



Library Notes

by Bill Ludwig

Word spread rapidly throughout the community, from house to house and person to person, like some ancient, silent drum beat announcing the arrival of a great man, a traveling griot. Soon the library was filled with people and the scurry of activity. They came out of their homes and offices and churches, dressed especially for the occasion, carrying copies of his book to be signed, hoping for just a glimpse, a handshake, a friendly word.

When he did arrive, it was just as he had described it in his own book: "When the storytelling griots came, a quick hush would fall among the villagers as they sat around the baobab to hear of ancient kings and family clans, of warriors, of great battles, and of legends of the past."

Alex Haley entered the library quietly and greeted each person with softspoken words, warmly, as if he had known each all his life. There seemed nothing special about this man, so unobtrusive, so at home among his friends, so at ease with his fame. The large gathering of people seemed to sense that there was no need to shout acclaim. Everyone felt his importance to their own lives personally and wanted to extend that feeling to him, as a close and deeply respected friend.

His visit was to be much shorter than planned, as an unscheduled press conference had been squeezed into his time. Instead of formal speeches and official exchanges, had been squeezed into his time. Instead of formal speeches and official exchanges, it seemed much more appropriate to allow him to move freely through the room among the people, signing autographs and speaking briefly to each. A pre-school group of children had just completed their story hour program; they then lined up, each with a piece of paper to record this bewildering moment of their day, only partly realizing the special importance of this man.

Alex Haley had slipped away from his official duties to present a signed copy of "Roots" to the library, through the generosity of Leonard Mason who had made the arrangements for his visit. As time came closer to his departure, he was introduced to the gathering. His words, like his person, were thoughtful and warm. He spoke of libraries, of our West Las Vegas Library: "A library is the first sign, the most positive sign of a community's desire to grow, of an individual's wish to become better. You are fortunate to have such a good library, as I have heard that this one is, in your own community." He apologized for not being able to stay longer, to browse the collection and meet individually with everyone. There were a few more handshakes and autographs, and then he slipped out as quietly as he had entered.

Behind him, he left countless people convinced anew that they had just seen a truly great man and, in the tradition that he had uncovered and made known to the world, a travelling griot. No other man in America could carry the title as he could; Alex Haley was indeed the National Griot of Black America.

His legacy was "Roots". The copy that was handed me before he left bore the following dedication: "For the West Las Vegas Library---and for all who use it---the warmest wishes from the family of Kunta Kinte. Alex Haley"



Telling It

As It Is

by Jimmy Gay

Hello there! It's nice to be back with you this week. As you noticed, last week the column was a week late for some unknown reason, but I hope the message got home to you anyway. The column I had planned for this week would also be a little belated, so I'm going to do an updated one for you on the subject that is nearest and dearest to my heart - TOGETHERNESS.

Since a very early age, I've tried to put together a Black organization that could stand up and be counted. This has been a pretty tough task, BABY. As a kid back in Fordyce, Arkansas, I organized two groups, one before entering High School and one shortly after College.

The first group was known as the Baby Jackets. This group grew out of the high school athletic team known as the Yellow Jackets. We were organized in all sports; Music, Drama, scholastic, you name it; we excelled in them all. So much so, that the Baby Jackets grew into the Yellow Jackets and became the first Arkansas basketball team to represent the state in national competition. (The national high school basketball championship in Gary, Indiana, 1935). And may I say to you, we represented the state very well as runners-up in the national competition. The group included such people as the Reverend T. P. Johnson, who today is the pastor of the largest Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana; Mr. William Perkins, who today is proprietor of one of the finest Black dry cleaning establishments in Chicago; Mr. Fred Parks, formerly the lead singer with the famous Wings over Jordan Choir, who is now an executive with the U.S. Postal Service in Cleveland, Ohio; Mr. Carsel Harris, who is the owner and operator of the well known Soul Food Kitchen of San Francisco and who was a unanimous choice All American; Mr. E. M. Winfrey of our fair city and a top man with the Clark County School District for many years (he also was mentioned for All American); Odesia Baker of Chicago, who is now an executive with the Campbell's Soup Company. Now for the sad part of our famous Yellow Jackets, the two members who have preceded us in death are Mr. Mack Rucks and Mr. Leroy Green. May their souls rest in peace. And of course, yours truly was the coach of this tremendous group, and may I say that he was the youngest coach, at age 16, to ever enter a team in any national competition.

The other organization that we spoke of was known as the Green Wave Basketball Team and Social Club. This organization remained intact for a number of years but had many odds against its existence because of the color barrier. We were the only Black, semi-pro basketball team in the state and surrounding states, so our playing and competition was limited to Black high school teams. If the barrier had been lifted in those precious years, the NBA would not have had a team that could have touched the Green Wave.

After some 40 years, yours truly is still trying to put together a Black group that can do just what was previously stated -- stand up and be counted. Today yours truly is involved in some ten organizations from the church to athletics and all in between. Be it social, welfare, athletic, civic, political, charitable, or youth organizations, you name it, yours truly is involved in them all. And I find that I offer my input seem to be accomplishing the most. Can you tell my ?? I have begun to believe that we are not putting enough trust in ourselves. Are we going to continue, through this century, to believe that the other man's ice is colder?? Or his coal burns longer?? Yours truly proposed an idea to a group some three months ago that made

light of the fact that it is time to form an organization in our community that would consist of 100 men and/or women - no more, no less - and could be so strong whereas they could change the entire political, financial, educational, and social structure of this community. I would like to mention that this I offer my input seem to be accomplishing the most. Can you tell me why?? I have begun to believe that we are not putting enough trust in ourselves. Are we going to continue, through this century, to believe that the other man's ice is colder?? Or his coal burns longer?? Yours truly proposed an idea to a group some three months ago that made light of the fact that it is time to form an organization in our community that would consist of 100 men and/or women - no more, no less - and could be so strong whereas they could change the entire political, financial, educational, and social structure of this community. I would like to mention that this idea came to yours truly during the most critical stage of his illness some six months ago. I still think we can do it - let's put it together for the sake of the community. I hope you took the time to read about the most recent organization yours truly is involved with - The Fordyce Club of Las Vegas. This organization may be the answer to the things that I have prayed for for so long.

Congratulations to Reverend Charles Wyatt for his new appointment as Chaplain of the new Jean Prison. We know that you'll do an excellent job, Reverend, but as I mentioned to you, a public Thank You to the entire Black Community would be in order.

This week's column was a rush-rush job because of deadline changes. Please follow this column for more on telling it like it is. "Think togetherness in 78." TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG. See you next week.

Read the VOICE and keep abreast of the community news!



V.I.P. Corner

by Kenneth Carson

As promised last week - I will be on KVOV Open Line with Evelyn Newman on Tuesday, April 25 at 10 A.M. to talk about my new organization Second Chance, Inc. Be sure to tune in!

The Blacks worked so hard to be able to go on the strip and enter the casinos and hotels as guests - not just work there - and are now allowed in any casino or hotel on the strip.

But what about the Whites that are afraid to come over here to West Las Vegas? There are quite a few that are just plain afraid to enter the area. I don't feel it is anything we have done to give this impression, but it is there nonetheless!

If the Blacks are to get along with the Whites in all areas of Las Vegas, let us make the Whites welcome on the Westside.

First, we must invite them to join our organizations and get involved with us.

Second, we must make them feel welcome whenever they come over here.

The Black is his own worst enemy - so let us try to get along with ourselves - as well as others!

BREAK THE HATE HABIT
UNDERSTAND
THY NEIGHBOR
BLACK, WHITE or BROWN