

Comic pages find Negro heroes

More than 40 years American Children have watched Tarzan alternately bamboozle and bedevil the black cannibals who cavort through the jungles on the comic pages of the nation's newspapers.

With the change in trends and with angry raised clenched fist, no longer are the black men cannibals to innocent children, thanks to the wisdom of Tarzan's latest creator, they are now equal partners.

This change in the Tarzan comic strip came in 1968. Call it a touch of God working on the hearts of men or a wave of consciousness among the newspaper editors and syndicate managers who since 1968, have introduced a half dozen new comic strips featuring black characters as heroes and heroines rather than as the "toms" mouthed stereotypes of the past.

Most of the new thrust comic strips have not penetrated many states in the Deep South, but a great number of children are no more growing up seeing nothing but white faces on the comic page they devour daily.

Carl Schmidt of the National Comic Council said "Today, some 48 million comic sections circulate throughout the United States every Sunday." "Peanuts is the largest circulating strip with a daily circulation of 29,262,000 in 745 papers and 30,186,000 in 393 Sunday papers."

LONG TIME A COMING

Like a number of opportuni-

ties for Blacks, the change in comics strips was a long time coming. Comic strips first appeared in America in the 19th century, when they first made their appearance in Sunday supplements of some of the sensational big newspapers.

Blacks were featured occasionally. For example "Mushmouth" appeared in "Moon Mullins" as a shuffling character in the old Amos 'n' Andy tradition.

COURAGE TO CHANGE

Nov. 11, 1968, the first episode of "Dateline: Danger" was offered for syndication. It involves a team of two roving correspondents, Troy, a tall, strapping blond, and raven, a black former football star and intellectual.

BLACK CONSULTANT

There are a few black drawing comic strips today, one is Brumic Brardon Jr. of Westbury, Long Island, who has been drawing cartoons and design for 25 yrs. Two years ago he created his first black comic strip, "Luther," and the adventures of a 9 year old black boy growing up in a slum.

Other comic strips now featuring black include "Friday Foster" of The New York News-Chicago Tribune Syndicate, the adventures of a black fashion model-photographer from Harlem; and two so-called big-foot or humorous comic strips, "Quincy" and "Wee Pals."

The Observers of the same opinion of Mr. Schmidt of National Comics Council believe that comics help shape views of preschoolers to adults.

The entire news media will have to take this seriously. This is the key to some people's thinking without even knowing why.

Two years ago for two weeks, Mr. Schulz introduced a small black boy named Franklin, into "Peanuts." Since then he has appeared from time to time for a day or two and the Observer thinks he will return.

Mr. Schulz said in a telephone interview from his home in Sebastopol Calif. "I thought for a long time of introducing such a boy or girl, but I didn't want to do it with the patronizing attitude and I was not sure I was capable of handling it properly."

"What prompted me to do it was two letters I received from two fathers. One said, even if you don't do it right at least try, so I did it."

"I thought and felt that Peanuts had a universal appeal, but Mr. Brandom, creator of 'Luther' disagreed."

NARROW WINDOW INDEED

It is a very narrow window editors are trying to look through. The general feeling, particularly in the industry, is that the times are changing, and for the better.

The question of appeal of the black-oriented comic strip to the black community is one that

continues to puzzle the newspaper editor who carry the strips every day.

"Friday Foster the Black newspaper photographer is just a black face Brenda Starr" said one Black soul sister. She did agree, however, that the times are changing and admits that the comic are receiving some favorable comments even from militant black groups.

Two years ago Russ Manning took over as the fifth creator of Tarzan since Edgar Rice Burroughs and Hal Foster began the strip in 1929.

The original blacks were almost invariably cannibals; they were the slaves. Mr. Manning said in a recent telephone interview from the golden state of California. "But in the current episode in the Sunday pages, for instance, Tarzan has gone into the North Sahare to rescue a group of people from his jungle."

"In helping to rescue them he in turn is helped by a ten year old black girl from Tarzan's

jungle who courageously loosens Tarzan's bonds as he is about to be thrown into molten lava.

"But I handle them as partners. The Waziris the African Tribe of which Tarzan is chief. He helped him and he helps them, I've made a point of that. The Waziris are a strong able people. That's the way it should be—the blacks were in the jungle first."

This is really what the Observer believes. Read statement on the Editorial page.

Ads mislead on Medicare

Some private insurance companies have been sending misleading advertisements to Medicare beneficiaries in the Portland area, according to James Pizza, social security district manager, in an effort to sell them health insurance to supplement their Medicare protection.

THEATRE

What color is talent?

