



Library Notes

by Bill Ludwig

It's not always the big events that count at the library, like the street festivals and movie programs and training workshops and Board meetings. They are great, of course; a lot of people come together and get involved and go away with stronger ties to one another. But those are extra curricula to the day-to-day activity at the library.

If you or anyone else just happened to come by the library during school hours, recently, mornings or afternoons, you might have found the building filled wall-to-wall with young people, pouring through magazines, taking notes from books, searching through encyclopedias, watching short filmstrips. Most likely these are students from Kit Carson Sixth Grade Center whose teachers have walked them over from school.

We, the library staff members, probably all take a deep breath as the students walk in and let out a deep sigh as they leave. But we enjoy every minute they are here at the library, because that's what libraries are all about.

You might like to hear about one project the students are involved in; it isn't the kind that makes the evening news on TV, but then the best news doesn't.

Two of the core teachers at Kit Carson, Messrs. Dave Piggott and Jerry Endres, put together a research project on the individual countries of Africa for their classes. The students wrote all the African embassies for information, make flags of each of the countries and selected the particular country for their individual research project. As a part of the plan the classes were then brought to the West Las Vegas Library to carry out their research. To help them make the adjustment between the school library and the public library, we held an orientation amounted to describing to them some of the differences in the libraries and then giving to each student a research question to search out and answer.

The research questions, all dealing with Black history and culture, became the high point of the day as each student scrambled through the reference books to find the answers to such questions as "what is O. J. Simpson's first name?" or "when did the first Blacks land on American soil?" or "when did the Harlem Globetrotters begin to play?" As the questions were answered, the students came back for more. Everybody---the students, the teachers and the library staff---got turned on to the detective work, and all of us went away from the experience excited by what discoveries could be made in the library and how much real fun it could be.

The sixty morning students went back to school to spread the word, and the 60 afternoon students came to the library already primed and ready to go. The repeat performance was as exciting as the first, and the students began to make up their own questions to spring on their classmates.

We often hear about and talk about our children's education and the concern over racial matters, and indeed we should. Yet in this one small experience, students from all over the city and of various racial makeups became excited together about the process of learning, enough to take their excitement home and tell their parents about it. We need to know these good things, and we need to thank those who are good enough to make them happen. So, thanks Dave Piggott and Jerry Endres; we appreciate it.

NEW DAY BEGUN

by

Benjamin L. Hooks



RACISM AND THE PANAMA CANAL PART I

The uninspiring start of the Senate debates on the Panama Canal treaties represented more than an opportunity to inaugurate the first live radio broadcasts of sessions in Congress. The related issues encompass the whole range of beliefs about individual freedoms and respect for national sovereignty upon which our own democracy was founded.

To a considerable degree, the debates can be likened to the 18th century English Parliament discourse on the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. We hope that Congress will not repeat the mistakes of King George and Parliament.

Ratification of the Panama treaties will be a message to the world that the U.S. accepts the realities of our time, supports President Carter's human rights thrusts and is willing to phase out a vestige of early 20th century colonialism. To do less would not only cast a blot on America's image as a land of freedom, but disapproval would also spark considerable anti-U.S. protests throughout Panama and South America.

The construction by the U.S. of the Panama Canal beginning in 1903 was generated by economic considerations. Like slavery in this country, the resulting exploitation of the people and land was based on race.

Historians have praised the 10-mile stretch of waterway running across Panama as a triumph of American engineering and organizational skills. To that extent the employment of the American technical genius was commendable. The canal has saved shipping companies hundreds of millions of dollars since its opening in 1914 and enriched shareholders of the Panama Company, which operates the canal.

Until President Johnson began an effort to correct this exploitation following the violent riots in 1964, however, the Panamanian government received a pittance from canal revenues. The black laborers in the Canal Zone fared no better.

Forced to work long hours for low pay, their despicable living conditions could not be easily alleviated. Racism was institutionalized through the "gold" and "silver" wage systems under which whites were guaranteed higher pay than blacks. The fact that these designations were replaced in 1948 by the terms "US rate" and "local rate" did nothing to correct the caste system, since the discrimination was continued.

The other most glaring form of discrimination was housing. Panamanians not only had to live in despicable housing conditions, but their presence in the Canal Zone was controlled by a strict housing quota for non-U.S. citizens, which was even used to expel them from the Zone.

This and other forms of discrimination were never affected by the passage of the Civil Rights Act and other signs of racial progress in the U.S. because of the distance between the mainland and the Central American Republic.

The Canal Zone NAACP branch valiantly worked to remove these barriers. But, despite progress that has been made through such efforts, discrimination still exists, especially in such areas of job assignments and promotions. More offensive, however, is that the 1903 treaty which gave the U.S. the right to operate the Panama Canal under present arrangements in perpetuity insults the national pride of Panamanians.

(Next week, part II)



V. J. P. Corner

by Kenneth Carson

Hello Readers - The Gamestore is open to everyone. We're located in the Golden West Shopping Center, 1014 West Owens.

The first program on our agenda will be a Pool Tournament. We're asking boys and girls to take part in this program, and are hoping for a good championship game. There will be an entry fee of \$2.00 and there will be matches in the age groups of 9-11; 12-14; and 15-17. Prizes and trophies will be awarded.

The deadline for filing your entry fee is April 7, 1978, with the Tournament being held on Saturday, April 15. The time will be announced in a future column.

The money raised from the pool tournament is for uniforms and jackets. Parents, you will need to sign for your child, and we will need parents and young people to help -- also to participate, not only in this event, but in all future endeavors.

I know I sound like a broken record, but I can't say it too many times -- I NEED YOUR HELP. I like children and I like to work with them, and work as a total team with the parent and child. I will be knocking on your doors in the near future to talk to you about some of these programs I have in mind. I hope I don't miss anyone, but if I do please try to get in touch with me. I know the children have potential and ability, and so do we as their parents.

I want to thank all the parents that have volunteered their time and aid. I would also like to thank all of my readers, friends, and customers for their encouragement.

Thank you
King, The Meat Man

P O Exams

Postmaster James W. Bradford has announced that Distribution Clerk, Machine exams will be given in the near future and urged that all those interested apply to take the job-related tests that can lead to Postal Service employment.

Salaries, not including fringe benefits, for distribution clerk, machine begin at \$6.75 an hour and increase to \$8.04 an hour over an eight-year period. Annually, this represents a \$13,604 starting salary for a full-time employee that increases to \$16,189 in eight years.

"I do not want to give the impression we will be hiring great numbers of people in the coming months," the postmaster said. "I anticipate approximately 200 vacancies will occur in the next two years that will be filled by hiring people from our job register. We need qualified people who will be willing to accept employment, and we want to offer people in the local community the chance to compete for these openings by signing up for and taking the exams."

The Postmaster said the Postal Service established the policy two years ago of extending eligibility indefinitely for those on the job register because little hiring was being done. "On October 8, 1978 those who have been on the job register for more than two years will lose their eligibility. They will have to reapply to compete for a standing on the new register," he said.

Postmaster Bradford explained that those wishing to take the exam could apply to:
EXAMINATION SPECIALIST U. S. POSTAL SERVICE 1001 CIRCUS CIRCUS DR. LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89114 ROOM 112 STARTING MARCH 16, 1978 ENDING MARCH 27, 1978.