Saying Goodbye...


The legendary Jack “The Rapper” Gibson, pioneer African-American music personality, passed away on January 30, 2000. He was a major donor to the AAAMC as well as a member of the National Advisory Board. His influence and impact on me personally and the Archives in general are immeasurable.

When I first met Jack in 1979, I discussed my research in Black popular music and my efforts to document the creators and those legendary figures who promoted and disseminated this tradition. He agreed to my request for an interview and offered his assistance to my endeavors. Jack provided me with an essential entry into the infrastructure of the music industry by introducing me to key players at his Family Affair Recordings. Jack founded this important mutual benefit organization of musicians and industry personnel associated with Black music in 1973, which he hosted annually for the next two decades. Using his well-earned influence, Jack encouraged the understanding of music industry players to open up and make themselves accessible.

As my research began to take root and thrive, my earliest visions for the AAAMC began to evolve. Again, Jack was supportive of this concept, allowing me to spend days over several years in his office in Orlando, Florida, going through files and organizing photographs and other materials. During this process, I discovered two badly deteriorated 7-inch and 45-rpm 78-rpm records of Jack from the 1950s and 1960s that were broken in several places. I convinced Jack to let me take them to Indiana University for restoration. After this, he agreed to leave the originals at the university for safekeeping. I later realized that his then-fledgling Indiana Recordings would be preserved. These materials, along with those contributed by other major people such as Hootie Shoats and Karmen Searcy, were pivotal in helping establish the AAAMC. In subsequent years, Jack added documentary video and radio programs about his life and Black radio in general, selected photographs and “Family Affair” programs, and related memorabilia to his collection.

Jack also contributed to Indiana University in many other ways and served as a role model for students—African-American students in particular. In 1981, he contributed to a scholarship fund for Indiana University students training for careers in telecommunications and the music industry. Jack also contributed to R&B and the AAAMC’s educational mission, giving captivating and widely acclaimed public lectures and classroom presentations beginning in 1981. He gave his first public lecture on the IU campus on February 4, 1999.

The Archives will miss Jack’s advice, encouragement, and guidance. I, along with the Archives’ staff, IU students, and others who came into contact with “The Rapper,” will miss his effervescent personality, unwillingness to be cowed, and genuine humor. Goodbye, Jack. Know that the AAAMC remains committed to the preservation of your memory and legacy.

—Portia K. Mensch
Director


For many of us the word “Motown” evokes images of Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and other well-known stars who rocked the “Motown Sound” upon the airwaves of the world. Likewise, Motown’s founder, Berry Gordy, and his staff of songwriters and producers, Holland-Dohl-Dozier-Holland and others, are well-known heroes of the Motown legacy. Only in recent years has the public begun to take note of Motown’s unsung heroes; those who stood in the shadows of the stars while helping the company make stars and achieve overwhelming success during the mid to late 60s. On January 28, 2000, the world lost one of those unsung heroes: Thomas Bowles, affectionately known as “Dr. Bean,” or just “Beans.”

I met Beans in July 1994, when I began researching the history of Motown in its home city, Detroit, Michigan. A musician and former road manager for Motown, Beans had gained brief mention in various books that I had read. As I began to chart a path of interviews that I would pursue with Motown alumni, Dr. Licks, who is now a member of the AAAMC Advisory Board, suggested that I start with Beans.

I recall the day that I met him at his two-story apartment, a modest dwelling that Beans describes as a “ten-room ghetto apartment.” The place was filled with the range of the remnants that defined his dovetailed life: instruments, audio equipment, sheet music, old photos, new computers, etc. He was a tall,thin man whose name Beans, with a lovely smile and warm personality. From the very beginning of our meeting, Beans was no stranger to me. In his down-to-earth, sincere, gentle, yet direct manner, he talked about his life and Motown’s experiences as if we were long-time acquaintances. Beans didn’t just give information; he told stories, he explained, reflected, remembered, and gave advice using his own life as a model. In the manner of a good social scientist, he drew relationships across musical, economic, social, cultural, and geographic lines. What I thought was going to be an interview about his experiences with Motown turned out to be an engagement with his personality and a lesson for life. What was gained from my conversation with Beans helped shape the approach that I would take from that point on in my research and in my development of a course on Motown at Indiana University.

