

P E R S P E C T I V E S

By Professor McKinley Burt

Will there be more black inventors?

Last week I promised more notable examples of African Americans who made significant contributions to the transportation industry of America, and the world. You will keep in mind that their inspired inventions, all patented and thoroughly documented, not only brought new insight, safety and compassion to the transport of both freight and passengers, but contributed mightily to the overall growth of the nation and the viability of its infrastructure.

I will introduce this week's heroes shortly, but, first, let me advise you that, like many of us, I have great concerns about the present opportunities available to our youth for a repeat and continuation of this unparalleled mastery of technology. It will be emphasized toward the end of this article, that the very earliest of these black inventors persevered to emerge intellectually triumphant from the cruelest and greediest trauma ever inflicted upon human beings, ie., SLAVERY!

The question, today, is can our youth emerge unscathed and uncrippled by an equally traumatic situation? We refer, of course, to the impact of economic factors engendered by racism and a disabled education system -- to accompanying family disintegration and the proliferation of gangs, and, certainly, we cite the current furor over the disproportionate number of African Americans in the military. The question being asked, then, is "Will we once again be able to produce such a corp of ingenious and committed mas-

ters of technology." Especially in consideration of the fact that never before in the history of this nation has its future depended so heavily upon the escalation of technological expertise among "all" of its citizens.

We shall cite Elijah McCoy (1844-1928) as our next great contributor to the transportation industry. As is the case with our other black geniuses, his innovative talents were not limited to one invention or one industry. He is most famous for his invention of the Automatic Lubricator, the first in the world and the first of his patented designs of such devices, beginning with NO. 129,876, May 12, 1874 and the Lawn Sprinkler, No. 631,549, Sept. 26, 1899.

Can you imagine the situation which existed before McCoy devised a system for OILING MACHINERY WHILE IT WAS RUNNING? Trains had to be stopped every hour or so to have lubrication applied; the same for all power equipment and machinery in industry -- mills, logging, mining, factories, even the new steamships. So it is not difficult to see that the development of the Industrial Revolution, and all the added value of trillions of dollars would have been impossible without the invention of this black man (And can you imagine, too, the development of the AIR-PLANE -- Can you picture someone walking out on the wings with an oil can to lubricate the engines?).

This contribution was so important to the world that by the turn of the century all industry specified that any power machinery must be equipped with a "REAL McCOY LUBRICATOR". This is how a black man's name became part of "Colloquial English". Relative to an earlier comment, Elijah McCoy was the son of slaves, the family escaping their terrible degradation by fleeing to Canada. There both man

and wife worked in the woods to finance his education at the finest engineering school in Scotland. McCoy returned to work as an engineer for steamships and railroads. He patented the first at age 28 and the last at 76, 57 in all.

Next, let us cite Garrett A. Morgan, and again we have before us the account of an African American inventor whose contribution to the transportation infrastructure is encountered every day. In 1923 he sold his patent for a TRAFFIC SAFETY LIGHT to the General Electric Co., and now this device is found on practically every corner of the world. Here, also, we find that commitment and compassion dedicated to improvement of the loves of us all.

Like the other black inventors, Morgan had more than one contribution to make, and in more than one field. His invention of the GAS MASK revolutionized fire fighting and saved lives of thousands of soldiers in the First World War (Persian Gulf). He made a dramatic rescue after an explosion at the Cleveland Water Works on July 25, 1916. Morgan descended into a smoke-filled, gassy tunnel and rescued two dozen workers. When will the media sing the praises of these great African Americans?

Indeed it is a question, "Will There be More Black Inventors?" Will our youth be able to persevere against the onslaught? Not only are there nationwide problems such as I cited at the beginning, but there are recurring "regional" shocks to the black infrastructure. I cite for instance the situation here in Oregon where a system of higher education, already in difficulty, must now cope with "Ballot Measure 5". How prepared are we to deal with the affects of the massive curtailments in classes and enrollment -- and the large increases in tuition? You know "who" is going to really suffer. We had better get busy.

Blacks Are America's Most Patient Patriots

As African Americans have become increasingly vocal and active in opposition to the war in the Persian Gulf, there have been voices which have questioned our patriotism as "citizens" in this country. There has even been the suggestion that black opposition to the war will provoke a white backlash that will further stymie Black progress in the U.S. As if to give credence to this notion, a poll on racial attitudes in America published before the U.S. led attack on Iraq revealed that more than 50% of white Americans feel that African Americans are "less patriotic".

The fact is that African Americans have been and continue to be the most patient patriots in the United States. We have fought and shed our blood in virtually every war in which the United States has been engaged. Crispus Attucks, a former slave was the first person to die in the Boston Massacre in the hostilities which lead to the outbreak of the American revolution. In the American Revolution itself some 5,000 Africans joined the battle to win independence from Britain. Blacks fought in the American Revolution despite

George Washington's initial refusal to accept Africans into the Continental Army. It was only after the British promised to emancipate any Black who fought on the British side that Washington rushed to enlist Blacks.

