

Portland actors feated

by Kathryn Bogie

Actress and former Portlander, the late Jessie Coles Grayson and actor Paul Winfield, also a former Portlander, were selected for special tribute in their old home town recently by the Guild of the Portland Urban League.

The occasion, observed at the Sheraton Hotel, was marked at the May luncheon meeting of the Portland Federation of Womens Clubs. Annually, some fifty to sixty clubs in the federation vie, under their individual banners, for top honors in portraying in their imaginative table centerpieces the current decorative theme chosen by the federated group. This year's theme, "Hooray for Hollywood," was borrowed directly from the famous Portland Rose Festival Parade scheduled to be again viewed by thousands of eager spectators in early June. Representatives of the Royal Rosarians, sponsors of the parade, came to the luncheon resplendent in their royal regalia to present their 1978 Festival queen to the nearly 400 assembled guests.

The Urban League Guild did not win one of the three coveted prizes but did attract much favorable attention and interest for their dramatic table centerpiece which featured a few of the many Black artists who have struggled for

recognition of their talents in the movie capitol. Spotlighted with tiny lights were the two Portland personalities.

Jessie Coles Grayson began in 1927 her seige to break through the walls of denial and restriction standing against Blacks who sought to develop their art on film in this powerful media. Much in demand to sing in Portland's music circles of church and concert events, Mrs. Grayson had been a member of Bethel A.M.E. Church since about 1910. She possessed a rich contra-alto voice with admirable range which afforded her considerable advantage when the "talkies" came in. Mrs. Grayson was awarded substantial speaking and singing roles in films with Bette Davis, Spencer Tracy and others before her death in Los Angeles in the fifties.

Of a younger generation of Black actors, Paul Winfield, also spotlighted by the Urban League Guild, is currently busy building his successful career in Hollywood. He enjoys the movies but keeps ever mindful of his early love for the stage and for the Shakespearean theatre. Winfield came to Portland as a child, attending elementary and secondary schools here, and was graduated from the University of Portland.

Mrs. Ozella Canada is president of the 75 member Portland Urban League Guild.



Paul Winfield, the celebrated actor, is a former Portland resident - a graduate of the University of Portland. [Photo: Courtesy of University of Portland]



Jessie Coles Grayson, one of the first Black screen actresses, was much in demand in Portland as a soloist before her Hollywood success. [Photo: Courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California]



The late Jessie Coles Grayson as seen in her movie roll. [Photo: Courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California]

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Actress Donna Summer hosts "American Bandstand" on May 27th in Dick Clark's first absence in his twenty-two years of heading the show.

Donna Summer visits Bandstand

For the first time since Dick Clark took over as host of "American Bandstand" some 22 years ago, he will not appear on the program as its host on May 27th.

Taking his place for Bandstand's hour-long tribute to disco music will be the

Queen of Disco herself - Donna Summer. Among other things she will be promoting her first motion picture, "Thank God It's Friday."

Both the movie and her "American Bandstand" hosting chore should go a long way to convincing the public that there is a lot more to Donna than just the sex-goddess image she acquired while moaning and heavy-breathing through her monster hit, "Love To Love You Baby."

Not that Donna objects to the publicity.

As she says, "You have to get people's attention some kind of way. But I'm not just sex, sex, sex. I would never want to be a one-dimensional person like that."

"It's like if you have a coat that's red, yellow and white. You don't call it a red coat, or a yellow one, or a white one, you call it a multi-color coat."

"Same with me. I can sing songs like 'Love To Love You Baby,' but I can also sing ballads, light opera, things from musical comedy, church hymns - all kinds of songs. Plus, I can write, act and think. Like the multi-color coat, I'm multi-dimensional, and I don't want to be known for just one thing."

Meanwhile she is stepping into another pair of big shoes when she hosts "American Bandstand," May 27th, with Dick Clark executive-producing from the wings, rather than standing in the center-stage host's spot he has occupied for more than 20 years.



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