

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Mayor

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One night my wife went to see Sammy Davis Jr., and she invited him to the Cotton Club. So he came by and he got up on stage and performed with my little four-piece band. Sammy got up and performed, and that was the highlight of the whole seven years that the club ran. He sent lots of people there afterward.

Other celebrities came too — like Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber. And remember Elvis did “Hound Dog”? Well, the person who performed that song before him was Big Mama Thornton. She packed the place out.

There were plenty of Portland groups too. One group out of Portland who made the big time was The Three Little Souls. They later changed their name to Sunday’s Child and appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and the Sammy Davis Jr. Show.

Mel Brown was a 17-year-old drummer when I bought the club in 1963. He went on to be Diana Ross’ drummer — and The Temptations’ and The Four Tops’. Then there were Ronnie Steen, and Billy Larkin and the Delegates, which featured Mel Brown and Hank Sworn. Their key song was called “The Pygmy,” and it sold hundreds and thousands of copies, but they didn’t get that money.

That was the Cotton Club. I sold that club — a nightclub has around a seven- to eight-year run — and I bought Paul’s on the corner of Williams and Russell. I kept that club from 1964 to 1970. Then Emanuel Hospital tore down that whole neighborhood for redevelopment. It’s still empty today. The only thing left is the gold dome that used to be on top of the pharmacy. It’s the only part of that block remaining after 34 years.

The corner of Williams and Russell was the big meeting place because it had everything you wanted right there. It had the pharmacy, a dry cleaner; Sally’s Soul Food restaurant, the Citizens Bar, a pool hall, a clothing store, a Chinese restaurant and a meat market around the corner. On Sunday afternoon it was just busy. Everyone would get out of church and go to eat. It was the spot.

For more about your neighborhood go online to TheSkanner.com

1ST ANNUAL salute to

BLACK HISTORY

PORTLAND, OR

MAKERS

EVENT PORTLAND PRIME RESTAURANT

Monday February 27 • 2012 - 6:30pm

THE FOLLOWING will be SALUTED & HONORED:

1. W.G. Hardy - Senior Pastor, Highland Christian Center
2. Comm. Loretta Smith - Multnomah County
3. Mel Brown - Legendary Jazz Musician
4. Larry Miller - President of Portland Trail Blazers
5. Bernie Foster - Publisher of Skanner News
6. Avel Gordly - Former Oregon State Senator & Author
7. Margaret Carter - Former Oregon State Senator & Legislator
8. Phil Walden - Posthumous Award
9. Ernest Hartzog - Doctor
10. Vesia Deweese-Loving - Legendary Community Activist

6:30pm: Strolling Buffet & Beverages
 EVENING EMCEE: Robin Givens - actress, Brenda Braxton, KGW - news anchor
 ENTERTAINMENT: Mel Brown Band & Special Performance by SEI choir
 TICKETS: \$65.00/person
 for more info & tickets contact Portland Prime & www.ticketsoregon.com



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