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(VERSION 1.0 REVISED NOVEMBER 1991)

I was born in Detroit and lived on the east side in Black Bottom. I remember going to Duffield school. We lived on Mullett between Elmwood and McDougal and of course, I remember Joe Louis' mother living down the street on McDougal. I remember the two stores, one on the corner, the south east corner. There was another one catty-corner across the street from it. It was on the north west corner. I remember going to those stores. I remember they used to have pickles. There used to be big jars of pickles and they would just reach their hand in there for people who wanted to buy sour pickles. I remember the Carver Theater which was up on Chene which was where we went, I guess it was about Chene and Chestnut.

My family was never rich, we were never poor in the sense of the other people there. I did not even realize this until I was an adult. Everybody practically in our block received something from the Goodfellows and the Goodfellows never brought us a box. This disturbed me, hurt my feelings. I can even remember crying about it. There was a family that lived next door to us on Mullett where there were 8 or 9 children in that family, the Ambrose's. There was one of the Ambrose girls that was my age. We would sit down and we would day dream about things to come and what have you. We were dreaming about what we were going to get for Christmas. I loved dolls. Christmas wasn't Christmas if I didn't receive a doll. I was saying that Santa Claus is going to bring me some kind of doll and she said "Santa Claus is going to bring me a doll. I hope

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I don't have to share it. But in case I do, the Goodfellows will bring me a doll." They had it down pat exactly what was going to be in the Goodfellow package. I kept waiting and the police officers and whoever would bring the Goodfellow baskets kept bringing the baskets and we never got one. I remember even asking one day and they said were you on the list and I said "I don't know but I know everybody got something and we didn't." He told me "Well, ask your mother to call your school." I was out of high school when it dawned on me, it took me this long to figure out why the Goodfellow never brought us anything. I can remember around September or October, we'd be in school in Duffield and they'd say "How many of you in here have a working father?" My hand always went up. Most of the time they said "How many of you in here mother's working?" They didn't give us anything because we didn't need it. It was for those who were in need. How in the heck was I supposed to know this. All I knew was it was like discrimination. We didn't get anything. That was something that always disturbed me. I wondered well why don't they leave me something? but they didn't.

I had to go to Northeastern and I hated Northeastern. Northeastern at that time was very prejudice. I remember having an English Lit teacher there and she sat all of the Black boys on one side of the room, all of the Black girls, in a row. She had four rows. All the Black girls was in one row. All the Black boys was in another row. All the White girls was in one

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row and all the White boys was in another row.

I started going to the Paradise theater when I was about 9 years old. I was fascinated ever since that time with the music, the lights, like my Christmas tree lights and the shiny instruments and the gowns that they wore. We loved to go to the Paradise. I remember someone discovered that you could stand outside the stage door and get autographs. To see these people and to see that they were real human beings that were made of flesh, this was fascinating. I started Fan Clubs Inc. That was the group, there was some teen magazine that I wrote to and that was the first time my name was in print, national print too. They wrote about Fan Clubs Inc. and it was for Count Basie, Buddy Johnson, Billy Eckstein. In fact, I started Billy Eckstein's first fan club. Arthur Prysock, Illinois Jacket, there were about 7 of them. This was my first time of having a brand new idea to offer to the public. Nobody else had done a Fan Club, Inc. so I guess that was why they wrote about me in this national magazine.

I went to Chicago because number 1, I couldn't find a job in Detroit with just a high school education and because I was Black.

Then I came back to Detroit and I got a job at the Gotham hotel. I was the secretary to John White. John White taught me half of everything I know, especially about Black pride. John White paid my tuition for me to go to Lewis Business College. There are a lot of things about him that I should never

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forget. In order to work for the Gotham hotel there were a lot of principles. One was you must belong to the NAACP. Number 2, you had to be a registered voter. John White was a cousin of Coleman Young. He told me some things that I did not understand then. There were a few of them that I got very angry about. One was he told me that integration was going to hurt the Black businessman as much as it was going to help him. Maybe even more. Which I did not understand at that time. I do now understand what he meant because he meant that when the White hotels opened up the Blacks just flocked to it and they have been doing it ever since. Wherever the White live, talking about Southfield, that's exactly where they're going to leave them and they're going to starve to death out there.

I left there for awhile, I had an application in with the city and I went on the road with Rev. Clarence L. Franklin which was by far the most exciting job I ever had. Traveling with Rev. Franklin, he was preaching as an evangelist but they had a complete "show" if you will. The Clara Ward singers and the Bradford Singers and ??? Bryant who came out of his church, a little gospel singer. We traveled all through here and went to Washington D. C. and Baltimore, Louisville, KY. In Louisville KY for instance, as we were checking in, it wasn't a hotel that you stayed in it was like a boarding house. When we were coming in Joe Louis was leaving. He had been a guest there. These are just memories that I have. That was in 1956.

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The reason I can remember that is because I left here in January and I was gone January, February and March. In the meantime I had put my application in and taken my test for a job with the city. The city had called me, well I'm retired now and I can tell a White lie. You weren't supposed to leave the city if you took the test. I was in Miami, FL when my roommate called me and told me I had got a thing from the city and I was supposed to report. I told her to call and tell them a little White lie. Tell them that I was out of town due to a death in the family. So I returned to work for the city on April 26, 1956.

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(EM) What years did you work at the Gotham?

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I worked at the Gotham from 1951-1955. There was something, I guess my love for Paradise Valley came because I was angry. I was angry after having waited all of those years to go to Paradise Valley and the Club Three 6's. I never got a chance to go there because when I got old enough it was gone but there were still things left in the Valley. This is something that people don't really realize. There was plenty left in the Valley. There were things left in the Valley in 1956 and 57 and 58 because when I started to work for the police department in 1967. I started with the city at the DOT-DSR and I stayed there until 1967 from 1956-67. I went to work for the police department in 1967. The 606 was still

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around the corner, the original place so this is why I'm saying there was still something left in the valley. They had started tearing down those places. My sister worked at Detroit General and from 1956 all during that time I would go down in the Valley for one thing or another. I remember where Chester Richie's office was which was on the corner of St. Antionne and Adams. That building was still there because there was a fellow that I knew, a cousin really, who lived in that building.

I've always had a knack for writing and for show business. I would see a play and I would always think I could do it a little better. I had a million stories in my head. I'm currently writing, working on 4 plays. Working on two of them, the other tow I have just written a little bit of. I wrote Paradise Valley Revisited, a play. It was on September 21-23. IT was at Highland Park Community College. We're going to do it again and it basically tells the whole story of the Valley. I wrote 18 songs. I have a tape that I can let you see. The show is about 2 hours long. I took it out to show some people that wanted to buy it and I started showing it and I told them I would just show them excerpts but once you get into it you almost want to see it all together. I used Kim Weston, a fellow named Cody Black, a fellow from my choir at church, ??? Scales, there were no real known people. That's what led me to the reviews and things. I really started doing these in high school. I remember doing my first show at McMichael. We

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were supposed to come up with a project at school and I brought photographs and records and told something. I researched it and remember using Billy Epstein, Count Bassie's band. I found out they were from Kansas City and how they got together. And something from Duke Ellington. I did actually my first review there but before that we were doing something from the Caribbean, doing the Conga in a play. This was at Russell intermediate school. I just had something that I wanted to do and I really didn't feel that I was pretty enough to be a performer or a dancer and I liked telling the stories and writing them out just as well so I said this is what I'll do.

I was afraid to try to do any of it full time which is the reason I'm doing it now. I liked to eat and show business is so shaky that I was afraid to go into it. Now I have a play that I'm so proud of and I'm going to try to finish it this weekend. It's called the Club Man. It's hilarious. I've got 6 women and they are just doing all kind of things. I don't think anybody had ever written about the clubs. You know you go from this organization to that organization and you meet very catty people, very nice people, people with good ideas, people with bad ideas, people who are in there for self-gratification. I'm just putting them together, making a conglomerate of a whole bunch of these people and putting them into these 6 characters. Each one represents 4 or 5 different personalities. This is the first thing that I have attempted

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to do . . .

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(EM) Nobody tells me that kind of controversial stuff. The thing that I've noticed about life is whatever group you enter, you get the same cast of characters, they just have different names and different shapes.

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That's right. It even goes on in your church because you have different organizations in your church and there is usually a power struggle. This is what I was thinking about one day. Like I say, it's going to be fashionable but in a comedic way. People are going to see themselves in it. It will probably be my commercial success. I refuse to write vulgarity. It's like Beauty Shop. People flocked to see Beauty Shop because they saw themselves in it. Don't think they didn't see themselves in it, they did.

He had a love for Black people and he had a direction in which he thought they should go. The Gotham Hotel was known as the finest hotel anywhere in the world, not just in the country, in the world. Mr. White had paintings. I met anybody who was anybody there, including Coleman Young. I met Dr. W.E.B. DuBois there. I met Adam Clayton Powell, a very regular guest. John H. Johnson was from Johnson Publishing, publisher of Ebony and Jet. There was a man who used to come from Arkansas and he had a lot of land, a lot of money. I met Roy Wilkens, Marion Anderson, anybody who was anybody in Detroit.



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Sammy Davis, you name it. They all stayed in the Gotham. Mr. White had beautiful suites. The Errol Garner Suite, the Duke Ellington Suite, the Count Basie Suite. He had gorgeous paintings in there. This guy who was a photographer who made it and just died a few years ago, J. Edward Bailey, he was around the hotel almost daily. It was like a melting pot. It was a place where everybody who was anybody that was Black, that's where they stayed. In the lobby, anybody who was anybody like the John Roxborough, the baseball players: Larry Doby, Luke Easter. All of the early ball players would come up there. I remember one day the game was rained out and because the White players didn't want that much to do with them, here come Larry Doby and Luke Easter and the whole bunch.

I knew about the numbers and I saw them play the numbers. We had honest number men. If you played your number today, number one you had a carbon, you had a copy and they had a copy. They had rules. You couldn't have what they called a short ticket. You had to add it correctly and if you didn't add well, you best ask you pick-up man to add it for you "How much is this ticket worth". They would pay you for it and if it came to \$7 and it went in and your number hit, that afternoon whenever the horses finished which is where they got the numbers from, and you hit your number. It came out at 6:00 and by 8:00 you had your money. It was just as honest as the lottery.