THIS WEEK IN BLACK AMERICA

MILESTONE: Barbara Dortch became the first black woman ever appointed to the Massachusetts Superior Court. Dortch is a founding member of Massachusetts Black Women Attorneys and past president of the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association.

EDUCATION: Black students of Penn State University sponsored a rally this week to speak out on the persistent racist activity taking place on the college campus. Three hundred people turned out to hear speakers, including Penn State Football Coach Joe Paterno condemn activity by a select few students who have harassed blacks in a number of incidents this year.

YOUTH: Joe Clark, the controversial principal portrayed in the movie "Lean On Me" was suspended from his post at East Side High School for an assembly in which four strippers performed before an audience of students. Clark was not at the school when the assembly took place.

SPORTS: Lawrence Taylor, linebacker for the New York Giants, was arrested on drunk driving charges. This latest incident is but one in a long line of substance abuse problems Taylor has had over recent years.

LAW: Comedian Richard Pryor has been ordered by a Los Angeles superior court to pay $4,500 in child support to a former showgirl whose child he fathered out of wedlock. Pryor, who was previously paying the woman $1,000 a month, was ordered to increase payments after Geraldine Mason, mother of the child, complained she was not able to make ends meet under the original agreement.

POLITICS: Judge Alcee L. Hastings' attempt to have impeachment charges dropped against him failed last week as the Senate voted 92 to 1 to reject his motion. The 15 charges were upheld and the stage is set for impeachment proceedings to begin next month.

RELIGION: Reverend James Bevel, former aide to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., announced the formation of a new group to combat the growing tide of religious bigotry throughout the country. The organization is called The National Committee Against Religious Bigotry (NCARBAR).

HEALTH: National Public Radio will begin airing a special week-long series entitled "AIDS and Black America: Breaking the Silence." The show will begin Monday, April 3, and will run at least one report in the series every day.

MOVING UP: Ted Lange, better known as Isaac on the now defunct ABC television show "Love Boat", has been named to a teaching post at the University of Southern California. Lange, who has been busy directing television and stage productions since the show was canceled, will teach a class in cinema and television.

MOVING ON: Thaddeus Garrett, a black minister who at one time served as domestic adviser to then Vice President George Bush, has been offered the post of Deputy Ambassador to The United Nations. It is not certain if Garrett will accept the post or remain as president of his own international consulting firm.

ENTERTAINMENT: The mini-series "The Women of Brewster Place" earned a respectable 24.4 Nielsen rating and a 35 share March 19 — beating out "Star Wars II" and "The Wizard of Oz" as the nation's most watched program. The two-part made for TV movie also dominated the March 20 ratings The movie — which was adapted from the Gloria Naylor novel of the same name about the lives and loves of eight black women — featured Oprah Winfrey and Robin Givens, and had a strong showing 18 major markets.

MUSIC: A Broadway musical based on the 1940's radio program, "Amos and Andy" is expected to begin production this summer. Stephen Silverman, the play's author, won permission to use the characters after a New York Federal Appeals Court ruled the pre-1948 shows were public domain and not owned by CBS Television which hold the rights to the later shows.

DEATH: Civil Rights Activist Rosa Slade Gragg died last Monday in Los Angeles, Calif. She was 86. Gragg first gained notoriety when she was appointed to a national advisory board of the Federal Office of Defense under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Bridges pleads innocent to charges

LOS ANGELES — Actor Todd Bridges pleaded innocent Friday to charges he shot a convicted narcotics dealer eight times in a drug-induced fit inside a rock cocaine house.

Bridges, 23, of Sun Valley, the former child star of the now-cancelled NBC sitcom "Diff'rent Strokes," denied a single count of premeditated attempted murder at his Superior Court arraignment.

If convicted, Bridges could be sentenced to life in state prison.

Judge David Horowitz ordered Bridges to remain in custody in lieu of $2 million bail, but agreed to consider a defense motion April 14 to lower that bail.

Bridges was ordered earlier this week to stand trial on the charge after convicted narcotics dealer Kenneth Clay testified at a preliminary hearing that the actor shot him eight times inside a South Central Los Angeles rock house Feb. 2.

