

AN AMERICAN DREAM OR HOME ON THE RANGE

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

Oh give me a home
Where the buffalo roam
Where the deer and the
antelope play
Where seldom is heard
A discouraging word
And the skies are not
cloudy all day

Ah, fond memories. I remember well the first time I heard those famous lyrics. I was just a wee tyke, sitting on the front row of the Ace theater. It was a Saturday afternoon in early summer and Roy Rogers and Gabby Hayes were on center screen. Roy, of course, did the singing.

After leaving the movie, walking home up St. Catherine Street and kicking a tomato paste can ahead of me, I visualized myself being at home on the range. There would be the ranch with those ranch-kinds of fences and a

herd of deer and antelopes over on the hill side just playing around. Obviously, the sky would be blue with little fluffy clouds floating by and in the background could be heard: "o k a y", "alright", "yes", "you can do it", "go right ahead", "good job", "there you go", and any number of other encouraging words.

Suddenly I was rocked out of my revelry by a snarling, barking, teeth gnashing, drooling, mad dog. I took off. I ran so fast that I went right by my house. The dog finally gave up after about four miles and I was able to stop and let my breath catch up to me. No sooner had I sat down on the edge of the grass when someone yelled: "get outta here", "where do you think you are?" You see, I had inadvertently

gone into the "other" part of town—the part where people like me were not welcome. Once again I began to run but, while I had ample stamina, I was not quite fast enough. A police car pulled over and the officer inquired as to what I was doing in that neighborhood. He put a good scare in me and sent me on my way. My troubles were not yet over. I was four miles away from home and a bluster (rain storm) was coming up fast. I got drenched but I finally got back to Whelan Quarters, in the alley, and home. So much for my time on my home on the range.

You may be wondering why such a nice kid as I had to grow up in a shotgun house in an alley. Simple—that was one of the few places we were permitted to live at that time. You see, even someone as young as I

can remember the good old days when the "swells" wouldn't let us live in their neighborhoods. You know the places—with the paved streets, sidewalks, street light, sewage lines and convenient shopping. Yes, I remember it well and I'm not Maurice Chavelier.

How did that circumstance come about? Why is it important? Think of Spring Valley. Think of Sunrise Manor. Think of any number of other places across the United States where such circumstances occur time and time again and we are pushed further and further west.

If you really want to understand how such came about in the first place, let's take a quick walk down memory lane.

In the history of Georgia, the Exposition held in Atlanta in 1895 probably ranks a close third to the activities of

Oglethorpe and that of Sherman. In regards to race relations in the United States it could also be considered a turning point. Almost as an afterthought the organizers of the exposition decided to accept the suggestion of including a Black as a participant on the dais. This was to have far reaching effects. The exposition was to serve as a vehicle to national prominence for Booker T. Washington. Neither he nor anyone else realized then that this would be the case. Washington approached this task with a great deal of apprehension. He had been asked to make a few remarks at the opening ceremony. This caused him numerous sleepless nights. "The crux of his dilemma was that he had to meet the different demands of all three elements of his audience, Southern whites, Northern whites, and Negroes."

This was not as easily achievable as it might have at first appeared. Fearful, but yet undaunted, Washington proceeded to prepare himself for the big event which would bring him the distinction of being the first Black person to speak before a primarily white audience in the South. It was not a matter to be taken lightly. It had been in September of 1864 that William Tecumseh Sherman and approximately 100 thousand Union troops had wrestled from Joseph E. Johnston, John Bell Hood and the Confederacy, the city of Atlanta. Some thirty years later, once again in September, Booker T. Washington was called upon, inadvertently, to bridge the gap which still existed between the three aforementioned groups.

In 1895, the racial climate throughout the United States was quite tense. Segregation was the basic order of the day and segregationists passed up no opportunity to remind Black Americans of this. The Atlanta Exposition was no exception. A

separate building was utilized for the exhibits of Black participants. The main auditorium where the speeches were to be made did not go untouched by the bigots' swat. It was decided "that a part of the auditorium be set apart for the use of Colored People". Bumping shoulders and rubbing elbows was not to be a part of the Exposition. Perhaps the realization of this reality is what prompted Washington, in his speech, to state that "In all things that are purely social, we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress".

Washington failed to realize that while progress has always been an objective of white Americans, it has not always been viewed as something which is necessarily desired mutually for Black people. It is generally believed that the statement by Washington set the drive toward equality by Blacks back a century or more. Racists, both north and south, appeared to have been "biting at the bit" for justification and acceptance, on the part of Blacks, for their

policies and practices of discrimination.