In the spring semester of 1995, the Motown course was offered at IU, and Beans Bowles appeared one day as guest lecturer. Much like our interview that prior summer in Detroit, Beans covered in his lecture a broad range of subjects, sharing with us his life’s experiences as examples. What I remember most are the words of wisdom that Beans left with us: “The world changes; when it changes, you’ve got to be able to change with it.” He said, referring to adjustments that he made during his lifetime, including ranking computer classes at age 68. You’ve got to do what it takes to get to a point where you can be of value,” he said.

A young Detroit musician credits Beans as being the person who kept him out of jail. “Everybody needs a hero,” Beans says. “To me, Beans is a hero. I’ve got to do what I can have the opportunity to spend time with Beans. I will always remember him and his teachings.

—Charles L. Sykes
AAAMC Acting Director/Research Associate
In the Vault
The William Barlow Collection: Black Radio

To fully sell the history of music in African-American culture in the post-World War II era, we must consider the role of radio, a primary medium that has been an integral part of popular culture and its impact on African-American community life. The William Barlow Collection housed at the AAAMC provides a new resource for students of Black radio and cinema. The black radio collection illuminates the experiences of people such as radio personalities Harry "Chatte Hattie" Looper who became a professor of communications at Gaston College in Dallas, North Carolina; former radio announcer and long-time blues performer B.B. King; and Dororthy Irwin who, in 1965, won the first Black American woman to own a radio station, Ron Davymer (who at one time headed the only Black radio network in the United States), Obasiye Alimiwolfe co-founder of the first African-American public radio station in the United States, and today's widely heard syndicated show Tom Joyner. Of particular note among the preserved resources are some scripts of Richard Burton's radio programs aired in the late 1940s on Destination Freedom, interviews with African-American veterans describe the role of Black-owned radio stations in their daily lives at the time when television was a novelty, and both blues and rhythm & blues music gained in popularity among the majority of African Americans. These interviews contrast the human experiences of Black-owned radio stations with the lives of its listeners, who vary in age, profession, marital situation, and regional location. We are proud to house this resource at the archives of African American Music and Culture, and we look forward to serving patrons interested in the collection.

Over the years, musicians and radio broadcasters have helped to flavor the musical, political, and social life in African-American communities. Materials in the Barlow Collection illuminate experiences of people such as radio personalities Harry "Chatte Hattie" Looper (who became a professor of communications at Gaston College in Dallas, North Carolina; former radio announcer), and long-time blues performer B.B. King; and Dorothy Irwin (who, in 1965, won the first Black American woman to own a radio station), Ron Davymer (who at one time headed the only Black radio network in the United States), Obasiye Alimiwolfe co-founder of the first African-American public radio station in the United States, and today's widely heard syndicated show Tom Joyner. Of particular note among the preserved resources are some scripts of Richard Burton's radio programs aired in the late 1940s on Destination Freedom, interviews with African-American veterans describe the role of Black-owned radio stations in their daily lives at the time when television was a novelty, and both blues and rhythm & blues music gained in popularity among the majority of African Americans. These interviews contrast the human experiences of Black-owned radio stations with the lives of its listeners, who vary in age, profession, marital situation, and regional location. We are proud to house this resource at the archives of African American Music and Culture, and we look forward to serving patrons interested in the collection.

New Initiatives for Studies on Black Radio
Professor Barlow remains involved in the historical study of Black radio, a topic of which he says "the public about Black radio, but also ... collect artifacts on Black radio for the national exhibit." According to Barlow, the AAAMC has been selected as a site for a regional conference.

-Susan Coblentz
Susan Coblentz is completing a Ph.D. in folklore and ethnography with a minor in African-American Studies. She is finishing work on a dissertation about blues in intercultural contexts.

Collection Highlights
Each issue of liner notes includes brief descriptions of selected existing and new collections.

JOHNNY GRIFFITH COLLECTION: More than 600 record albums from the late 1940s through the early 1980s by various artists. Styles range from blues, gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, funk, and disco. The collection features personal recordings, a musical score by Griffith, and a sidetracked performance of Griffith and jazz guitarist Kenny Burrell. Also included is a taped interview with Griffith and his accompanying interview transcript.

THE MILES WHITE COLLECTION: A collection of compact discs, cassette tapes, videos, and books on rap music and hip-hop culture. The collection contains a copy of White's master's thesis, which contains a printed material and video footage of deejays demonstrating turntable techniques. The collection also includes photographs of jazz trumpet Miles Davis, among others.

