

Joe Adams, Decades Long Manager of Music Giant Ray Charles, to Receive Doctorate in Chicago

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CHICAGO, May 10 /PRNewswire/ -- One of music's legendary figures, Joe Adams, 83, who was Ray Charles' manager and business partner for over 45 years, and a pivotal figure in the political and cultural landscape of Los Angeles for the last half century, is going to receive an Honorary Doctorate from Columbia College (ceremony at Navy Pier, 3:30PM) in Chicago on Saturday.

Himself a major raconteur, emcee, radio star and award-winning actor, Adams was portrayed in the critically-acclaimed movie, "Ray," by Harry Lennix. Over the years, Adams and his wife have made major contributions to a host of colleges and he has previously received several doctorates, including one from historic Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Although he's been the longtime president of Los Angeles-based Ray Charles Enterprises, Adams jokes, "I was never officially hired."
"Ray and I never formally signed any agreement, we were too busy and never got around to it."

Sitting at attention behind a massive glass topped desk, that has been the pulse center of Ray Charles' personal and professional life for the past half century, Joe Adams still carries the final word on every decision.

Rising to prominence in radio after serving with the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II, Adams was the first black D.J. to host a prime-time show in Los Angeles which became number one.

Stars galore appeared on Mr. Adams' radio broadcasts -- among them Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Tommy Dorsey, to name just a few -- but none shown brighter than Joe Adams himself, for whom Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn even provided a musical theme.

During that same time span, Adams landed on television with "Adams Alley" and "Joe Adams Presents".

Not surprisingly, Hollywood also beckoned and soon he was starring along with Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte in films like "Carmen Jones."
Adams appeared in over 25 motion pictures, including "The Manchurian Candidate" and "Carmen Jones".

In 1958, he received the Golden Globe Award as Outstanding New Actor. With no formal training as an actor, Mr. Adams was stunned when Broadway, too, beckoned for his services, though Mr. Adams continually refused -- until, that is, David Merrick proposed an irresistible opportunity: a starring role opposite Lena Horne and Ricardo Montalban in Yip Harburg and Harold Arlen's classic musical, "Jamaica."

In 1959, after a two-year run with "Jamaica," Adams was asked by Ray Charles to move behind the scenes to manage the career of Ray Charles and Ray Charles Enterprises, a post he held for the last 48 years.

However, Adams' most lasting legacy will always be his unique partnership, one of the longest running in show business, that he enjoyed with the late Charles. Together, they donated millions to charity, endowing many African American colleges and universities with their hard won success.

"I cherish the time that I spent with Ray, he was truly amazing," recalls Adams. Charles, a music icon, died in 2004.