

Brown's life emblematical of triumphing over trials

Catisha Marsh
Sentinel-Voice

His name was Trigger Man.

Les Brown remembers him because, more so than any of the thousands of people he's addressed in his motivational talks, tapes, books and seminars, Trigger Man affirmed the power Brown has.

"He'd been laid off and was planning to take his life," said Brown, who once hosted a television show bearing his name. "He came to the seminar to drop a friend off and ended up hanging around. Some time later, I received a letter from him thanking me for saving his life."

Brown, in town for last month's National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners' Fall Conference, took time

out to speak to the Sentinel-Voice and revealed what's in store for the future and how he's coping with cancer.

Brown's is a rags-to-riches story. He was born in an abandoned building in Miami. His biological mother was a married woman who became pregnant with Brown and his twin brother, Wes, while her husband was overseas in the military.

She gave the boys to Mamie Brown, who reared them as her own.

Brown was a sub-par student who was labeled a slow learner because of his inattentiveness and restlessness. His formal education restricted to high school, Brown found he was an able communicator.

He honed his skills as a morning radio disc jockey and



LES BROWN

has since become one of the nation's most sought-after speakers.

"I never dreamed I'd be doing what I do today, making the money that I make now, when I first started in radio," Brown said. He said he was "determined not to die poor and to make a contribution."

Brown said he changed his fortune by reading about successful people and telling himself, "If they can do it, I can."

In 1986, he formed Les Brown Unlimited, Inc. The company specialized in motivational tapes and materials, workshops and offered a personal and professional development program. He's won several awards including being named one of Toastmasters International's America's top five speakers for 1992, winning the Council of Peers Award of Excellence, the National Speakers Association's highest honor.

At 53, Brown is preparing for a return to radio. He will be hosting a national call-in show. He also plans to build a web site and enter television

again. For more than a year, Brown has been battling prostate cancer. When it was first diagnosed in April 1997, doctors said he was "terminally ill" and that chemotherapy could no longer help him.

Through changes in diet and exercise, he reduced the levels of cancerous cells in his body and says that his health is now "very good and improving."

"The doctors may determine the diagnosis, but God determines the prognosis," he said.

Brown has poured \$150,000 into cancer research and wants to become a leader in the fight against cancer and an inspiration by spreading the message that cancer is no longer a "death

sentence". Brown's love life hasn't been immune from challenge either. He recently divorced famed singer Gladys Knight. He attributes their split to "irreconcilable differences," but still maintains a friendly relationship with her.

As for all the hard times, he smiles.

"I'm very blessed. We can go through them (the hard times) or we can grow through them," he said. "I've chosen to grow through them and as a result, they've made me stronger."

So what ever happened to Trigger Man? "He now works with me as a consultant — helping people start new careers. His seminar is called "Options." If there's anything Brown knows about, it's creating options.

Sparks man sentenced for painting swastikas on home

SPARKS (AP) — A 21-year-old man who painted and carved swastikas on a black woman's home here has been sentenced to four days in jail and 96 hours of community service.

Sparks Municipal Judge Larry Sage handed down the sentence last week to Jason Kamerer, a self-proclaimed white supremacist who pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor destruction of property charge in a plea bargain.

In return for his plea, city prosecutors dismissed another destruction of property charge and a misdemeanor stalking charge against him.

Kamerer painted a swastika above the doorway of the woman's home and

carved a swastika on the door last summer, police said.

Kamerer and the woman were neighbors at the time, but the victim has since moved out of state.

Prosecutors say they were

limited in their ability to charge Kamerer with a more serious crime because they were unable to find the woman. Noting Kamerer had no prior criminal record, Sage imposed a suspended jail

sentence of 180 days.

But the judge also ordered Kamerer to spend 30 days on house arrest, to submit a written apology to the victim and to pay \$100 in attorney fees.

