

Entertainment

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

Plans On Front Burner To Thwart Desegregation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Cloakroom conversation here is getting louder about a new onslaught against school desegregation. Talk is that the Education Dept. has on its front burner a "Voucher Program" designed to allow parents to send their kids to the edifice of their choice.

However the belief is that when the plan strikes the fan it will create quite a stir. That is expected to keep any seeking re-election law person from letting the proposal out of the committee gate . . . Flipping the coin the House Subcommittee on Post Secondary Education approved a \$110 million development fund for historically accredited Afro-

American colleges. While in a generous frame of voting, the panel decided to change the Student Guaranteed Loan Program and increase the amount your child can borrow while being allowed to consolidate loan payments his good pal, Cong'man Charles Rangel, to escort his lovely, fashioned mag. dressed spouse, Alma Rangel, to Pepsi's posh party within the historic confines of the Smithsonian . . .

H'wood to see and hear the words of Jane Fonda when

she presented the '85 Integrity Award to Bishop Desmond Tutu. Mayor Tom Bradley and Dr. Helen Caldicott were also honored during the ceremony at the swank Bev Hilton . . . That Malibu blaze you eyed on your telly cost the producer of "The A-Team" plenty and had the cast scampering for dear life, and there was nothing B.A., "Mr. T." could do about it. Those brush burnings in Calif. "bees that way." . . . STAY LOOSE . . . Billy Rowe is a syndicated columnist.

Had 21,000 hairdos in 23 years

Patti LaBelle Gets Ready To Stir Up Act For Tour

NEW YORK — Ooooooh, la, la, it's vintage LaBelle.

"It's a wig, honey," whispers Patti LaBelle in a voice as sexy as crumpled satin sheets while her creamy pink fingernails run through the mass of limousine-black hair. "I figured hair was the one thing I wasn't going to worry about today."

Hair, after all, isn't just hair. It's part of — a great big part of — the entire LaBelle act. Hair, clothes and a few tons of talent.

"I've probably had 21,000 hairdos in 23 years," says LaBelle, who sports another couple of dos on her first variety special, *The Patti LaBelle Show*, airing Thursday on NBC, 10 p.m. EST/PST.

"I don't know why it took so long, but I still say when I act like I'm going Hollywood, just kick me in the butt," laughs the 41-year-old diva of rock 'n roll soul.

Patricia Louise Edwards grew up in Philadelphia, and that's where she still lives with her husband of 15 years, a 12-year-old son, and two boys she adopted after their parents were kill

In West Philly, she got her start in the Beulah Baptist Church Choir. But she began belting it out for legit in late 1961, when she formed the Bluebells with Cindy Birdsong, Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash.

Last year, after almost a quarter century, the LaBelle rush heated up. There was the movie debut as a torch singer in *A Soldier's Story*, two hit singles — *New Attitude* and *Stir It Up* — from the *Beverly Hills Cop* sound track, and then there was her grab-the-mike-and-don't-stop-singing-till-they're-going-crazy-in-the-aisles performances on the *Motown Returns to the Apollo* special and at Live Aid.

Onstage, she's a spitfire — parading, stampeding, rolling around in bugle beads, plunging necklines and stiletto heels.

"I loooooove shoes," she says, adding that she has two rooms in Philadelphia lined with nearly 3,000 pairs.

Offstage, she's as polite

and soft-spoken as a nun, but as naturally seductive as a kitten with a spool of thread.

She likes Prince, Cyndi Lauper and Bruce Springsteen, but forget Madonna.

"Give me a bucket," she says. "She's not talented, she's lucky. At the American Music Awards she almost knocked me down — and she did step on my foot — trying to get to somebody more important. I don't care if she didn't know who I was. She was just rude. As big and black as I am, she



Patti LaBelle

couldn't have missed me."

LaBelle, a Gemini, admits she can be tough.

"And sometimes I can't stand myself. There's another person — Priscilla — inside me, and that dame is a real witch. With a capital B," says LaBelle. "But that's what the audiences want, and I'm going to give 'em a 110 percent."

She doesn't exercise ("Child, I don't do nothing to keep this body in shape except what I do onstage") and went on a version of Dick Gregory's liquid diet to lose 25 pounds for Thursday's special.

She keeps her voice in shape by standing in a hot shower for at least an hour after every performance and drinking a brew of tea, honey and spirit of peppermint or a concoction of warm water and cayenne pepper.

"That really opens up your throat," she says.

By Richard David Story
USA TODAY



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PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED - SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

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