

# BILLY ROWE'S Note Book

WRITE ON JOY AND SORROW---A couple of tall events took over our town and marked one of its nights and another of its days. One was of tremendous joy for it honored a talented good hearted gentleman of the theatre, William "Count" Basie. The other was tinged with overwhelming sorrow for it highlighted the final tribute to Kiah Sayles, who had stumbled in the race of life and fallen into the abyss of death. The essence of these events were the caliber and number of old pals each attracted. "The Royal Salute to "Count Basie" was just that, made so by the personal efforts of Catherine Basie herself. This fantastic woman reversed the trend of this deserved affair within 13-days. At that point it was headed down the drain until she "bit the bullet" with a "buy a ticket" pitch to friends which they could not refuse. The vast number which coughed up a 100-bucks in the final days, was just as great a tribute to "Lady" Basie as it was to the count. Therefore, it was fitting that she too received a standing ovation from the International gathering at the Waldorf to honor a marvelous guy on his 70th b'day. Despite the fact that the Daily News reporter did not mention his name among the celebrities present, it was Sammay Davis, Jr., who made the nite extraordinary with his exuberant talent an unmatched generosity by adding \$5,000 to the profits of the evening.

The arrow of friendship which Kiah Sayles shot into the air many years ago, were all found in the hearts of just as many friends who came from all over the nation to stand by his bier in final tribute. It was a fitting final for a guy who had touched many corners in his go-about-life and left a brightness there'in. So many pals and gals came from so many places it would be impossible to name them all here and to name some without naming the others would be disastrous. It is fitting however, to note the visible emotions of Cab Calloway and Marshall Miles. Plus the diligence to the needs of Dean Sayles of Shirley Rhodes, Sis Dabney, Sonny Bostic, Johnny Hartman, Honi Coles, Ethel Vandergrass, Gloria Marshall, Audrey Whitmore, Gloria Barker and Margaret Butler. The great numbers who came to pay their last respects was a true tribute to the life which Kiah lived. There were so many members of his family from in and out of town, there were neither enough cars for them to make the burial site, Hartsdale, N. Y., or enough beds to sleep the stay-over-niters. Because it was such a sad reunion for old friends it was suggested by Dr. Aaron Well, Herb Douglas, Carl Maxwell, Buddy Young, George Rhodes, Herb Wright, George Jackson, Andy Hatcher, Bill Cohen and Herman Smith that a move get started for an annual get together of friends. This would be when there was traces if sadness upon their hearts.

TAN TOWN TALES---Illness kept Freddy Guinyard and Nelson Sykes from attending the last rites for Kiah Sayles. Joe Louis was unable to get out of a contracted fling in Boston. At the last minute, Redd Foxx was denied the chance to come to Count Basie's party by his producers...Billie Oliver, the former Mrs. Sy, White Plains abode was hit by burglars who got away with her priceless record collection...Lena Horne is concerned over the illness of her mother...Gladys Knight's folks are trying to decide how big the wedding should be. That talented lady plans a splicing with lucky Detroit, Barry Hinkelson 12-days into Oct...Fun and funds were uniquely raised for Calif's gubernatorial candidate Jerry Brown. The happenin' was a \$100-per-plate chitterlin-dinner featuring all soul goodies, black eye peas, beans and greens, corn-bread, okra and other go-along goodies...If such is possible, Kiah Sayles loved his funeral. It was standing room only and took place in the rich environs of middle Park Avenue. There were enough Cad-dics, Mercedes and Continentals to pop the orbs of every cliff dweller of that posh thoroughfare. About 50-limos traversed the route from 64th, up Park and Madison Avenues to cross 125th St. west to 7th Ave. to the h'way and Ferncliff cemetery, located on a majestic hill in suburban rich Hartsdale, N.Y....STAY LOOSE.

## Poitier and Belafonte 'Go Back a Long Way'



Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte go back a long way.

These two superstars, who are seen in the movie "Uptown Saturday Night," first met in 1945 in the American Negro Theatre in Harlem. By coincidence, both of them went to register in the ANT on the same day.

Since that time, their professional careers-Poitier's as an actor, Belafonte's as a singer-actor - have criss-crossed periodically and they have formed a close, lasting friendship.

When Belafonte first enrolled at ANT, he was more interested in the craft end of the business than he was in acting. But then, as he has said, "My interest spread to acting and that's when I went into the drama workshop and studied acting technique."

Poitier got his first important break as an actor when he was Belafonte's understudy in the ANT production, "Day's of Our Youth."

At that time, Belafonte's regular job was that of an assistant janitor in a New York apartment building. One night, a co-worker failed to show up and Belafonte had to stay on the janitorial job.

Poitier filled in for Belafonte at the theatre that night and was seen by the producers of a Broadway play, Lysistrata."

They gave him the lead in the play.

From that point, the careers of Poitier and Belafonte took different directions.

Poitier concentrated on acting and worked his way to stardom. He wore three hats in the production of "Uptown Saturday Night." He was the executive producer, director and leading actor. Melville Tucker produced and Richard Wesley wrote the screenplay.

Belafonte, meanwhile, became a superstar singer and entertainer, who also acted periodically in Hollywood movies. More significantly, perhaps Belafonte became the first black to produce, or co-produce, a major motion picture in Hollywood.

In the late 1950's, Belafonte co-produced "The World, the Flesh and the Devil." Two years later he produced "Odds Against Tomorrow."

Belafonte and Poitier teamed up in the movie "Buck and the Preacher," and followed that with "Uptown Saturday Night." It is a Verdon Production for First Artists and a Warner Bros. release. The film opens Wednesday, October 9th at the Rancho Circle Theatre.

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**SATURDAY - 2:30 P.M.**  
Join Vicenta Montoya and Ray Willis each Saturday for a look at what minorities are doing in Southern Nevada. The weekly special guests and national figures make this program a noteworthy cultural half hour.  
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