

College to recognize Piedmont native

Resident says honor long overdue for 'Giant of Jazz'

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PIEDMONT — Piedmont resident and local history buff the Rev. David Coleman hopes a celebration planned Monday in honor of a hometown boy who grew up to become a giant in the world of jazz will only be the beginning of some long-overdue recognition for the world-renowned musician, composer and arranger.

Don Redman, a Piedmont native who became known as the "Little Giant of Jazz" in the 1930s, will be remembered Monday with a special program and exhibit at the John Brown Museum in Harpers Ferry.

Coleman, who only met the talented musician once, said few people living in Piedmont today even know anything about the man who made such a large impact on jazz.

"I remember seeing him once; I was about 8," Coleman said. "I didn't know much about him, but he was dressed like people from the city; he had his spats on and was very well-dressed."

As Coleman grew up and became interested in local history, he began learning more about the son of Daniel and Henrietta Walker Redman, who was considered a child prodigy and was play-

ing trumpet for local audiences at the age of 3.

Not content to stop at learning to play just one instrument, Redman became proficient with a number of instruments. His favorite was the saxophone.

As a student at Howard High School in Piedmont, Redman excelled in music and sports. After graduating from Howard at the age of 15, he decided to continue to pursue his love of music and enrolled in Storer College near Harpers Ferry, where he earned a degree in music in 1920.

From then on, there was no stopping the young musician from Piedmont.

He began his professional career with Billy Paiges' Broadway Syncopators from Pittsburgh, and went on to form several bands of his own over the years, playing to packed houses in New York, Detroit and other venues.

Redman was a composer as well as a musician, and wrote and recorded such familiar jazz pieces as "Cherry," "How'm I Doin'," and "I Heard."

After World War II, he was the first American band leader to take his group overseas, and when they returned, he

began freelancing for CBS and other recording firms, as well as arranging for Pearl Bailey, Louis Bellson, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Lunceford and the Dorsey Brothers, among others.

Redman died in 1964 in New York, after falling ill during a trip to Paris.

Monday, his life and accomplishments will be featured in a special program, "Prepared for Success: A Shining Star of Storer College."

An exhibit of memorabilia from Redman's life and career will be on display at the museum through the end of February.

Coleman, who plans to attend Monday's observance, also hopes to eventually honor Redman in his hometown.

"I hope to get some kind of a marker to stand in the yard of his home place," Coleman said, gesturing toward a property just up the street from his own Erin Street home where Redman's house once stood.

"I'd also like to put a sign on the bridge between Westernport and Piedmont, and on the road from Keyser, saying Piedmont is the home of Don Redman."

For more information on Monday's program, call the Harpers Ferry Visitors Center at (304) 535-6298.

