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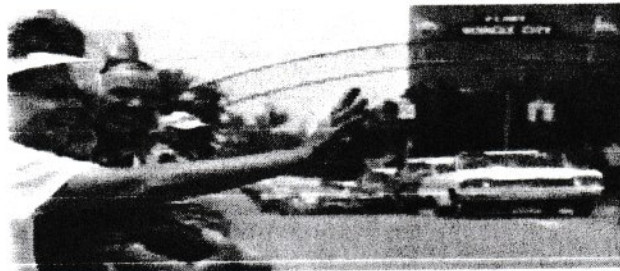
Flint, has more than its share of great players

NEIGHBORHOODS FEBRUARY 18, 2010 BY: WILLIAM CROCKERHAM

After viewing the movie, Flint Star "The Motion Picture" it spawned additional questions for this viewer. Why did Marcus Davenport's great work uncover the fact that Flint, Michigan, a small city in the middle of the state, has produced more elite players, especially in the sport of basketball, than say Grand Rapids, which is larger, or even Detroit, which is a lot larger?

That was one of the questions that many interviewed in the film talked about. Some said it was because there were no other opportunities for success to the mostly black players who come out of the "Vehicle City." But is that true? It is true that there are a lot fewer General Motors jobs in Flint these days. Also there are a lot fewer GM jobs anywhere, these days. But that doesn't deal with the fact that, most of the great players who have come out of the city have done so, back in the decades preceding the major decline in jobs here. Plus most of them, achieved through educational opportunities. Today, Flint has over 20,000 college students attending school here.

One player attributed the prowess of Flint-Stones to some great desire to succeed because of the great players who have preceded them. That may be true, but the obvious reason is esoteric. Could it have to do with the fact that basketball is easier to improve at and because for many years GM was the major if not only large employer in the city.



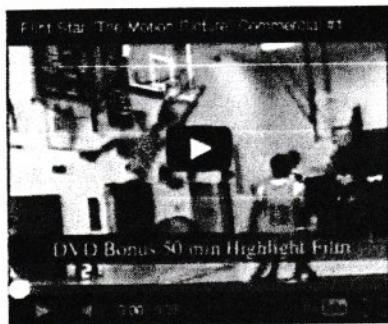
How this developed is interesting to look back at. Charles Stewart Mott, the great Philanthropist, started the Mott Foundation, here in Flint. He also made it possible for three of the four colleges or universities to get started in here. See the article: [Flint has become University Town](#) (http://flint.has.became.University.Town) by the author. Along with Frank J. Menley, an educator, they started the "Community School Program."

What this did was make school gyms available for the aspiring athlete to have a place to develop his game. Besides inside play, there were the obvious blacktop basketball courts outside at every school. One other factor weighs heavily on this matter, having to do with the fact that a basketball and a rim, was all a kid needed to be on his way to a career in hoops. There were no heavy equipment outlay or other guys to play with needed. Besides that, most every home that had a garage usually had a basketball rim and backboard attached to it. Whereas now, at night you hear gunshots; back then in the 60s thru the 90s you usually heard basketball's hitting the blacktop at night.

The film's contention that there were no other way to succeed in Flint is a misnomer. One of the major avenues for the aspiring athlete was through high school and junior college. Mott Community College which got its start due to a land gift from Charles Stewart Mott, has been a phenom in JC level of collegiate hoops. Success at that level, often meant the aspiring hoopster could transfer to a four year college or university. Grade school level, the athlete only had two things to do while in school—study and remain eligible and play hoops. Schools provided the athlete with city wide talent, Saginaw Valley talent, and later with Statewide talent. Plus some but not all of the successful talent who made it big at the next two levels, guys like Muteen Cleaves and Morris Peterson, and Charlie Bell came back to give the youths they left at home.

The answer to the question as to why Flint hoopsters are so good is elusive. Why does little Flint, Michigan, with a shrinking population, and fewer residents, and few G.M. jobs and plants, still provide some of the most awesome dunks, to be seen anywhere? The answer is, keep on watching and for the price of admission to the game, you'll have the Flint-Stone answer. And that is the best answer anyone can dunk you.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM7112u2p0



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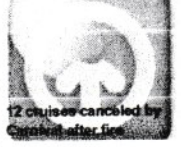
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