

# LORETTA HOLLOWAY



## ...A True 'Rags To Riches' Story

By Neil Hoffman

Rags to riches is a phrase that's often used loosely. But in the case of a petite lady now singing nightly in the Frontier's Circle "F" Lounge, that's a pretty fair description of her life over the past five years.

Loretta Holloway did not start out in rags, exactly. The daughter of a South Carolina mortician, she studied English at a small black college in

Orangeburg, S.C. and between classes found time to sit in on sets at a little jazz club in town.

On graduation in 1975, Loretta decided that the singing and music bug was stronger than the English teaching one, and she lit out for Chicago to scratch her itch. There she met L.D. Young, a famous jazz player, who introduced her to the Rush St./Near North Side nightclub scene.

Holloway landed a singing job at one of those

clubs and, one night, in walked Bob Kaz, a native Chicago bartender who was to become her husband and personal manager.

Holloway admits that she was skeptical when this white man, ten years her senior, started wooing her with daily gifts of flowers and with dinner invitations. "I didn't know what his motives might be — he could have been a pimp, after all."

For Kaz' part, he says he'd never before gone

out with a black woman, and he still doesn't know precisely why he was so taken with this little, big-eyed girl from South Carolina. "Must have just been love at first sight," he agrees.

Bob and Loretta have now been married for three years.

"There were only so many clubs to play in Chicago," relates Holloway, although Bob, with his many contacts in the area, was very helpful to her career there. The couple decided to make for the coast — but which coast was a tossup. "The weather in L.A. is, of course, better than it is in New York, so we went West."

Shortly after arriving in Smogland, Holloway was signed to do the vocals for the sound track of a movie called "Blackjack."

"The talent for this movie was good," remembers Kaz, "but the direction was not professional."

The movie has only been seen, as a result, by patrons of drive-ins in the southeast and midwest. But it provided a lot of experience for Holloway and her first sight of Las Vegas. "I was enthralled," she remembers. "All those stages and marquees!"

So she came back for visits. On one of those, she played the Monday night showcase at the Sahara Hotel and was seen by some producers in from London. That exposure got her a one-week gig at the famous London club, Players, and her first trip overseas.

Back in Vegas, Holloway was offered a four-week stint in the Lan-

dmark's Galaxy Room. She filled that room as it has seldom been filled, and she stayed for six months.

During that time, Walter Kane came to see her and proposed the current engagement at the Frontier.

On opening night there, Kane came to the stage of the lounge and proclaimed that Holloway would soon be playing in one of his main showrooms. (Kane is overall entertainment director for the Summa Corp. properties, which include the Desert Inn, the Sands and the Castaways, as well as the Frontier.)

A typical Loretta Holloway show includes jazz, country, rock and introspective ballads such as "I've Never Been to Me." She varies the show slightly each performance and honors requests from the audience whenever possible.

Holloway works with Pazazz, her six male member instrumental and harmony backup group, which does an interlude on its own midway through each show.

Times at the Frontier Circle "F" for Loretta Holloway and Pazazz are 9:45, 12:15 and 2:45, every night but Sunday.

Holloway was a little way above rags when she started out — and now she's a little below great riches (she and Kaz live in a modest apartment near the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; they do not like to squander money in a precarious business and a precarious economy). In terms of her professional and personal development, however, she's come farther in the past five years than most people go in a lifetime.

would cater to the wealthy and the wealthy were all white. They realized also that Black people were on the very bottom of the economic totem pole because they, and others like them, had deprived Blacks of educational and employment opportunities. How much could a person who only earned \$35.00 a week afford to spend for entertainment? Very little. Blacks were forced to be window shoppers even though they were spending 100 percent of their earnings. Their spending, however, was simply to survive. They could not afford to have expensive fun.

Approximately twenty major hotels opened in Las Vegas during the two decades following completion of the dam. All had, however limited, some involvement in segregation. Those which have opened since March of 1960 have no such involvement. This is not to say that such behavior on the part of individual employees does not occur. There have been instances in which employees' racial attitudes have manifested themselves. A waiter or waitress might be slow in attending to the needs of customers purely on a racial basis. There are times, during the shift changes, when such delays are to be expected and one needs to recognize when such is indeed the case.

In most instances the Maitre d' & Captains are top flight people. Seating is generally done on a first come first served basis. However, there are quite often the matter of "tokens" generating better seating. Usually, there are select seats reserved for "high rollers" or other expected "VIPs." Most people can accept those differences. Blacks, especially, become concerned upon observing

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HOLLOWAY — From classroom to show room.



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