

# Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man



as told by  
**John P. & C. Buck West**

SPONSORED BY



GENERAL ALEXANDER DUMAS  
("ALEXANDER THE GREATEST")  
Dashing Commander of Napoleon's Cavalry  
(1762-1806)

"SO FULL of robust adventure is the life of General Alexander Dumas that it reads more like that of a fabulous knight of romance than even of a Napoleonic commander.

"Dumas reminds one of Richard the Lion-Heart of England, who fought the Turks in Palestine for the tomb of Christ. Like Richard, Alexander was a giant in size and strength, and one of the bravest of the brave.

"Coming on the scene at one of the most critical and dramatic periods of history, he played an important role, during which he rose from a sergeant to general-in-chief in twenty-two months. Anatole France was so fascinated by the story of his life that he dubbed him, 'Alexander the Greatest.' Dumas' story goes back to the day when a certain great nobleman, tiring of the gay, empty life at the court of Louis XV, decided to get away from it all and went to settle in the far-away island of St. Domingue, now Haiti.

"ON HIS arrival there he was warmly welcomed by the rich planters, who were glad to have one of such rank in their society. But the nobleman, the Marquis de la Pailleterie, shunned them and went to live among the Negroes, little knowing at the time that in so doing, he was to add a thousand glories to his name.

"The Marquis, completely breaking with his past, took a consort from among his dark-hued neighbors, one whose bright flashing eyes, supple figure and merry laughter had captivated him. She was Marie Dumas. Perhaps he married her, perhaps he did not. It is believed, however, that humble Marie became Madame la Marquise.

"A year later a son, Alexander, was born. In color he was very dark. For eleven years the couple lived happily together, and then Marie died. The Marquis, grief-stricken, remained in the West Indies eight years longer and then returned to France, taking Alexander.

"And what a son was Alexander! In three years he had become the talk of Paris. Standing six feet two in his bare feet, he was endowed with strength to match. He performed feats of incredible physical prowess; as a swordsman he eclipsed all in France, save one, another Negro, the Chevalier de St. Georges.

"GENEROUS, kind-hearted, but hot-headed and quick to resent insults, Dumas got into many quarrels. He was forever challenging opponents. At twenty-two, he fought a duel and won. A year later he fought three duels in a single day, receiving a wound in one of them that later gave him much trouble. When his son, the great novelist, made one of his heroes D'Artagnan, challenge three men on the same day, he was merely using his father as a model.

"One of the young man's quarrels was with his father. This, however, was to be his making. When the marquis took another wife, Dumas hotly objected, and decided to leave his father's home. 'I have but one request, young man,' said the marquis coldly. 'Do not take my name around with you to dishonor it.' And the future general, to show his scorn, rejected name and title, and took another that was to become illustrious for three generations--that of his mother.

"On June 2, 1786, a few days later, he en-

## REGISTRATION FOR GENERAL ELECTION

If you are not registered, you have until October 1st to register to vote in the General Election, November 8.

SO THAT unregistered citizens will not be caught by the registration deadline for the November election, Deputy Registrars are now on duty at the Food Fair Market in the Golden West Shopping Center on West Owens, the Thriftmart and Skaggs Complex at Tonopah and Bonanza, the Cove Hotel at 'D' and

Jackson Sts., and Penney's Downtown Department Store.

Deputy Registrars will move throughout various neighborhoods in an effort to reach every unregistered person and make it convenient as possible for them to become a registered voter. Another convenient place where a deputy registrar is on duty is the Candidates Headquarters, on Miller Avenue, next door to Bob Bailey's Sugar Hill.

listed as a private in the Army of the Rhine. Several republicans of St. Germain brought suit to prevent his entry because he was a nobleman, but he was allowed to remain.

"IMMEDIATELY Dumas distinguished himself. One day while reconnoitering with four men, he found himself cut off from them with thirteen of the enemy against him. Spurring his horse into their midst he fought so vigorously that the thirteen surrendered. Tying all of them up, Dumas led them back to camp on a single string. For this he was made a regimental sergeant-major, cited for bravery by his commander, and invited to dinner.

"This was the period of the French Revolution, and a number of free Negroes from the West Indies had come to France to offer their services to the people. They served as a unit known as "La Legion Americaine," (The American Legion), later as "The Black Legion," and at their head was the famous Chevalier de St. Georges.

"The latter, eager to get Dumas, offered him a second lieutenantcy, but the officer of a white regiment, Col. Boyer, equally desirous of having him, offered him a lieutenantcy. Not to be outdone, St. Georges offered him a captaincy, and so the bidding went on until Dumas gained a lieutenant-colonelship under St. Georges.

