

# Curbstone Jockey Figure Based On Statue Of Real Negro Hero Of Revolutionary War

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WASHINGTON — In one of her monologues, comedienne Jackie "Moms" Mabley says that Negroes should stop complaining when they see, at the driveway of a white suburban home, the statue of a small black boy in a jockey outfit, reminiscent of the Southern plantation hitching post. "Moms" says that instead of complaining, Negroes should earn the money to buy such homes and then they could have such a statue and paint the face white.

Baltimore's Negro historian, Earl Koger, would not agree to this. To paint over the black face would, in his view complete the obscurity of the figure's origin. For, he says, that little black boy if truth were known, would not be a symbol of shame — a perpetuation of the servile image — it would be a symbol of racial pride.

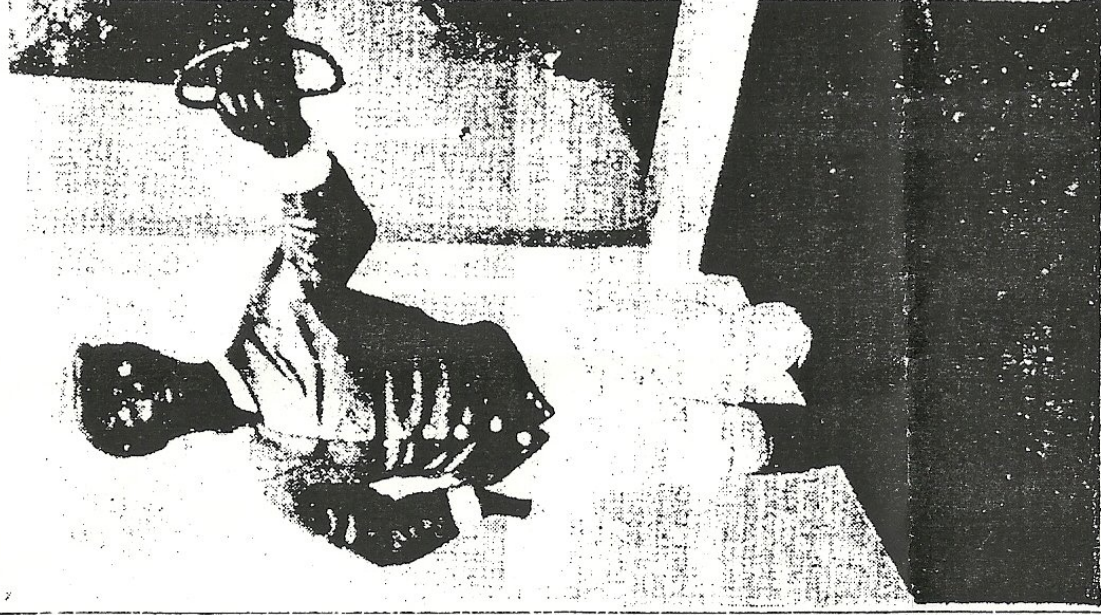
Earl Koger is a jolly man. His open manner invites friendship and amiable discussion. If discord arises, he is willing to yield in order to keep the peace — except in one area, the race, because Koger is a "race man" (in the parlance of a generation and more ago, a "race man" was a black man who is proud of his race, aware of its history, hopeful of its future and constantly concerned with its welfare).

As a race man, Koger is aware of the jockey statue's origins. It is a monument to black heroism in the war to make this country a nation. **Statue Traced**

Koger says the inspiration for this statue's prototype was a 12-year-old black boy named (or nicknamed) Jocko who had followed his father Tom Graves when he became one of the 60-or-so Negroes who volunteered for the Continental Army. When the Army's ranks were thinned by casualties, captures and desertion, Washington needed a victory to restore morale and gain military advantage. Jocko and his father were among those who still remained.

Washington determined that he would, on the night of Dec. 24, 1776, cross the Delaware River and take the British and Hessian camp at Trenton, N.J., by surprise. In order to do so, he had to arrange for ferrying his Army of 2,400 across. He had also to arrange for his officers to be mounted so that they could communicate with the troops who were to land at three different points.

Someone had to cross the river ahead of the main force, (find horses, and be waiting on the other side with them. Jocko was among the handful of volunteers for this task.



**JOCKEY STATUE is monument to black heroism in Revolutionary War, says historian Earl Koger, and has origin at Mt. Vernon where George Washington installed it.**

Koger says that when Washington alighted from his Delaware River passage, he saw the horses tied to what he thought was a stump. Closer inspection showed that the reins were firmly fixed to the hand of Jocko, who had frozen to death during the bitter cold on the night's vigil.

**Men Inspired**  
Washington, the accounts go, related the story of Jocko's sacrifice to his officers and they were inspired to overcome the British garrison. After the war, when he was president, one of Washington's first acts was to have a statue of this brave black boy installed at Mount Vernon. As the statue was copied and the dress modernized, the story of its origin gradually faded, kept alive only by oral, generation-to-generation accounts among Negroes.

Earl Koger first heard the legend from his mother when he was 10, the family moved to Baltimore. After graduation from Douglas High School he entered West Virginia State College, selling books on Negro history to help pay his expenses. He was an editor of both his high school and college newspapers and started a weekly paper in Charleston, W.Va., when he got out of college.

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## Expenses Paid

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Negro history and combed library shelves to find fragments to help fill the gaps.

Married and back in Baltimore, he became an agent for the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Co., one of the first such enterprises started by blacks. In 1944, he became the first Negro in Maryland to qualify as an insurance broker. With a partner, he still operates the agency he founded then.

During all these changes, his concern has always been larger than his own personal interests. He was still a "race man" and in dozens of ways sought to improve the lot of the black man. He has organized community groups to strengthen the black voice, he has (as the father of five children) been involved with PTAs, the Boy Scouts and other service organizations; he has been a church trustee; he was the first Negro named to a Baltimore grand jury.

## Books Published

In 1969, he copyrighted two books for young children: Earl Koger's Mother Goose, a book of verses referring to Negro notables, and history of the Black Man, an illustrated book of biographies and essays on various aspects of American and African Negro history.

Despite his interest in all the Negro history he can find, Koger has remained somewhat attached to the Jocko Graves story. In 1953, he had "the Legend of Jocko" printed in pamphlet form. Whenever he spotted one of the little statues in front of a Baltimore area home, he would make note of the address and mail a copy of the legend to the occupants.

No musician his experience being limited to having played the bass drum in his college band, Earl Koger is now (with a great deal of help) converting the Jocko legend into an operetta.

When challenged as to the authenticity of his research and reconstruction of the Jocko story, Koger says: "If Americans can believe the I cannot tell a lie" legend concerning Washington and the one about Lincoln walking five miles to return a penny or two, they should be able to believe in Jocko, too.