# If You Ask Me

By Bettye Moss

## Hats off!

Salute of the week to Mrs. Irene J. Dodson and her sister, Miss Pearl Z. Johnson, two gracious Baltimore ladies who are known for their gentility, kindness and devotion.

Last week, they rounded out a total of 135 years service with a firm of orthopedic physicians at 4 E. Madison St., where Mrs. Dodson has been employed since 1914 as receptionist, and Miss Johnson since 1919 as physicians's assistant.

Their pleasant voices, professional manner and service have endeared them to hundreds.

On Sunday, the 4 E. Madison physicians gave an elegant reception in their honor which was attended by some 750 friends and former patients.

## Beautiful

The 12th floor of the Belvedere Hotel in downtown Baltimore was the site of the reception. Both large reception rooms were decorated with floral and food displays. Guests moved from room to room to partake of the delicacies and salute the honorees. An orchestra provided background music.

Both honorees lived up to their reputation for wearing elegant attire. Miss Irene was a picture in a black chiffon caftan, highlighted by a sequin necklace. Miss Pearl selected a beige knee length dinner suit decorated with sequin at the front and hem.

Both had their white hair swept high in becoming style, (see accompanying photo), and both wore wrist corsages.

For a solid three hours, guests streamed to the flower-banked reception area to greet the honorees.

There were "oohs" and "aahs" and "so glad to see you," and other sentimental greetings all evening.

There was no formal program. There was a brief but moving thank you on behalf of the hosts by the senior in the 8-member firm, Dr. Edmond J. McDonnell. He described the sisters as "models of gentility and unselfishness", and "exceptional" persons who are ageless. He emphasized they were not retiring. He brought a laugh when he joked, "we had the reception at this time so they can be at work as usual on Monday morning."

## Who was there

Friends, patients and former patients of both races were in attendance, Among them, a teenage blonde girl who embraced the honorees and said, "I just love you..I can never forget you for helping me when I had a bad leg..."

Mrs. Dodson is a steward, a member of the Flower Guild and active in the missionary society at Payne AME Church. The minister, Rev. Howard L. Camper and Mrs. Camper, and almost all Payne members, attended.

Miss Johnson is active in Unity United Methodist Church, and the pastor, Rev. William Peters, Sr., was there, as well as a number of Unity members.

Both ladies belong to the women's auxiliary of Frontiers International. Frontier president, Mrs. Sara Howell, was there, with her hubby, Pinkney Howell. Other Frontier members spied in the crowd: Mrs. Althea Cornish, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Snowden.

Down from N.Y., able to walk on his cane and happy to say thank you to the sisters was a longtime patient, John Rulon-Miller. Also from N.Y., Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson, cousins of the honorees.

Others out-of-town about were: Mrs. Hilda Webster, Mrs. Marie Parrault, Mrs. Daisy McDonald, all of N.Y., Mr. and Mrs. C. C. House, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Baltimore, all of D.C.

From Silver Spring, Mrs. Ruby Brown, Mrs. Jackie Hendry, Mrs. Anne Johnson;

From Atlantic City, Mrs. Zita Payne; from Lusby, Maryland, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Brooks, Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Gross and Mrs. Angela Bishop; and from Waterbury, Md., Mr. and Mrs. Charles Griffin, Mr. and Mrs. Austin B. Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Brown.

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Cuff notes: AFRO files show that when this newspaper sponsored its annual Easter parade on Pennsylvania Ave. in the 50's, Mrs. Irene Dodson frequently walked off with the prize for best dressed lady. That was in the days when Charm Center was the top ladies" apparel center. Remember?

Mrs. Dodson and her sister designed and made their own outfits and then, as now, have been noted for their unique and becoming styles.

Miss Johnson never married, but Mrs. Dodson was married in 1927 to the late Nimrod Dodson, a postal employee, who was active in a number of community groups. He died in 1962.

SISTER of Herbert Gardner, Mrs. Florence Ringgold, retired Baltimore educator, pictured with her husband, Daniel, retired government employee, at fellowship following memorial for her brother. Herbert Gardner. In rear, Mr. Gardner's niece, Mrs. Pauline Fox of D.C. See more in If You Ask Me.

