

The whole picture

Photographer had special eye at right moments

BY VALERIE RUSS

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PHILADELPHIA photographer Jack T. Franklin told the story of the 1963 March on Washington from almost every angle.

There are photos of city political heavyweights, lawyers Cecil B. Moore and Charles Bowser, riding on a train to the march.

And there are photos of ordinary Philadelphians, black and white, sitting next to each other on a train seat.

One shows two women seated with a young girl, about 4 or 5 years old. The girl's face is not smiling, not fearful, but full of anticipation.

Does she understand she is part of history?

Franklin's photos in Washington show he had the ability to be almost everywhere.

There is a photo of a young Harry Belafonte and a graying Jackie Robinson. He also captured Sidney Poitier and Sammy Davis Jr.

He shot photos looking out from the Lincoln Memorial to the crowd, from the crowd facing the memorial, of the crowd walking toward the memorial, as well as aerial views.

Known for wearing a signature black beret and capturing the life of black Philadelphia for 60 years, Franklin died in 2009, at age 87.

His photos and negatives are part of the collections of the African American Museum in Philadelphia, which received grants to digitize some of the images.

Of 500,000 images in the collection, about 1,000 are online, said Leslie Guy, the museum's director of curatorial services.



PHOTOS: JACK T. FRANKLIN COLLECTION COURTESY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA
Marchers traveled from Philly to Washington, D.C., the morning of Aug. 28, 1963, on 65 buses.



Civil-rights activist Sam Evans (standing center) chats with Cecil B. Moore (seated) during the train ride to the 1963 March on Washington.

"It is an amazing resource," Guy told the *Daily News* yesterday. "Not only do we have an extensive resource in documented historic events, such as the civil-rights movement, but we have some really interesting documentation of everyday life, which is equally of value. It's also showing how people lived."

His work appeared in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, *Scoop USA*, *Jet* and *Ebony*, as well as in the *Daily News*, the *Inquirer* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Born in North Philadelphia in 1922, he picked up photography at age 10 when his sister brought back a camera from the Chicago World's Fair.

Franklin was a combat photographer for the United States Army during World War II and later studied photography at the U.S. Army Signal Corps Photographic Center in Astoria, N.Y.

But he had a hard time getting hired as a full-time photographer, said Sonny Driver, publisher in *Scoop USA*. So Driver encouraged Franklin to take photos of celebrities who came to perform at the Uptown Theater and other venues for *Scoop*, an entertainment paper launched in 1960.

"When they [newspapers] saw the quality of his work that he was taking around the city of different parties and activities, everybody started knocking on his door," Driver said.

The African American Museum showed Franklin's work in a 1992 exhibit: "Protest and Participation: Freedom Ain't Free."

In an *Inquirer* interview at the time, Franklin said:

"Back then, I didn't think these photos were going to be used. I wondered why I knocked myself out when the media, nobody seemed interested. I did freelance work and tried to sell them. But half the time, I ended up with them. . . . Now, everybody's interested. This is history."

To view the collection online, go to bit.ly/16MXzQQ and search "Franklin."

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WDAS radio rose above all to tell of history

BY WENDY RUDERMAN

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THE SUN HAD yet to rise on that warm 1963 morning. In the darkness, dozens of amped-up WDAS staffers and radio listeners converged at the station's Fairmount Park headquarters. One by one, they boarded buses — 13 in all — bound for Washington, and destined for the pages of history.

The Philadelphia contingent, organized by the city's premier black radio station, was singular in size and scope. No other area radio station rivaled the amount of resources dedicated by WDAS in its coverage of the March on Washington 50 years ago today, according to WDAS historian Wynne Alexander.

"This was an immense effort," Alexander said. "We told our listeners, 'If you want to go, we've got a seat for you. Come with us.'"

"We did wall-to-wall phone-in coverage of the march," she said.

Charlie Geter, then a 32-year-old WDAS disc jockey whose on-air name was "Bonnie Prince Charlie," was part of the pioneering team coverage. During a recent phone interview from his home in Ewing, N.J., Geter vividly recalled that "grand, hot day."

"Everyone was sweating but they were happy because they were seeing history being made in the United States," Geter

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said. "I was wearing a light-blue summer suit that really had me stand out."

Upon arriving in Washington, Geter said, the first thing he noticed was the all-black military police directing traffic with machine-like precision. He perhaps best summarized the scene in Charles Euchner's book *Nobody Turn Me Around*: "When you have black people who serve as special units, they take an extra pride," he said. "Those black police were sharp. Boots were spit-shined, helmet liners were chrome-plated. . . . That really made my heart pound, made my eyes well up."

Geter made his way to the press tents set up on the National Mall's grassy field. There, reporters had access to phone banks for calling in live reports, he said.

"The telephones were quite busy, and whenever one was available, you would grab it to report something," Geter said.

Geter, along with tenacious WDAS newsman Jim Klash and radio personality Georgie Woods, called in dispatches throughout the day for the station's more than 650,000 listeners, according to Geter and Alexander, curator of the website WDASHistory.org.

Back at the station, Joe Rainey, WDAS news director and host of the popular and groundbreaking talk show "The Listening Post," and Louise Williams, known on the airwaves as "The Gospel Queen," would break into news and music programming with,



From left: "Bonnie Prince Charlie" Geter, Dottie Scott, Georgie Woods, Jim Klash and Chet Carmichael of WDAS during the 1963 March on Washington. Geter, Woods and Klash called in dispatches throughout the day.

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"This was an immense effort. We told our listeners, 'If you want to go, we've got a seat for you. Come with us.'"

— WYNNE ALEXANDER,
 WDAS historian

"And now this special report from the March on Washington . . ." Or, "Now we take you to Washington, D.C. — live . . ."

"They would interrupt whatever they were doing to put those feeds on the air," Geter said, his voice, at age 82, still silky and radio-made.

In those days, WDAS, like so many other radio stations, did not have the finances or technology to carry a live, continuous feed — across three states — of the Mall speeches, including the fa-

mous words spoken by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Still, the coverage embodied the station's bold commitment to civil rights, which was fostered largely by Bob Klein, the station's lanky and socially conscious general manager, Alexander said.

Alexander pointed out that WDAS was revered — and in some circles, reviled — for its groundbreaking interviews with black leaders, including Malcolm X, in an era of segregation, rampant racism and fearmongering

by some of the nation's top government officials.

"Those times were very different and bad. When you look at the physical dangers, the not friendly government, the unfriendly socio-political realities," she said, "the vision and necessary bravery of Bob Klein is something that most people are no longer familiar with."

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