In the Civil War African Americans were anxious to fight against the Confederacy as a means of striking blows for their own freedom. Once again the services of African Americans was initially shunned. Only after numerous union defeats at the hands of the Confederate Army and after anti-draft riots

in New York and other northern cities did Abraham Lincoln agree to recruit African Americans to help turn the tide of the war. More than 75,000 African Americans fought in the Civil War in white led segregated units where they received less pay than their white counterparts. After the war, African Americans were "freed" into a hostile and segregated society.

In World War I, 370,000 African Americans were drafted into the armed forces. Fighting under French command, 100,000 African Americans faced the Germans soldiers in the bloody battles against Kaiser Wilhelm. Three African American regiments and several individuals received the Croix de Guerre from France for their valor in battle. Back on the home front, Black citizens were being subjected to a continual wave of lynchings. In 1918 African Americans purchased 250 million dollars worth of war bonds and stamps in support of the war effort. That same year 58 African Americans were lynched in the United States.

In 1919 as black troops returned home from a victorious war effort, 26 race riots erupted across the nation. In some instances Black soldiers were assaulted and killed in their uniforms by white mobs. So ferocious were the attacks on Blacks throughout the country that historians have dubbed 1919 the year of the bloody "Red Summer". More than 1900 African Americans were killed in cities like Washington, D.C., Knoxville and Omaha, Nebraska.

And on the legacy of patience, patriotism, heroism and denial goes. Nearly 900,000 African American men and women served in the armed forces during World War II. Black troops also

distinguished themselves in battle during the Korean war. In Viet Nam, African Americans suffered from 30 - 35% of the frontline casualties.

No one dare challenge the patriotism of African Americans. Over and over again we have been eager to fight in America's Wars even when "our country" did not want our services. Over and over again we have fought in America's wars only to return "home" to mob terrorism, lynchings and an absence of freedom, democracy, equal opportunity and human rights here in America. Over and over again we have fought in America's wars on the hope/ wish or naive assumption that if we fought for the United States the United States would fight for us.

Over and over again our patriotism has gone unrewarded or has been betrayed even down to this day when America can invest billions of dollars for war in the Persian Gulf, but cannot find the funds to eradicate Black unemployment rates 3 times that of white Americans. And despite our blood, suffering and denial in this country, President Bush can veto a much needed Civil Rights bill.

Blacks are America's most patient patriots. But now our patriotism must be inspired by a higher calling. African Americans must oppose the war in the Persian Gulf. If we must fight, let us fight for a just and humane society right here in the United States. If we must fight, then we must fight to force America to cease its senseless interventionist policies abroad and beat its swords into plough shares. If we must fight let us fight to build a society that will study war no more.

Lloyd Building Renamed

In conjunction with the Port of Portland's 100th anniversary and a 1988 co-ownership agreement with Pacific Development, Inc., the Lloyd Building at 700 N.E. Multnomah Street in Portland will be officially renamed the Port of Portland Building on Wednesday, February 20. New building identification signs signaling the name change will be put in place above the north and south entry way doors at 10 a.m. on that day.

Carter MacNichol, the Port's director of real estate management and development, said the significance of this name change goes beyond the Port's 28 percent interest in the 16-story north-east Portland structure.

"Naming this building after the Port of Portland is a fitting tribute to a vital regional resource," MacNichol said. "It is especially appropriate now as the Port begins a year-long celebration marking a century of service to the Portland Metropolitan area."

Bill Scott, president of Pacific Development, Inc., said this is the first time a Lloyd property has ever been renamed.

"We welcome the name change at this time, especially in light of the Port's anniversary celebration," Scott said. "With three Lloyd buildings so close together and with very similar names, it was sometimes confusing for people. Now, the location of the Port of

Portland's offices can be readily identified by a building in the Port's name."

Pacific Development also owns the Lloyd Center Tower, 825 N.E. Multnomah Street, and the Lloyd Five Hundred Building, at 500 N.E. Multnomah Street. Scott said that while Pacific

Development's parent company, PacificCorp, is also headquartered in the same building as the Port, the development company's management is very pleased with the building's new name.

"It is more than appropriate that the Port, being a major tenant and co-owner, have its name affixed to this building," Scott added. "We are proud to honor the Port in this way and congratulate it for playing such an important role in Oregon's development for the past century."

In October 1988, the Port entered into a creative real estate transaction that would eventually give it ownership of its Lloyd Guiding Offices. The agreement, between the Port, Pacific Development, and The Koll Company, also helped launch development of the Port's 458-acre Portland International Center, adjacent to Portland International Airport.

During the term of the agreement, the Port saves between \$150,000 and \$250,000 a year an office space rent, with actual savings increasing annually. At contract maturity, the Port will gain condominium ownership of its Northeast Portland offices, lowering its annual office expenses to just the cost of operations.

Another part of the agreement stipulated that the Lloyd Building would be named for the Port of Portland when the Port became owner of its occupied space in 1991. However, Pacific Development's management opted to rename the building now in recognition of the Port's 100th anniversary. The Port has been a Lloyd Building tenant since 1971.

