USSA IOWA — Georgian Wright (left) holds the flag from her son, Seaman Apprentice Nathaniel C. Jones, Jr.'s casket and weeps as her husband, Sgt. Major Lawrence Davis (stepfather) holds onto stepdaughter Lauren at funeral services in Lackawanna, NY. Jones was one of 47 sailors killed aboard the battleship, USS Iowa when an explosion ripped through a gun turret last week.

He's free after spending 21 years on death row

ATLANTA — Freed death row inmate James Richardson made a pilgrimage Friday to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s crypt, quoted from King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech and vowed to work for a more just penal system.

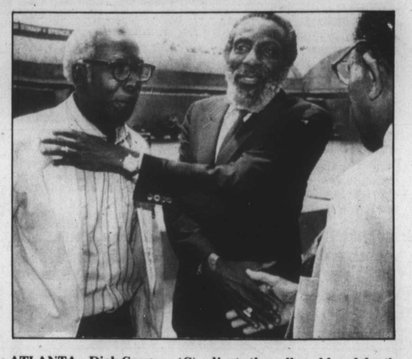
Richardson, released Tuesday when a judge overturned his 1968 conviction after 21 years in a Florida prison, declared," I'm free at last. I'm free at last. Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last."

The gray-haired Richardson, 53, invoked the famous line from King's 1963 Washington speech in the shadow of the slain civil rights leader's marble grave, which is emblazoned with the same inscription.

"I'm praying very hard for my brothers and sisters that they never have to go through anything as difficult," said the former migrant worker, his voice quavering

"I am sure there are more innocent poor people on death row."

Richardson, who learned to read and write while in prison, pledged to devote his life to preaching to youth about avoiding incarceration and publicizing his case so it never happens again.



ATLANTA—Dick Gregory (C) adjusts the collar of freed death row inmate James Richardson as they greet Rev. Joseph Lowery of SCLC.

He included in his remarks the story of how in 1972 he was being prepared for electrocution, complete with details of his head shaving and verbal taunting by guards.

"You can almost taste the scent of death on your tongue," Richardson said, after detailing how guards explained to him that it would require three shocks to kill him.

Richardson and his wife, Annie Mae were migrant farm workers in Arcadia, Fla. in 1967 when their seven children died from a lunch of poisoned rice and beans.

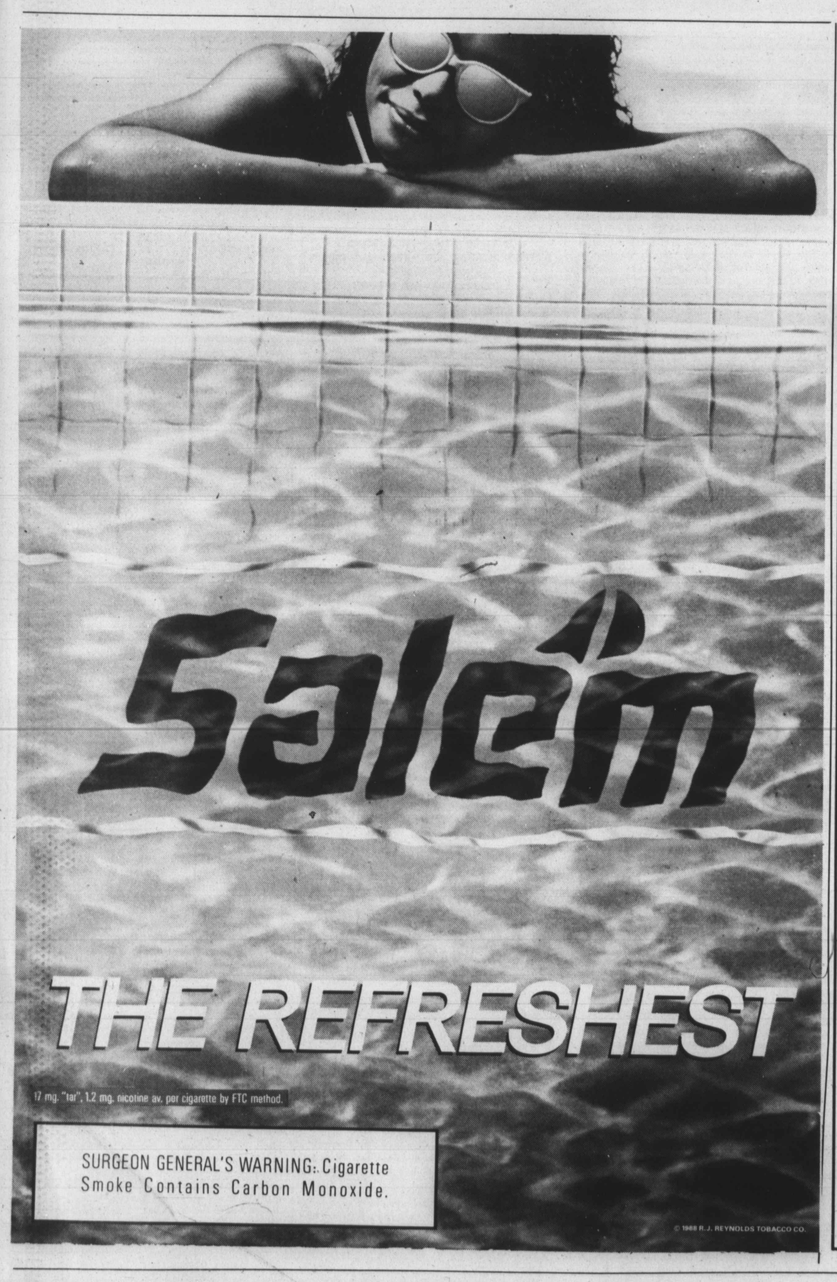
He was convicted of murdering his oldest daughter and sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted when the Supreme Court declared the death penalty unconstitutional in 1972.