By WILLIAM R. DEIZ

In the fashion of the big cities, Portland hasn't arrived yet, but it's catching up. One barometer of changing social attitudes can be found, if you look a little, in that most liberal of institutions—the theatre. The revolution that has swept blacks into starring and supporting roles on and off Broadway, in movies and on television, after spending generations type-cast as subordinates and flunkies, is just now beginning to make its effects felt here on the stage in the Rose city.

Four years ago the Portland Opera Association—prodded by the Park Bureau—put up the money to finance an extravagant production of "West Side Story," a play that is based, in part, on the classic "Romeo and Juliet" theme, but which substitutes warring rival street gangs in New York City for the warring families of Shakespeare's play.

Four years ago when the Park Bureau cast the roles, the choice, when it came to casting black people was simple. All of the blacks in the production would naturally be "Sharks" (the Puerto Rican gang), while no black, no matter how "American" or otherwise fit for the part would play a Jet (the American gang).

The production cost a lot of money. It played at the old Oriental Theatre, and was well received by the public. And with the black/white confrontation played out on stage, it wasn't difficult to get over to the audience a feeling of reality in the racially tense fight scenes.

But New York (at least the New York of "West Side Story") was not a black white town. That New York was an ETHNIC town, with the hatred between rival gangs of blacks and Puerto Ricans every bit as acute as the hatreds between the Irish or the Polish gangs.

So it is even more logical that if blacks (who have lived in New York longer than practically anyone—except the Indians) be cast as anything, they be cast as Jets.

Which is exactly what the Portland Civic Theatre is doing in its version of "West Side Story"—set to play in early November on the Main stage.

An honest attempt has been made by director Ed Udavik to define CHARACTERS and not just racial types. And this is a step in the right direction. The production itself may fall flat for various reasons, but at least

the impetus is "right on." If you have actors, let them act—at the roles they're best suited for. I



WILLIAM R. DEIZ

don't care what color they are. What color is talent?

Of course other Portland groups, such as the American Theatre Company, and the New Theatre have been giving parts to blacks all along. But for the ATC, these parts seem, too often, to be for specialized occasions; while the New Theatre just doesn't have the audience.

The Civic Theatre still has a long way to go. But it is the recognition, by those on the inside who make the decisions as to who will play what part that talent is where you find it, that gives cause for hope.

If you want to act—and you CAN act—try out for a part in the next Civic Theatre production. You may just be pleasantly surprised—and they're not "Tom" roles either.

Tektronix \$349,000 gift UGN drive's largest

Tektronix, Inc. of Beaverton, contributed \$349,000 to United Good Neighbors, and in so doing, became the largest giver to date in the \$6,130,162 campaign.

The Tektronix gift was reported at the Oct. 8 UGN progress luncheon in Portland's Benson Hotel, by Bob Hazen, UGN general campaign chairman.

In report the amount, Hazen said: "The corporate pledge obtained by the UGN advance gifts division was an increase of 7 per cent over the same amount contributed last year. This came to \$91,000."

"Then gifts of individuals at Tektronix amounted to \$257,412 — with 85 per cent of the employees giving their full share. This is the largest contribution to UGN so far in this campaign and is an increase that meets the total goal increase of our four county campaign."

He added: "Tektronix has conducted one single campaign for charitable purposes throughout its 24 year history. However, the staff took a look at the last ten campaigns and came up with a tremendous record of individual and corporate giving that has brought into the UGN coffers for agency use in ten years a total of over \$2,000,000. The average gift of individual employees at Tektronix has increased from

\$18.50 in 1961 to \$43.75 for each of 6,000 local employees last year."

The Tektronix UGN drive actually started in 1969, when Earl Wantland, executive vice president, accepted the chairmanship of the company campaign late in the year. Wantland, who also served three years on the UGN budget committee, planned the events of this year's campaign well in advance.

Late in August, more than 300 of the firm's managers and area representatives toured UGN agencies. A major meeting featuring the company's leadership and UGN speakers was held for area representatives. Solicitor training meetings for more than 600 managers were led by Chairman Wantland and community relations manager Tom Williams.

Managers throughout the company and area representatives then held over 100 informational meetings which were followed by actual solicitation. The campaign started Sept. 9 and ended Sept. 25.

In addition to the \$349,000, Tektronix is also lending five employees to UGN for the duration of the drive.

The UGN campaign continues throughout Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties in Oregon, and Clark County, Wash, through Nov. 5.

Having a dance or social event? Let us rent you a neat spacious hall with necessary facilities to accommodate approximately one hundred people. Reasonable fee. One bedroom and Bachelor apts for rent also. For information call 288-4040

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