Lionel Hampton...

"Bessie Smith was not refused at White hospital"

By Ida M. Peters

Q. Will Lionel Hampton's new book "Hamp" An Autobiography by Lionel Hampton with James Haskins- (1989) change history books on the death of Bessie Smith? Lionel Hampton says his uncle, Richard Morgan, his mother's brother, was Bessie's Smith lover and manager and was driving the car that night when Bessie was killed.

G. W.T.
Chicago, Ill.

A. Your question so aroused my interest, I read Lionel Hampton's new book and found it so fascinating, I ordered a personal copy. On Bessie Smith, Lionel Hampton tells what his uncle Richard told him about Bessie Smith's death. Richard was driving to Memphis from Chicago when he misjudged the speed of a truck. He hit the truck. Bessie whose arm was resting on the window, had a crushed elbow. People stopped to help, called an ambulance. The ambulance took Bessie and Richard to the colored hospital in Clarksdale where Bessie's arm was amputated but she'd lost so much blood she died. John Hammond, says Hamp, was responsible for a story in "Down Beat" that said Bessie was refused at a White hospital which wasn't true. Lionel Hampton says that no reporter ever asked his uncle what really happened and if they did, never printed it. That's just a teaser. Read "Hamp."

Q. Has Natalie Cole married again? How old is her son and how are her hits going?

J. B.
Baltimore, MD.

A. Last fall, Natalie Cole married record producer Andre Fischer, a man she has known for 14 years. She is reported to be a dedicated mother to 11-year-old Robert (Robby) Yancey. She has several Top 10 hits on her 1988 album "Everlasting," including "Pink Cadillac." Her current "Good To Be Back" has hits "Miss You Like Crazy" and "As A Matter of Fact."

Lionel Hampton

Natalie Cole

Q. I am trying to get the Coasters straight. I recently read that Cornelius Gunter, lead vocalist for the Coasters, whose hits included "Charlie Brown," was shot to death last month in an argument with another man in Las Vegas. The article says he is the second Coaster in a shooting in Las Vegas. Daniel (Buster) Wilson was shot and killed in 1980. I say Wilson was not a member of the original Coasters.

C. G. B.
Washington, D.C.

A. The original Coasters were Carl Gardner, Billy Guy, Leon Hughes, Bobby Nunn and Adolph Jacobs formed in 1956. Leon Hughes was replaced by young Jessie then Cornell Gunther. Bobby Nunn was replaced by Will "Dub" Jones in 1968. The Coasters from 1958 - 1960 for "Charlie Brown," "One Kiss Led to Another" was Will "Dub" Jones, Carl Gardner, Cornell Gunther, Billy Guy and Adolph Jacobs. Cornell Gunther was replaced in 1955 by Earl "Speedoo" Carroll, (onetime lead vocal for The Cadillacs).

In the "Solid Gold Years" published in 1977 by Norm N. Nite, The Coasters based in New York were Carl Gardner, Earl Carroll, Ronnie Bright (he replaced Dub Jones the bass voice on all the Coasters hits) in the 1960's and a new member Jimmy Norman. They sing today as The Coasters. Cornell Gunther had another group he traveled with known as Cornell Gunther and The Coasters with him being the only original member.

The murder victim, 46 - year - old Daniel (Buster) Wilson, tagged as a member of The Coasters must have been a member of Cornell Gunther's group and not an original Coaster member. Wilson, last seen in Las Vegas, 1980 was found dumped into Del Puerto Canyon, 3 miles west of Interstate 5 with a gunshot wound in the head and both hands and feet missing. He was missing a year before his body was identified by dental records.

Q. I read the recent interview with Howard Rollins the Baltimore-born co-star of NBC's "In the Heat of the Night." He admitted his drug and alcohol addiction and said he had given up his last drug in December, 1989. Please write him for me to tell him to get help and that he has many, many fans who are praying for him. Perhaps his family will tell him and send this clipping. We love you Howard; we've watched you grow to be a big star. Hang in there and with God's help, you will make it.

Name Withheld
Baltimore, MD.

A. Thanks for your letter and we'll send a copy to him. I think the daily press has been overly critical of Howard's bad habits but you have to expect publicity when you get to be a big star. There are places that can cure Howard of drug and alcohol abuse and I hope his manager and agent are working with him to get help.

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

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