

Betty Wright Parker: Cleaning up for God

Grassroot News, N.W.—In the 1970s Betty Wright emerged as the 'Clean Up Woman.' She cleaned up to the top of the national charts. Now Betty sings the tunes as Mrs. Betty Parker. Her motivation is her religious belief. Although she sings gospel, she doesn't refer to herself as a gospel singer. "Titles tend to stereotype. I think basically that all music belongs to the Lord. When I sit down and write a love song the connotations that the listener draws may be different from what I intended. I may be writing that love song to somebody's husband and it will be soiled. But if I write it to my husband the song will be clean. I've always said that beauty is in the ears and hearts of the listeners. It's like two men who gazed out of their prison bars. One saw mud and the other saw stars."

She feels that although a person is saved, they should not isolate themselves from the world. "When people say they want to live separately as the word says, they are in fact making a mockery out of the word. You cannot live a sanctified life without helping the people around you. You can't help anyone sitting on a pedestal. I never separate myself from those who don't know God. Even those who call themselves saved are just sinners saved by grace. I just hope God would purify whatever kind of music I sing so that children could get enjoyment, and most importantly, learn something from it."

Mrs. Betty Wright Parker talks about one of the ailments affecting the church-goer today. "Judging people is unfortunately something that will not be erased in the Church because people are living in fleshy bodies. If we were all angels we would have dispensed with that not-so-nice quality. You know, I love people. Even the people who don't care a penny about me. I don't love them in spite of their faults but because of their faults. I used to hear people wondering if I was going to

stay in the church. My answer to them was you better watch you. Many said I wouldn't stay but I've been in the body of Christ for six years and I plan to stay."

Her life was changed with her hit, 'Clean-up Woman.' "After I got into the knowledge of Christ I found 'Clean-up Woman' in the Song of Solomon. It focused on the sin of negligence. Solomon is ready for his new bride and she is not ready for him. He departs into the City and she has to go find him. That's a great sin of negligence. I do believe when you marry a man your body no longer belongs to you. It belongs to him and his body no longer belongs to him, but to you."

Mrs. Parker summarized her origins: "I was never bad, just mischievous. When the sun rose I had a reason to fight. I was just waiting for it to come up so that I could be a little tomboy. I never wanted to be a performer. My sights were set on being a physical education teacher. In college I got a job as a T.V. interviewer and I would sing on the weekends. Soon the crowds became louder and louder and I said I must be getting better. 'Clean-up Woman' turned gold on my 19th birthday. After that I became serious. The tours followed in America and Europe."

She was born and raised in Liberty City in Miami, Florida. "Down there you have a situation where Cubans came in and worked for less than the Blacks. All that did was cancel out jobs. The Cubans weren't citizens so they didn't have to pay taxes. I now see something happening with the Haitians. Because of the color of their skin they are not treated the same way as the Cubans. It's very crowded in Liberty City. When Castro sent the last group of Cubans here he really flushed his toilet. Sometimes living in that community is like living in a war zone. Everyday you see homocides and there is so much dope. But I believe in Miami because it has a



MR. AND MRS. PATRICK PARKER
(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

good and solid foundation."

In her concerts Betty Wright Parker has combined secular and gospel music. "There's a good side to everybody and there's a bad side. I don't separate my sides. I sing what I feel in my heart. If there's pain I sing until it goes away."

The change in her life occurred in 1975. "A friend who had altered her life asked me to come to church. I kept putting her off until she said that some fine brothers were in the church. I sat in the back because I didn't want to enjoy the services.

But that night the Lord really saved my heart. When I came into the Lord he opened up my heart and gave me a new sense of satisfaction."

How did she end up in Oregon? "I met this guy in church, Patrick Parker, and the Lord had it in the plan that he was to be my husband. I fell in love and we were married."

In the immediate future Mr. and Mrs. Parker plan to return to Florida to work on developing a T.V. show of her life. Now, Betty Wright is cleaning up for God.

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News Notes

City Commissioner Mike Lindberg has proposed an ordinance that would begin a new procedure for investigating liquor license applicants. Police would conduct investigations of problem liquor outlets. Currently neighbors can express concerns but there is insufficient information for the Council to make its decision.

Dorothy Alexander will be sworn in as a member of the Governor's Commission on Black Affairs on January 27th in the Governor's office. She replaces Frank Wilson, who resigned. Dr. Alexander is an evaluation specialist in the technical assistance center, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.



Donald Hunter, Mrs. Bernice Hunter, Rev. Charles Hunter and Mrs. Mary Jean Berry sing for KBOO Salute to Martin Luther King, Jr.



This group produced 21 hours of special programming on KBOO honoring the birthdate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Program included poetry, music, talks, and interviews.

Prior to 1980 she was a program evaluator for the Dallas, Texas school district, and a librarian at Pacific University and the University of Oregon.

Minority and women contractors have a five per cent preference in bidding with King County, Washington. According to an ordinance passed this fall, a bid by a minority- or woman-owned firm will receive the bid if it is no more than five per cent above the lowest bid.

At least 19 deaths have been attributed to Neo-Nazis in West Germany since September 1978. Nazi

bombings and acts of violence have resulted in wounding 233. Approximately 630 fascists have been convicted of violence, 97 await trial, but only 20 are currently in prison.

Congressman Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) blasted Reagan's approval of a \$245 billion military budget for fiscal 1983 as "totally irresponsible, unconscionable and irrational." Pledging to lead a House floor fight against the budget next season, he said, "It should be evident to everyone in America now that President Reagan's economic policies of making the rich richer while making the poor poorer are rapidly taking our economy into more and more chaos."

The Defense Department has given lie detector tests to about 25 senior officers in its attempt to find the source of an unauthorized disclosure of information (a leak). The investigation continues with little hope of success.

Meanwhile, back at the Justice Department: In a revolt in the Civil Rights Division against Reagan policies, some career attorneys were leaking documents intended to demonstrate that the department is ignoring law and precedent in its approach to enforcement. They were caught.

Halim Rahsaan, Career Educational Specialist at Portland Community College will work out of the personnel office at Portland Community College one quarter (1/4) time on a weekly basis. Rahsaan is currently screening for professional positions within the PCC structure. Rahsaan has been on the faculty of PCC for seven years, having worked for the last three years in the Career Research department being responsible for aptitude and interest evaluations for adults and youths.

Rahsaan becomes the second Black person to work in the personnel division having anything to do with screening employment applications since the conception of PCC in the early sixties. Jim Boozer was the first Black person to be employed in the personnel department for PCC—he left PCC after ten years of service and is now employed by P.G.E.

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