Clay testified that Bridges shot him in a drug-induced fit of violence following a six-week narcotics binge in which the actor was free-basing cocaine every day.

He testified that he and Bridges argued the day of the shooting over Clay's belief that the actor had been stealing electronic equipment from the house, apparently to buy more cocaine.

Bridges then left the house, but returned five minutes later with an accomplice, Harvey Duckett, and shot Clay eight times with a .22-caliber revolver, the victim testified.

"Todd stood over me ... shooting the gun ... I counted six (shots). I thought he was through shooting, then he fired three more rounds," Clay said. Only eight of the shots actually struck him.

Prosecutors said Bridges also slashed Clay's face with a knife.

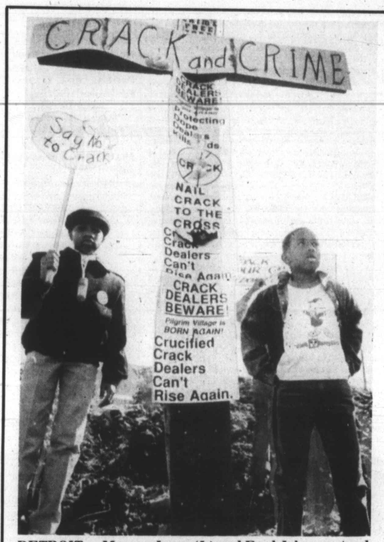
Deputy District Attorney Bill Hodgeman said an exact motive for the attack is unclear. But he said that sometime prior to the shooting, Bridges had threatened to kill Clay because Clay had borrowed Bridges' BMW and gotten it impounded.

Clay has since recovered from his injuries and remains in custody on charges he violated his probation from a drug dealing conviction in Texas.

Duckett pleaded no contest last week to being an accomplice in the shooting.

Bridges, who has had several brushes with the law since 1983, faces a preliminary hearing in a separate case on charges he stole his BMW at gunpoint from a repair man without paying a $500 bill.

Bridges, an actor since the age of six, played Gary Coleman's older brother "Willis" on the NBC series from 1978 to 1986.



DETROIT — Marcus Jones (L) and Fred Johnson stand alongside a 10-foot cross erected by a Detroit church to "crucify crack and crime" during a rally kicking off an Easter weekend of anti-drug and anti-crime rallies.

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The White House says:

No plans to change Rights panel head

WASHINGTON — The White House has no plans to force the resignation of William Barclay Allen, controversial chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Thursday.

Allen, whose brief tenure at the helm of the politically beleaguered panel has been marked by controversy, most recently created a stir by getting personality involved in a tangled custody dispute over a 14-year-old Apache girl at the White Mountain Apache reservation in Arizona.

"We don't anticipate any change in Allen's situation," Fitzwater told reporters.

There have been reports the White House was considering replacing Allen, a professor of government at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif., whose term ends in 1992.

A Reagan administration appointee, Allen has continued that administration's ardent conservative and confrontational policies at the commission.

Arthur Fletcher, a prominent supporter of Bush who served in the Labor Department during the Nixon administration, has been mentioned as a possible replacement for Allen.

Fitzwater confirmed that Fletcher, who also is considered running for mayor of Washington, D.C., is a "leading contender" to be a member of the panel, "if he wants it at that point."

But Fitzwater denied the reports the White House intended to replace Allen with Fletcher, noting the first opening on the commission will be in November and does not involve Allen's position.

In the recent Allen incident, the commission chairman was arrested at gunpoint on the White Mountain reservation Feb. 7 after he intervened in an emotional custody dispute between the adoptive parents and natural mother of the young woman, Lalite Altaha, without the permission of her parents, her school, the court or tribal officials.

The incident has thrown the already fractious eight-member commission into even further disarray.

The commission called on Allen to apologize to all those involved in the incident and said the chairman's actions "were in no way approved or mandated by the commission."

On Thursday, **The New York Times** quoted Allen as saying he would not voluntarily resign, saying, "I can't imagine why I would do a silly thing like that."

Allen, saying he has sought a White House meeting since Bush's election last November, also told the **Times**, "I'm not a man you should play games with."

Friday Plus
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