Just one year later in 1896, a landmark Supreme Court decision was rendered. In the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson the Court, in support of a state of Louisiana decision, ruled that as long as equality of accommodations existed, segregation did not constitute discrimination and that Blacks were not deprived of equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. Just as the double zero was the license to kill, in the secret service of James Bond, Plessy vs. Ferguson was the license to discriminate and Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise had said it was acceptable.

Beginning in 1896, and not ending until the Supreme Court decision of Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Black Americans have had to live in the shadow of slavery. They have not lived there alone. In almost every instance in which they have been discriminated against, a like number of white Americans have also suffered. They have suffered because they have been required to serve as buffers between minority Americans and the "swells" on top of



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the hill.

Blue collar and poor white Americans have been convinced that their whiteness alone has been enough to set them apart from minority groups. They have historically believed that rubbish. They have not realized that one's skin color is not negotiable currency and will not provide for a summer on the French Riviera. They are now finding the discriminatory practices can also keep them from living in affordable housing.

In the western lands of the 1890s, there could be found a goodly number of Black people. At the close of the civil war a larger number of Black soldiers were transferred to man the army posts, escort homesteaders and serve as buffers between the Indians and the never-

ceasing expansion of Anglo-Saxons fulfilling their notion of manifest destiny. The ninth and tenth calvary and the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth infantry served in an area which extended westward from the trans-Mississippi and from the borders of Canada and Mexico.

There were also ex-slaves who migrated to the west under the leadership of such men as Pap Singleton and settled in Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, Arizona, Kansas and other states of the southwest. Black people also came to Nevada. They experienced numerous difficulties here extending all the way back to the days of the mining frontier. Among the problems they experienced could be found that of finding suitable housing.

NEAL

from page 2

The South African Government is supported by four million whites who utilize sophisticated war machines to control twenty million blacks; war machines which are supplied and aided by economic investment from people such as yourself, just because it is their "job."

I speak to you, sir, as an African citizen of African decent. As such,

Next week we will see how difficult it was for Black Nevadans to secure protection in acquiring housing and we will begin to consider how that protection is slowly being lost. Do not dismay. The condition is not peculiar to Nevada or to Las Vegas. It has existed nation wide and the new found difficulties are also national in scope.

I will not sit idle and allow you to impoverish the dignity of my people or my ancestral relations by such a despicable act as giving the keys to the city to a racist government such as South Africa just because it was your "job."

Your action, sir, presumably condoned by your colleagues of the Las Vegas Commission, leaves us with no alternative but to protest your action by any means necessary if you insist on perpetuating this indignity upon us.

If you cannot bring yourself to render the keys to the city to the PLO, or declare Adolph Eichmann an innocent man, then I would certainly think that you owe the black community of Las Vegas an apology for doing such to the representatives of the South African Government!

Respectfully yours,

Joe Neal

NAACP FUND RAISER TAKES SOLID SHAPE

The Las Vegas Chapter of the NAACP presents the annual Freedom Fund Banquet titled "A Night With Sammy" honoring entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. The planned gala affair will be held on Sunday Nov. 22, 7:30 p.m. in the Coliseum Room of Caesars Palace Hotel. The NAACP is honoring Davis for his years of service in goodwill for humanity through entertainment and support of social programs.

Local businessman and long time NAACP member James A. "Jimmy" Gay is chairman of the banquet. Gay and the Banquet Committee announced that Bill Cosby, known comedian, will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the banquet and star-studded entertainment that follows the banquet.

The entertainment is being coordinated by singer Joe Williams and

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FIVE YEAR PINS — Employees of Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital were awarded with five year service pins for their continuous service and dedication at award ceremonies held recently. Commissioner Thalia Donedero, left, chairman of the hospital's board of trustees, and George Riesz, center, hospital administrator, presented the

five year pins to employees. They included, from left, Sandra Coon, R.N., cardiology; Carrie Sanders, R.N., nursing service; Sue Morris, R.N., head nurse cardiac intermediate care; Patricia Tyrrell, renal dialysis tech II; Rita Lewis, central supply tech; and Ralph Bond, facilities planning specialist.

EBONY'S GALLERY OF FAME



MADAME C. J. WALKER (b. Delta, Louisiana, December 23, 1867; d. May 12, 1919). Founder of the world's oldest and biggest Negro cosmetics company, she was a financial genius whose business methods were widely copied. The first Negro woman millionaire, she started her business with \$2 and an original formula for "refining the scalp and straightening hair."

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