Timothy Randolph, chief city prosecutor, said the sentence shows the city

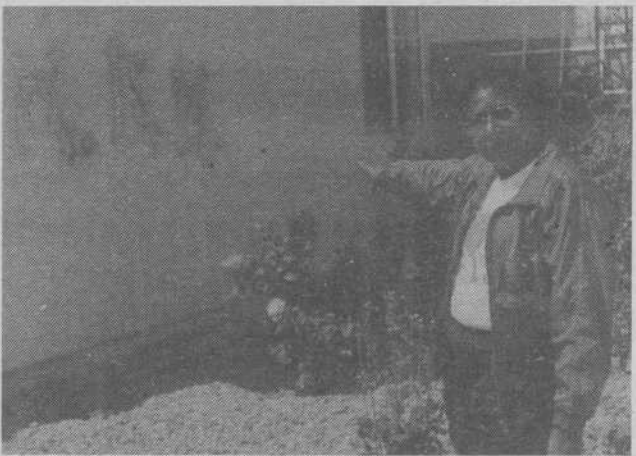
doesn't tolerate such crimes.

"I'm always concerned about that kind of thing — I don't like racists," he said. "I think terrorists should be punished as such."

This was the latest in a series of crimes involving white supremacists in the Reno area. In 1994, gay

medical-office manager William Metz was stabbed to death in Reno by self-proclaimed white supremacist Justin Slotto.

And in 1988, Tony Montgomery, 27, was fatally shot in Reno by three teenage white supremacists only because he was black.



LV Sentinel-Voice file photo

Margaret Brooks shows a similar problem with a neighbor that had KKK exhibited on his wall.

Prosecutor in dragging death: Fair trial is possible in Houston

By Terri Langford

HOUSTON (AP) — A prosecutor about to try the first of three white men accused of dragging a black Jasper man to death says he believes 12 impartial jurors can be found without moving the case.

A week ago, the lawyer for John William King asked state District Judge Bob Golden to consider moving his client's Jan. 25 trial to another Texas city because of pretrial publicity.

King and two other men are charged in the gruesome June 6 attack on James Byrd Jr. Byrd was beaten, chained to a pickup and dragged to his death along a rural road near Jasper. Prosecutors believe the three killed the 49-year-old because he was

black. In his response to the defendant's motion, Jasper County District Attorney Guy James Gray Jr. said he believed the trial can take place in Jasper.

"I think we'd like to pick a jury here if we can," Gray said. "With the amount of publicity all over the state, it's going to be difficult but no more difficult here than somewhere else."

The jury pool for King's trial is to be drawn chiefly from five separate Jasper County towns: Brookeland, Jasper, Kirbyville, Buna and Evadale.

"Potential jurors in Jasper County have heard about the same things as potential jurors anywhere else in the state," Jasper County Judge Harold Kennedy said in an affidavit

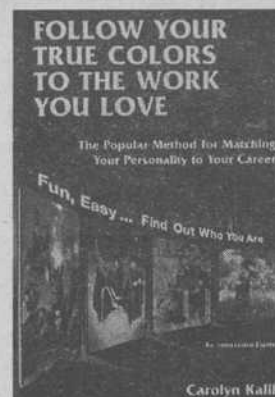
supporting James' plea to keep the trial from moving. "In my opinion, there is not such a degree of bias and prejudice against the defendant to preclude the selection of a fair jury in this county."

A hearing on the change of venue request as well as a motion to severely restrict media coverage is scheduled for next Tuesday. Trial dates for 23-year-old Shawn Berry of Jasper and 31-year-old Russell Brewer of Sulphur Springs have not been set.

King, 24, has disputed reports that Byrd's blood turned up on the shoes of all three suspects.

Authorities have stated in court filings they found the victim's blood on the shoes of all three defendants.

Events at Borders on Rainbow



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Carolyn Kalil, author
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Discussion / Book Signing
(Carolyn Kalil has counseled over 200,000 people along the career path)

Sunday, Dec. 20 at 2 p.m.

Kwanzaa Celebration
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Poetry by L.A.'s Shari Randolph (Raw)



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