

Snowplow kings



Rodeo winners: Local AFSCME president Don Gould congratulates Paul Smith (left) and Bob Hope (right) on winning the annual "Snow Plow Rodeo" held recently in Southfield. Hope, a 21-year veteran of the Farmington public works department, and Smith, who has been with the department seven years, won first place over 45 teams from other metro Detroit communities. Both will have an opportunity to take part in advanced competition later this year.

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ried her first husband and moved to the Detroit area.

A first obsession

Getting on an audition with Motown became almost an obsession, said Nero. "I'd hang around and watch people go in and out, like the Temptations and Little Stevie Wonder. The audition didn't happen. I was like the wallpaper there. But what an exciting place to be the wallpaper."

In the meantime, she went on with her life and had two children.

"In 1965 I started hearing about a talent contest at the Fox Theater sponsored by WCHL. First prize was a one-year recording contract with Motown. Berry Gordy was a judge. I decided I had to get into that contest."

With thousands of entries there was a matroning down process before the finals at the Fox. "In every round of competition I sang 'Everybody Loves a Lover.' I never thought I had a chance, but I kept winning. When I won the contest, I was in a complete daze."

During the first year at Motown, Nero made one record, "Keep on Loving Me" and the flip side,

"Fight Fire With Fire." "It did pretty well locally," she said, "but they didn't push it nationally. I made a few appearances."

"Motown had an option to renew my contract and they exercised that. I waited around and went on with my life at the same time. Then I made the decision to ask out of my contract. They wanted me to stay, they said, because they were beginning to get into the crossover to pop and I would fit into that, especially since I sounded like a white girl. But I wanted to walk away and they let me go."

Family comes first

After that, she got wrapped up in raising her family and taking care of her ailing mother. She divorced and remarried her current husband, Evelyn "Huck" Hines, and they had a daughter. She played in local clubs and community stage productions.

Her second career jump-start was in 1989 when Ian Levine, a British record producer and his Motor City project, crashed into her life.

Levine, an intense Motown fan, "who who could recite everything there was to know" about the world-famous musical production compa-

ny, came to Detroit to round up people once affiliated with Motown but "who didn't sing," Nero said. She was one he specifically sought out.

"He was full of enthusiasm, he wanted to record us all and he made promises of fame and fortune," she said. "As of last year, Ian had recorded and released 600 songs by at least 107 former Motown artists."

"I did 'Footsteps' and it was released in England. I didn't hear anything for about a year, then I started making it big. I was told by his that they played it three or four times in one night by request."

She made several trips to London for appearances and interviews as it went up the various hit lists. Nero's was the only record in the project that did.

With Levine, there was both good news and bad news, according to Nero. She has never received the royalties she was promised and as a result she's dropped her affiliation with him.

She admits being upset, "but my thing is if you keep looking back you can never see what's up ahead." That's the way she felt about her brief stay at Motown, too. "The experience was invaluable."

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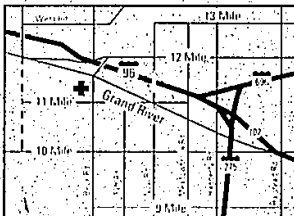
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