MAYOR'S KIN — Mrs. Ann Felton, Syracuse, N.Y., educator, daughter; Mrs. Lucinda Bright Gardner, wife of 53 years, retired Baltimore school employee, and brother, Dr. Thomas Gardner, retired NYC prof, pictured at fellowship dinner following Saturday memorial services for Herbert Gardner, Baltimore community worker and church leader who was known as "Mayor on the Hill." See more in, If You Ask Me.

## About people

It's a boy — their first-born — for Mr. and Mrs. Brian Copeland of Edmondson Village.

Baby weighed in a 7 lbs., 10¼ oz., at 10:43 p.m., Tuesday, (Jan. 31), at Sinai Hospital. He's been named Corey Douglas.

Mom is the former Helen Ruff, a U.S. Army accountant. Dad is employee representative at the U. of Maryland at Baltimore.

Infant is a first great grand for Mrs. Edna Gover of Arunah Ave. and a third grand for Mr. and Mrs. Earl C. Ruff of Massachusetts Ave. Paternal grands are the late Mr. and Mrs. Freddie Copeland.

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The Stan McKenzies, (Vashti), lost the baby girl they were expecting in May. She's the minister and WEBB radio figure. She is due home from Sinai this weekend.

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Prayers, please, for former Judge E. Everett Lane, who remains ill at his home, 500 University Parkway, Apt. 4R, Baltimore, 21210.

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Glad - you're - better cards to Mrs. Edna Over Campbell, She's the retired educator who is active in church and community, including service as a member of Morgan University's Board of Regents.

She has been confined since December when she had back surgery, is now on the way to recovery, says she hopes to be up and out in a couple of months.

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Thinking-of-you cards to Mrs. Daisy Alston and members of her family. They have had three deaths in their family in the last month.

Dad, Willie Lee, the retired Bethlehem Steel employee of N. Washington St., died December 30. He was 77.

An aunt, Mrs. Annie Morgan, 83, of Hollins St., was buried last Monday.

Her mother, Mrs. Ardella S. Davis, 75, of E. Lafayette Ave., was eulogized on Jan. 27.

All family members were active in First Baptist Church in East Baltimore.

Other survivors, sisters, Mrs. Elsie Johnson and Mrs. Brenda Graves, brother, Frank Lee, and stepbrother, Sylvester Davis, all of Baltimore.

## Mrs. Harris

Mrs. Alma Johnson Harris, who was found dead in her Charlton Ave. home in Morgan Park on Monday evening, was a retired educator and member of an old Baltimore family. She was in her mid-eighties.

She and her sisters grew up on Pitcher St. in west Baltimore and were the daughters of the late Dr. Charles Johnson, the chiropodist, and Mrs. Johnson, Adelaide, whom friends called Addie.

In the Thirties the Johnson girls were said to be the prettiest and nicest young women in their growing up days, and they went on to make significant marks for themselves in adult life.

Mrs. Harris, the third of the five daughters became the wife of the dentist, Dr. Roderick Harris. He died in 1955. She was a teacher in the city schools.

In her retirement she enjoyed companionship of friends in the SSS Club, and a pinochle group. She was a pleasant and kind neighbor and enjoyed tending flowers on her lawn.

Survivors are a daughter, Mrs. Alma Bond, of D.C., grandchildren, Roderick Ellis, Detroit; and Miss Olga Ellis, D.C., and a sister, Mrs. Anna Julian, Chicago, widow of Dr. Percy Julian, the renowned scientist.

Sisters who preceded Mrs. Harris in death included Mrs. Jean Wood Thomas, Mrs. Louise Wesley who became the first wife of Dr. Charles Wesley, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity co-founder, historian and former president of Wilberforce University; Mrs. Kitty Lane, who became the wife of Baltimore's first magistrate, Judge E. Everett Lane and Elizabeth.

SISTERS HONORED — Miss Pearl Z. Johnson, left, and her sister, Mrs. Irene Dodson, honored at reception attended by 750. See details in If You Ask Me. (Moss photo)

## 'Mayor on Hill'

The memorial service on Saturday (Jan. 28), for Herbert Gardner saw over 400 persons gather in Enon Baptist Church to recall his good deeds and his dedicated service.

The pastor, Rev. Porter W. Phillips remembered him for his 54 years as a part of the Enon family, where he was a trustee and very supportive of the church and its members. He said he gave unselfishly of his money and time, even visiting the sick during the week of his final illness." He moved through life making friends...helping others . . . sharing his talent for conversation . . .