He was released into the custody of his lawyers Tuesday after retired Circuit Court Judge Clifton Kelly overturned his conviction.

The judge ruled after Richardson's lawyers found new evidence supporting their contention the children were killed by their baby sitter, Betsy Reese.

The attorneys say there are witnesses who would testify that Reese, now 64, suffering from Alzheimer's disease and living in a nursing home, told them she poisoned the children but does not remember why.

The state has until May 6 to decide if he will be retried but Dade County State's Attorney Janet Reno, appointed a special state prosecutor to study the case, said that is unlikely.



News Notes

James Brown furloughed briefly

BROWN GETS AROUND: South Carolina corrections officials were astonished to learn that a judge had singer James Brown briefly furloughed from prison Thursday so he could go the courthouse to sign a few autographs. A sheriff's van took Brown on the 16-mile trip from the State Park Correction Center to the courthouse in Columbia where he signed his named for about 40 people, including Circuit Judge Frank Eppes, 66. "Somebody asked me if I could get him up here to get his autograph and I said I would try," said Eppes, who has a reputation for being colorful and describes himself as a fan of Brown's music. "He was dressed up nice and neat, clean-shaven and bright-eyed — seemed full of life to me."

Corrections Commissioner Parker Evatt was not amused. "I was flabbergasted," he said. "What happened was totally irregular." Evatt said if prison officials had known Brown, who is serving six years for leading authorities on a high-speed chase, was going to sign autographs, they wouldn't have allowed it. The officials had assumed the request was connected to court business, such as having Brown testify.

Tawana made it all up?