"At this time, Dumas met the daughter of a hotel-keeper, Marie Labouret, and as he was going off to war, he married her at once. Two weeks later, he won distinction again, when he and St. Georges saved Lille from the royalist sympathizer, Dumouriez, by a brilliant dash. In July of the following year he was made a brigadier-general; September 3, of the same year, a general; five days later he was appointed commander of the Eastern Pyrenees; two months later he was put in command of the Army of the Alps; and early in the following year he was promoted to the command third in importance--that of Commander of the Army of the West, all in less than two years.

"BUT HE WAS soon to come to the notice of Napoleon in another way. While pursuing the Austrians his horse was killed under him. Crawling into a valley he found a number of guns the retreating Austrians had thrown away. With these he shot down twenty-five of the enemy, finally making his way back to camp on an Austrian horse. 'He entered so weak and worn,' says Dermoncourt, 'that I cried, 'General, are you wounded?' 'No,' he said, 'but I have killed too many, too many.' And he fainted away.'

"In the Egyptian campaign the impulsive general was commander of Napoleon's cavalry. Among those serving under him were two of Napoleon's brothers-in-law, Murat and Leclerc. Dumas distinguished himself at the Battle of the Pyramids and in the taking of the Grand Mosque, but his plain-speaking during this campaign was to prove his undoing. A republican at heart, he viewed with disfavor Napoleon's imperial ambitions and took no pains to conceal his attitude.

"The break between the two came soon after the destruction of Napoleon's fleet at Aboukir. There, cut off from France and harassed by the heat, some of the generals grew impatient. One day when several of these met in Dumas; tent to eat melons, they complained bitterly against Napoleon for having brought them to Egypt. Napoleon, hearing of this, blamed Dumas as instigator, a charge that Dumas hotly denied.

"EVEN AFTER General Dumas' death, Napoleon visited his grudge on Dumas' widow. He ordered that she should not be permitted to pass through the gates of his palace at the Tuilleries.

"At the age of forty-four Dumas died of stomach trouble, his ailment being largely the result of his hardships at Naples. But for his quarrel with Napoleon, to what heights might he not have risen? At thirty-five, when he was a general, Napoleon was only a major. And it was only by an extraordinary twist of fate that Napoleon came to succeed Dumas as commander-in-chief of the French Army.

"This happened in 1793 when the revolution

had got out of hand and the Convention at Paris seeking someone to restore order sent for Dumas. The latter was then living at Villers-Cotteret, fifty miles from Paris, and at that time, a return journey of two days. Dumas, receiving the order by courier, set off at once for Paris, but the affair was so urgent that the Convention could not wait for him and selected Napoleon, who succeeded so well in quelling the riots that the Convention kept him in the post intended for Dumas.

"NAPOLEON who was both soldier and politician, turned this coup into personal profit and became ruler of France. Whether Dumas would have done the same had he arrived in time is to be doubted. He was a republican at heart, and first and foremost a soldier, self-effacing and honest. In Egypt when he found hidden gold valued at two million francs, he turned it over to Napoleon.

"Napoleon, in his way, admired Dumas. He told him on one occasion: 'What I like about you, Dumas, is not only your courage but your humanity. I know in the Tarentaise you rescued from the guillotine three or four poor devils who did not wish to let their church bells be melted down.'

"Dumas early victories contributed greatly towards keeping France republican and thus in paving the way for Napoleon. No wonder, therefore, that Dumas was so bitter against Napoleon.

"Anatole France says, 'The greatest of the Dumas's ... was the son of the Negro woman... General Alexandre Dumas de la Pailleterie, the conqueror of St. Bernard and Mt. Cenis, the hero of Brixen. He offered his life sixty times for France; was admired by Bonaparte and died poor. Such a life is a masterpiece beyond all comparison. One is proud to have such a man as an ancestor.'

"Dumas' statue stands in the Palace Malsherbes, Paris, near those of his son and grandson. His name is also on the Arc de Triomphe."

## (KEYNOTES, from page 1)

I don't know about. Why don't we find a way to learn about them together. You've got to involve yourself in order to be able to be in on the policy and decision making of your government on any level, local--state--or national.

Nobody wants anyone dictating to them that you should vote this way or you must do this or that, so let's just form our own neighborhood or community political groups and meet and talk about the things we want to know and how we may best help to get candidates elected to office who will represent the interests of the Negro.

BEFORE LONG, we'll even be grooming candidates of our own whom we select to run for elective offices and when we throw our united vote behind those candidates they'll win because we exercised our right to vote in unity.

These are dangerous times for the Negro in the United States and the greatest weapon we have is the ballot--please don't have me or you crying salty tears in November--O.K.? --A.K.

## LAS VEGAS VOICE

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