Donations to the AAAMC 1998–99
The AAAMC would like to thank individuals and corporations for the following donations that were made over the year:

- Blue/Gray--Free subscriptions to Blue magazine
- Jim Reed--Compact discs
- James Shulman (Dance Records)--compact disc
- Miles White--Hip-hop material

The AAAMC thanks Mark W. Garrett and Dr. Bobby L. Jones for their contributions. Thank you for your support.

Work in Progress

AAAMC INSTRUCTIONAL WEB SITES

The AAAMC is involved in the production of educational materials for use in various institutional settings. Our collection of Web sites represents our first venture in this area.

Over the last 15 months, the AAAMC has worked with Indiana University's Teaching and Learning Technologies Lab (TLL) to construct two instructional Web sites on African-American music. These sites will be available for use in interactive workshops that will be sponsored by the Association to educate teachers, high school students, scholars, and international visitors. On IU's well-paid campus, these Web sites are used for events and post-WWII popular music. This particular music provides students and workshop participants who are involved in a vibrant field of study. The AAAMC, while still protecting the valuable and often rare research materials. The multimedia format of the Web site offers interactive audio-visual displays that are often produced and media that are being used.

As a teaching tool it's useful in that you don't have to consult multimedia presentations. You can have the broadest range of musical possibilities, from the most basic to the most complex. You can pull out hundreds of hours of music videos, live performances, and historical recordings. The Web site design incorporates recorded sounds, digitized photos and drawings, interactive question-and-answer sessions, and animated graphics. We've included several audio examples. For example, a recording of a song is being played. You can pull up historical images, interviews, or rare audio recordings. And you can use these resources to enhance your own work. The AAAMC is currently working on a new Web site that surveys the development of African-American music from its African origins throughout the 20th century.

—Susan Gilman, project coordinator
CARRIE MAYFIELD. I think those were probably the primary creative forces within Chicago's rhythm & blues community. Of course I don't want to diminish the importance of voices like Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, and others. But Mayfield moved from becoming just a singer, to becoming a songwriters, to becoming a record-label owner. He was one of the first African-American artists to control his own art, publishing his own music.

On His Research Interests:
"I have recently completed a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, which is a journalism fellowship. I actually never really considered myself a journalist until now. I am just more of a storyteller. I have some projects that I am trying to develop, doing some research on post-World War II African-American society, which is what I focused on at Harvard, and I will continue to try to create programming that addresses that era. In addition, I think that in the latter half of the century, the struggle of African-Americans in post-World War II America fundamentally changed the world. The many social, political movements that spun out of the civil rights movement affected the policies and practices of America, and subsequently, I think, even had an effect globally. So, it was more than just the music that came out of the African-American experience. But the struggle and the sense of idealism are a cornerstone of contemporary African-American politics and contemporary American grassroots organizing. It just crosses all boundaries, sexual, social, cultural. The approach to protest, and approach to enfranchisement, I think that it was a template for the world, and that's why I have this interest in it. I think it's easy and accessible, as a maker of documentaries and television programming. We can use music and popular culture as a prism in which to look at this accessible to a mass audience."

On the AAAMC:
"Other than being a consultant to the AAAMC on an as-needed basis, one of the things that I want the Archives to do is become an institution that can be used in the archival holdings from which it can benefit commercially. I'd like for the AAAMC to amass holdings of home movies and photographs from African-Americans. I'd like for the Archives to be much more proactive in terms of going after movies and saying, let us be the keepers of your historical artifacts, let us be the ones that disseminate this to the public. We will protect the materials, copyright the materials in concert with the owners, and have that material available for broadcast on a variety of different media. And then the Archives can also profit from that. I'd also like for the Archives to create programming for educational purposes.

"I think that the Archives has a potential with its connection with the university, media professionals, music professionals, and television professionals. It has the potential to create displays and educational products that would educate individuals, or tourist groups, or high school and elementary school kids. I am very proud to be a part of it. I'd like to see it become more of a force. I am on the board and I am willing to do whatever the AAAMC requests from me. I am committed to this subject matter."

—Edited by Stephanie Shookeman

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For the 1999-2000 academic year, AAAMC Director Portia L. Maulicky is a Fellow at the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California.

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In Memoriam: