CELEBENIT
with JEANNE PARNELL

Alex Haley

Q — What's happening with Beulah Land?"

Victoria McDonald
Virginia

A — The major protest originates from the League of Black Cinema Arts. In a position paper they termed the drama as "white romanticism that distorts and maligns black history tradition and culture." It charges that the entire six hours is filled with black characters engaged in demeaning practices that range from blatant self-hatred to homosexuality. There are approximately 15 black speaking roles, yet each is supposedly negative and perpetuates the image of the slave as ignorant, oversexed and sloven." And so what else is new?

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Q — Is it true that Nellie Lutcher is back?

Liz Price
Washington, D.C.

A — Nellie Lutcher is not one for change. When she came from Los Angeles for an engagement at the Cookery in Greenwich Village, N.Y., where she appeared, she did not fly. She traveled the way she did when she came East for the first time in 1947 to play at Cafe Society. She took the train. Now she's in New York singing, "Hurry On Down To My House," "Fine Brown Frame" and "He's a Real Gone Guy" — the same songs she made famous in the 1940s.

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Q — What's the story line of the Broadway show "Home?"

Patricia Reynolds
Asheville, N.C.

A — "Home," begins and ends in the South in North Carolina, the birthplace of the author. Only by going home to Cross Roads, N.C., can Cephus Miles, played beautifully by Charles Brown, find himself. For him the city is an out-of-control roller coaster. The play is a love letter to the land, to farming as a way of life. "Home," deals with pastoral peacefulness.

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Q — What's the matter with TV and black personalities?

Iliala Cruz
Brooklyn, N.Y.

A — Janet Langhart is mulling over offers from other TV stations after being fired from ABC's A.M. New York. She said, "I want to be taken out of the kitchen and into the editing room." Melba Tolliver co-anchor of WNBC's newscast is questioning her reassignment to other responsibilities while her co-anchor Pia Lindstrom, Ingrid Bergman's daughter, was asked to stay. John Johnson, another newscaster of WABC News, has also expressed some disappointments over job opportunities. There are not enough black personnel in decision-making positions, that's what's the matter!

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Q — How is Roller Disco doing?

Gila Garnes
Boston

A — Roller skating, which started as a kind of freakish off-shoot of the disco, is rapidly becoming a kind of registered sport. Rinks are opening all over the country, many of them in vacant buildings or warehouses with a minimum of decoration. Besides renting the skates most of the rinks are without liquor licenses; the only extras are coffee or soft drinks. The right thing for girls to wear is shorts, a swimsuit or a minidress, and men skate in leotards, jumpsuits or even business suits. If the craze continues, it's certain to affect fall fashions.

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Q — Despite current record industry cutbacks, why is it that black artists and their music are continuing to be profitable?

LaQuana Jones
Baltimore, Md.

A — Many attribute this success to great acceptance of the music in the general marketplace, proved by the 30 % share of black acts riding high on the charts and crossing over. During 1979, one of the industry's softest periods, eight out of 12 platinum singles were by black artists as were nearly half of the gold singles. One of the most successful companies at this time with black products is RCA.

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Q — Who was fired just days before opening?

Teresa Nelson
Wisconsin

A — The producer, Michael Butler, took one look and the show didn't go on. The leading lady Ruth Cooke, director Glenda Dickerson and choroegrapher Mike Malone were all fired from the $1 million Broadway show "Reggae." The new star is Sheryl Lee Ralph and the new director-choreographer Gui Andrisano.

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Q — Have you read Beverly Johnson's "Guide To A Life Of Beauty?"

Pauline Church
Kentucky

A — I did read it before it was published by Times Books. It involves the total aspect of grooming, diet, health and elimination. Working her health and beauty regime into a daily routine has become a way of life that Beverly soon will share with the world in her book. Once a junk food junkie, she and her husband are both staunch vegetarians, as well as their daughter, Anansa (Beverly's name in the film "Ashanti").

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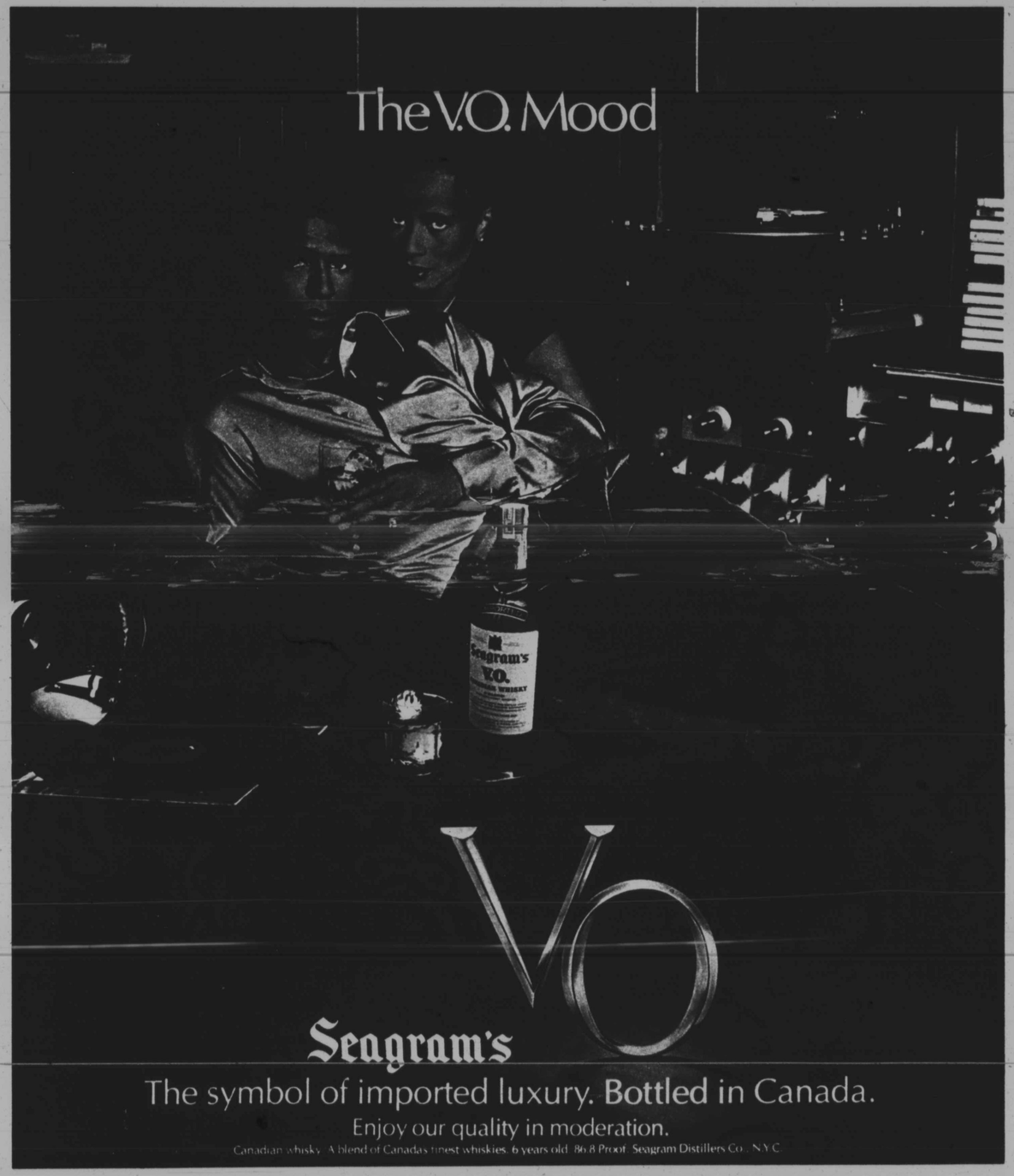
Q — The TV series "Palmerstown USA" looks back into Alex Haley's childhood. How much is factual?

Olga Carloss
Philadelphia

A — "Palmerstown USA" (Haley's middle name is Palmer) is centered on the friendship between nine-year-old boys, one black, the other white. Haley had written a 20-page proposal focusing the series on intimate portrayals of a black blacksmith's family (Haley's great-grandfather was Hemming's smitty) and the white family of a small grocer, modeled on the family of his boyhood chum. Haley's input is primarily to provide the genuineness of the era and region depicted. The scripts are credited to producer Ronald Rubin who collaborated closely with the author which makes the show believable. "There is an unmistakable authenticity," says Rubin, "when Alex draws from the intimate knowledge of his living memory."

Nellie Lutcher as she looked in 1947.

Butch Ford, disco skate instructor

Beverly Johnson

All letters should be addressed to Jeanne Parnell, Dawn Magazine, 628 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201. All questions are welcomed, but while Jeanne cannot provide individual answers, questions of general interest will be used in this column.