Former Enon trustee chair, Harvey B. Gray confirmed this. Rev. Marcus G. Wood, pastor of Providence Baptist Church, also attested to his generosity and commitment. Two Annapolis ministers who enjoyed fishing trips with him—Rev. James George, Mt. Zion Methodist, and Rev. George White, Asbury, delighted with their

(Continued on page 20)


ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Lafayette Square
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*The Rev. Donald O. Wilson, L.H.D., Rector*
*The Rev. Samuel T. Knight, Asst. Rector*
*The Rev. Robert T. Ford, ED.D.*
*Mr. Maurice Murphy, Mus. D.*

SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 5, 1984
CANDLEMAS
One Great Service

8:00 A.M. —
Holy Communion
10:00 A.M. —
Solemn High Mass
Solemn Procession — Clergy
and
Altar Guild
Sermon by the Rector
SILVER SERVICE BRUNCH
PROVIDED BY
The ALTAR GUILD IMMEDIATELY
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James S. Hammond, M. Music
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Sunday, February 5, 1984

Eight and Eleven O'Clock

Marion Curtis Bascom preaching

Anthems
8:00 —
Climbin' Up the Mountain
— W. H. Smith, arr.
11:00 —
Listen to the Lambs
— R. Nathaniel Dett

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It's Double Play Saturday With Aunt Pauline & Aurelia On 860 AM

The weekends are twice as good in Baltimore when you spend Saturday mornings with Aunt Pauline Wells Lewis, the pioneer of Baltimore Black Gospel music and Aurelia White.

The sounds start early and the beat goes on until 9AM, as Aunt Pauline plays your favorite hits.

But that's only the beginning. They'll keep you in touch with all the area church activities and let you know who is a year older on the Birthday Party.

It's Double Play Saturday with Aunt Pauline and Aurelia on the new 860AM.

860 AM
Baltimore's Full-Time Black Gospel Radio Station




# Action News' Newest Addition Tantalizes Her Viewers

"I'm a feminist. I think most black women whether they use the term or not are feminists. We don't grow up deciding whether or not we're gonna work . . . we grow up knowing we're gonna work . . . . our mothers worked . . . our grandmothers worked."

By Racine S. Winborne
AFRO Staff Writer

A colleague recently layed down a bit of media jargon and called Sheila Diane Stainback "a comer", which is tantamount to saying she's someone on the rise in the business.

The compliment isn't off-base. Since taking over as substitute anchor of the noon spot and as co-anchor at 6 p.m., over at WBAL's Action News broadcast, the native New Yorker may very well have established herself as the city's premier on-camera news personality.

A reserved tour de force, Ms. Stainback combines a reasonant theatrical voice, outstanding with its stage potential, and a direct yet beckoning gaze to lure the unresponsive viewer into the screen.

But the actual preparation began as a child growing up in the James Weldon Johnson housing project. There in East Harlem—Spanish Harlem—the craft polishing was started.

"I've wanted to be a news reporter for as long as I can remember...since I was six or seven years old. News was the main show, the most consistent show that was stressed in our house.

"At 33, I'm a force to be reckoned with. I'm outrageous, unpredictable . . . somebody once called me a wise-ass. I love to dance and can do breakdancing. . . . I model myself after my mother. She'll be 70 next year and she's in her second career.

"My mother was really tough on what we were allowed to watch on TV. We could not watch nonsense. While everybody was watching the Beverly Hillbillies we were watching classical music concerts. We protested like hell...we hated her stressing this white education and this white programing."

The fourth of six kids—five daughters and a son—born on August 30, 1950 to Iris and Oscar Stainback her mother has always been a staunch no-nonsense high achiever born and bred in Guyana, South America the product of the British educational system.

Arriving in the United States around the time of the Nazi uprising, she met young Stainback just before the outbreak of World War II.

Sheila Stainback relives the fairytale, describing their romance as "a typical war-torn love story." The glitter in her eyes suggests that she has often sat at her parents' heels listening to them retell the story over and over again.

When the James Weldon Johnson project first opened in 1947, shortly thereafter, the couple moved in. In those early years in the building named after the renowned writer-poet, the impressionable youthful Sheila had no idea that Johnson was a famous black man.