"We've come a long way in the last 100 years," MacNichol said. "Now we have an unmistakable identity in Portland with the Port of Portland Building."

In Oregon approximately 500,000 children attend public and private schools and certified day-care centers. This year approximately 2.9% of these children/parents received exclusion notices, about the same time last year.

Local poets Celebrate Black History Month

The poems of nine local writers, including some of Portland's best known African-Americans, will be showcased beginning next week in major local newspapers and weekly publications. The Poems, which were submitted to U.S. Bank in celebration of Black History Month, represent a variety of viewpoints and perceptions concerning African-American issues.

Nine poems will be featured in five publications under the title, "African American Reflections". They were selected from over 70 submissions requested by U.S. Bank. The poems will run in The Oregonian, The Skanner,

The Portland Observer, Willamette Week, and The Downtowner.

"Celebrating the heritage of African American people enriches the lives of all Americans," said Amber Schmitt, manager of special events for U.S. Bank. "We are proud to be sponsoring this second annual event as part of Black History Month."

Marion Paris-Madison, one of the writers whose poem was selected for publication, describes the program by U.S. Bank as a very exciting opportunity to receive recognition for many local writers. She has been writing since childhood and her poem, entitled

"There Was a Time", was inspired by a Nigerian relative who showed amazing pride and stability in spite of very difficult times in his country. A poem by Ms. Parris was also selected for publication last year when U.S. Bank initiated the program.

More than 70 poems were submitted to a panel of judges who selected the nine representative entries for publication. The poems were chosen based on form, originality, theme and clarity of thought. Twenty-seven of the poems received were from middle and high school students; the rest were from adults.

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Richardson Receives Nomination for Jefferson Award

by Mattie Ann Callier-Spears

In the midst of the hustle and bustle, the crime and violence, the chaos and carnage--there is still hope for the human race through people like James F. Richardson.

The Jefferson award is a prestigious national honor that recognizes individuals, throughout the country, who perform great public service, but largely without recognition. The American Institute for Public Service, Washington, D.C., sponsors the national competition. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Senator Robert Taft are national co-founders; Samuel S. Beard, a former associate of the late Senator Robert Kennedy, is President.

Persons nominated for this coveted award can be paid employees or volunteers, of any age. They can not be and elected official or a well-known individual. The nominee must also be willing to have his/her activities videotaped or broadcast. If the nominee should refuse, they are not eligible.

James F. Richardson was nominated by Mrs. Arleen Wilson, mother of Shannon Wilson, a student at Catlin Gabel High School. Now--the question arises, "How did she come to nominate him and why?" Well, James F. Richardson or Reverend Richardson, is a drill master, in his own right. This soft-spoken, gentle man has a way with young people. He first began working with the drill teams in Tulare, Califor-

nia. In 1972, James F. Richardson, a mental health worker, at that time, wanted to begin a drill team that would promote positive behavior, poise, academic excellence and an ability to follow directions.

Following seven months of discipline and hard work, the 42 member drill team was ready to perform in one of the biggest parades in the nation, the Christmas Parade in Watts, California. The parade was televised in Los Angeles with the Jackson Five singing group serving as judges. Television personality, Redd Foxx, was the grand marshal. James Richardson was asked, "Why an all-girl drill team?" Richardson responded, "A young lady has to have herself together at all times. The girls learn poise and proper behavior through the drill exercises. If you can get the girls together to function as young ladies, then they will get the guys to shape up."

Richardson was a professional drummer and has also served in the Armed Forces. Through his involvement in these areas and after seeing other drill teams, in the general area, he noticed that the young people were greatly interested in becoming involved. In his mind, he began developing routines. Progress was slow, at first, but, "We got started just like the Army," Richardson said. "The girls had to learn how to place one foot in front of the other. Boy! Was that a hassle!"

When Richardson organized the first drill team, in Portland, there were approximately 45 continuous members. He now has approximately 60 girls, ages ranging from 12-18 years. The drill team is a non-profit organization. Mrs. Wilson wrote: "In my opinion, Rev. Richardson is deserving of the Jefferson Award because of the time, energy, effort, support and finance he dedicates to the success of the drill team. The drill team, under his direction, has won first place in the Junior Rose Festival Parade for the past three years. Besides being a minister, he works a full time job mostly 10-12 hours every day--Monday through Friday."

The group not only performs in parades but they also perform in nursing homes, to bring a little sunshine to the elderly. They have also formed a choir so that when they are not drilled they can sing songs of praise, participate on programs throughout the community. The young ladies are in great demand. Just this weekend, they were seen strutting their stuff in the African American Festival parade.

"My goal continues to be that I should have a group of 200 girls. All marching for the Lord." Richardson beams as he shares. "You know, the drill team is an excellent avenue for witnessing. We will begin conducting Youth Witnessing Workshops."

Richardson is a man with avision on a mission, not for himself, but for the Lord.

"Reinvestments in the Community" is a weekly column appearing in API publications throughout the USA.