Richard Pryor Returns To Peoria Stage

By C. VERNE BLOCH

"I'm so happy, so excited. Nobody ever asked me to come here before."

This did Richard Pryor, flashing an infectious smile, break into a malarious shuffle routine yesterday afternoon at Carver Center. It was the first performance here of the 35-year-old Negro comedian from Peoria who has gained international fame.

IT WAS ALSO the first benefit show sponsored by the local Afro-American Black Peoples Federation, with all proceeds going to support their programs in the black community.

There were about 375 persons in the audience, the federation realizing several hundred dollars, since Pryor did not ask for anything even to paying his expenses.

He had a whirlwind visit, visiting his numerous Peoria relatives and friends before the show and then having just time enough to catch a plane to Chicago, where last night he did a concert at the Hilton Hotel and then flying back to California where he lives.

ONLY EIGHT YEARS ago Pryor had his first professional engagement at the now extinct Harold's Club in the 100 block of N. Washington St.

"I got $5 a week, and I'm the only entertainer Harold (the late Harold Parker) ever paid that much to that day," Pryor reminisced.

"How much does he make these days?"

"I can make whatever I want — $50,000, $60,000 a year," answered Pryor, who admitted his take now was well over $100,000. For the past several years he has been a regular on national TV shows.

He has made two movies and is currently shooting a movie in California — where he resides in an $80,000 home in the exclusive Beverly Hills area.

Having probably the most meteoric rise in show business of any single entertainer in a year, Pryor yesterday displayed amazing energy, despite the fact that he had left California at 1 a.m.

Sailing shortly before noon from Greater Peoria Airport, the young comic was taken to Methodist Hospital for a visit with his mother, Mrs. Gertrude Broman, who is seriously ill. His father and stepmother both died within the last year.

He popped into his mother's room, gave her a kiss on the forehead, then a hug and kiss. She had known he was coming and had primped ahead of time for his visit.

Normally talkative despite the rain and shakiness, he threw into the mario to accompany the story a grand slam he's gone through by his numerous comedy business. Pryor said: "Hey, Mom!" to embrace her.

"The good thing about my mother is, she's always so lively," Pryor said. "She's the most cheerful lady in the world." He was always in a good mood and made sure to give the nurses a hug and kiss when he left.

He was dressed in a blue suit, a white shirt and tie. His hair was neatly combed, and he wore a pair of glasses.

He was also wearing a black jacket and white pants.

He had just arrived in town from his tour of Europe and the Middle East. He is under management of the Creative Management Associates of Beverly Hills.

Pryor's turns were held at the Cafe Du Monde in New York, where he spent a year. Then he moved uptown where he appeared in "The Living Room," then in the Lyric Theater in Philadelphia, the Bitter End, and the Cafe Au Go Go in Greenwich Village.

A few weeks ago, he had the opening of his first movie, "The Breast," at the Ziegfeld Theater.

"I'm really looking forward to it," Pryor said. "I've been working on it for a long time."

He was scheduled to appear in a variety of shows in the upcoming weeks, including "The Tonight Show" and "The Mike Douglas Show."