She did know, however, that her house address at 1809 Lexington Avenue was part of a white president's birthdate.

"It's part of the perversion of American education. You'll know that your building number was the same year a white man was born but wouldn't know it was named after a black man."

While all of East Harlem played during the summer months the skinny clever bookworm poured over the speeches of then president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, trying to assimilate his public address from the tube.

In her own words, "I was a semi-square who hated summer growing up. It meant there was no school and I loved school. I would go to the library and get as many books as I could get. I couldn't wait to get an adult library card.

"The kids use to think I was strange...they used to ask my brother and my sisters what was wrong with me."

Something profound happened at 18. Suddenly the realization that she was livng in Harlem, in fast-lane New York, surrounded by quaint animals called boys, registered and invaded her reclusive intellectual world.

"I made up for lost time and I have been partying ever since. I consider myself foot loose and fancy free."

Ms. Stainback was educated in the Catholic school system, later attending Fordham University on an Urban League scholarship.

Her admittance to the traditionally all Italian-Irish male working class institution, which had previously graduated the likes of Alan Alda and Vince Lombardi, was for her a significant statement that coincided with the events of the prolific 1960's.

"It was so predominantly white that if one of us were to have dropped out the percentage of blacks enrolled would have dropped below one percent."

"There are not tons of brothers out there who can handle the kind of situation that black women who are successful find themselves in. But there are a lot of brothers out there who like the challenge of being with a woman in my kind of position, who want a woman who is together and sure of herself, and successful in her particular career."

Graduated with a degree in Urban Communications in 1972, she commenced on a journey that would take her to CBS where she worked for a three month stint as a desk assistant, to Newsweek Magazine to do sports research; her first reporting-anchor job was in Miami at WIOD Radio, and in 1975, she relocated to racially torn Boston and an all news radio station, WEEI.

Sheila Stainback arrived, from WLS TV in Chicago to Channel Eleven in Baltimore, in August of 1980. "WBAL was looking for a medical reporter and I was at WLS at Oprah's (former co-hostess of WJZ T.V.'s People Are Talking show) current station."

Comparing WLS and WJZ's format she sees the two stations as being similar and, being a "serious reporter" in the midst of a news station whose style was changing to a more humorous presentation, she realized that she was "not a joking kind of person."

That decision hastened her move to Charm City, ranked 19th or 20th, depending on whom you ask, in the national news market. Ratings are based on advertising figures.

Back to the subject of her effervescence, which manages to communicate itself successfully while not upstaging peers or the contents of the news broadcast, she attributes all to a very special trip.

"I credit it to the sabbatical I took. I went out to California last year for nine months to study. I think there were a lot of things that went on with me personally that opened me up.

"Made me take chances and not feel that everything lies on my failing or succeeding in life.

"When I was 14 me and two of my sisters would play at being the Supremes. But I wasn't Diana Ross. I was Mary because I thought Mary was the prettiest and she handled the background vocals well. She was a team player."

I suspect that a lot of it is coming across now. It's so natural and so much something that is understudied on my part. All I can say is that I'm a born-again journalist."

Throughout most of her 11½ year career there have been several fill-in anchoring spots similar to her three month tenure at WBAL.

Precipitated by the departure of anchorwoman Rudy Miller, who is on maternity leave, Ms. Stainback has enjoyed being apart of the hierarchy "People listen to you more.

"I'm the same Sheila who came back from Stanford (the cite of her sabbatical in Palo Alto, California) last summer, who had the same kind of questions and the same criticisms about the news. Just because I'm filling in, now I'm listened to."

Does she want the job full-time? She won't say definitively. Instead she fires back; "There are many things that I want full-time."

Still, she loves being up front in the midst of things. In particular, the noon show suits her fancy though the audience size is small.

Its the "free wheeling" atmosphere that charges her, the spontaneity and having to think off the top of the head.

"I think I've found my niche with the noon show but I want more. It's not going to be enough to keep me happy for several years."

Sheila Stainback's sight is set on more fertile fields. She wants a shot at Ted Koppel's "Nightline."

"I'm not married because I can't mate in captivity. Plus I've lived in six cities in ten years. You can't do that unless your mate is self-employed and supportive."

(AFRO Photos by P. A. Greene)