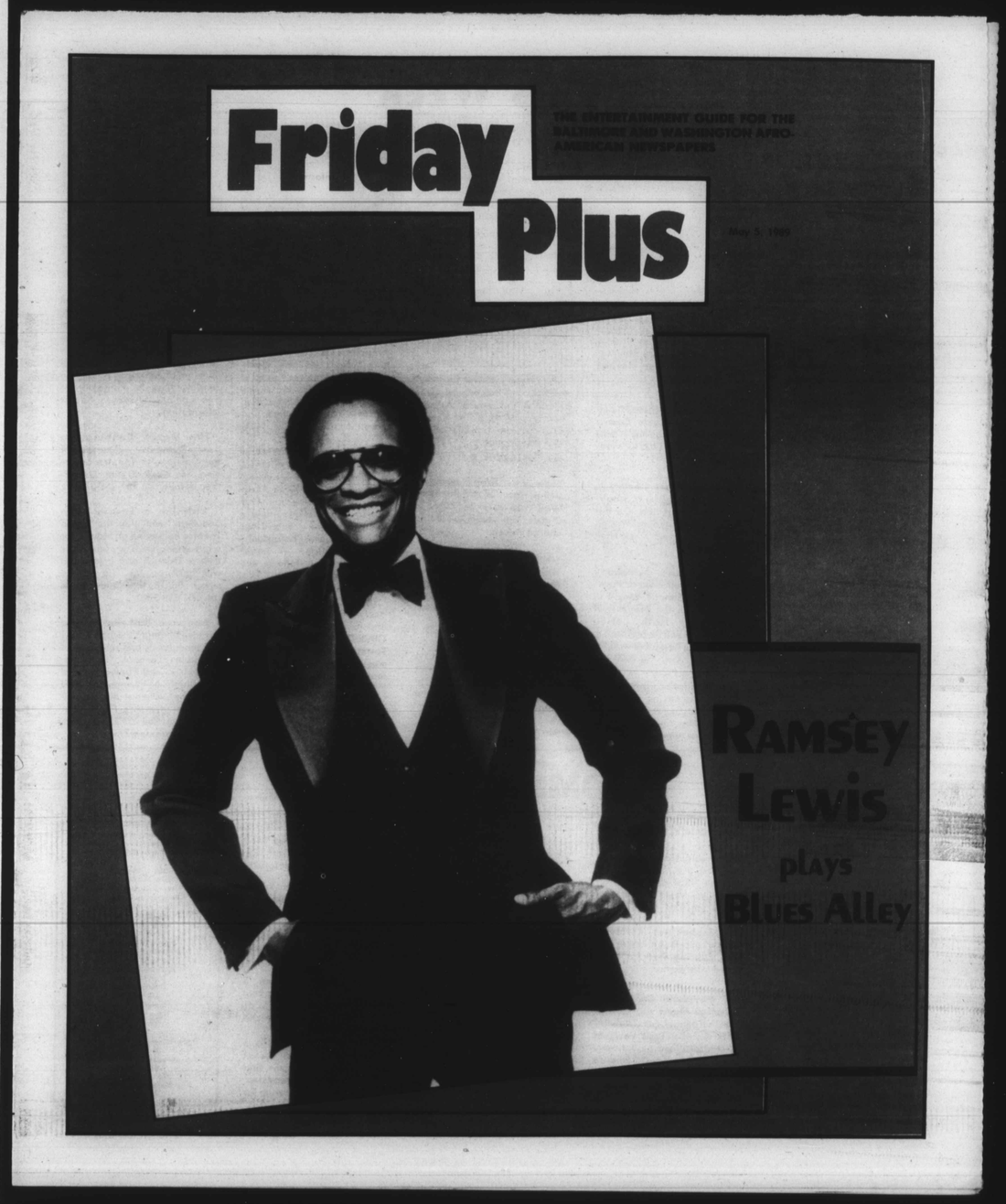
NEW YORK — Tawana Brawley told a friend that a story of kidnap and rape in upstate New York in November 1987 was fabricated to keep her mother's boyfriend from beating her up, **Newsday** reported Thursday.

The report out of Virginia Beach, Va., Brawley's current home, quoted Daryl T. Rodriquez, a former boyfriend of the teenage girl, as saying she told him the story two weeks ago.

Newsday said Brawley denied Rodriguez' account Wednesday, saying she had not seen him since last summer. But **Newsday** said several people told the newspaper they had seen Brawley and Rodriguez together as recently as a week ago.

Brawley, who is black, told police she had been raped and sexually abused by as many as six white men. A state grand jury concluded after a seven-month investigation that Brawley's story of abduction and sexual abuse was untrue and that her condition was not inconsistent with "having been self-inflicted."

Newsday Thursday quoted Rodriguez as saying Brawley told him she and her mother made up the story to keep Ralph King, her mother's boyfriend, from punishing the teenager.

Bo Diddley immortalized

Seminal rocker Bo Diddley and blues giant William Dixon were immortalized on Hollywood's Rock Walk Thursday. They made handprints and wrote their names in wet cement and then put on a 20-minute jam session before a crowd of 100 record industry people and fans. In honor of Diddley, 61, and Dixon, 73, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley proclaimed Thursday Rock 'n' Roll Roots Day while Mayor Richard M. Daley did the same in Chicago, where the two men became famous.