

INTEGRATION

...how it was achieved in Las Vegas



'It was not until 1955 that they (black entertainers) were permitted to walk through the front doors of the New Frontier. Still, while staying at the Sands during another engagement, the pool was off limits to them; the first time Sammy Davis, Jr. went for a swim he was unaware of that policy. Following his 'dip' the pool was closed and drained.'

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

When Pearl Bailey first came to Las Vegas the year was 1941. Upon exiting the train she went inside a nearby establishment "and played the machines". The policy of segregation had not yet reached all hotels and casinos in Las Vegas. She reminisces, however, "that a few years later 'people of race' were barred".

The Will Mastin Trio with Sammy Davis, Jr., were told by the management at the El Rancho "Sorry, we can't let you have rooms here".

It was not until 1955 that they were permitted to



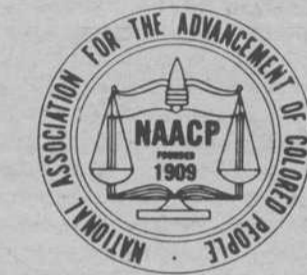
The Will Mastin Trio featuring Sammy Davis, Jr., 1950

walk through the front doors of the New Frontier.

Still, while staying at the Sands during another engagement, the pool was off limits to them. The first time Sammy Davis, Jr. went for a swim he was unaware of that policy. Following his "dip" the pool was closed and drained.

The first report of Blacks sitting in the audience of a show in one of the hotels was in reference to an event which took place during the early 1950's. Josephine Baker, the featured performer at the El Rancho, was aghast when she discovered that there were no Blacks in

the audience. She refused to do her second show if the same remained the case. The story has it that maids and porters were hurriedly sent home to change and two tables were set aside



for them near the stage.

When Herb Jeffries, a Black singer, appeared at a local hotel he was provided rooms. The manager informed him that his accompanist, Dick Hazzard, would be housed in "special Negro quarters." Little did he realize that Dick Hazzard was white.

Sammy Davis, Jr. put it best when he said: "In Vegas, for twenty minutes, twice a night our skins had no color. Then, the second we stepped off the stage, we were Colored again."

The aura which permeated the hotel industry was also present in the remainder of the community. Destiny demanded that Blacks in Las Vegas, as in the remainder of the country, force white people to come face to face with their principles. Change. Always traumatic. Even under the best of conditions it is

frightening. The principles of American Democracy had been a myth. Most were reluctant to acknowledge that. To change from a world of mythology to a world of reality was mind boggling.

The NAACP planned to march to protect the elements of discrimination within the Las Vegas community. The march was to take place on March 26, 1960. The date is important because the march would be taking place more than two years before the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, a year and a half before James Meredith entered the University of Mississippi in September, 1962, three and one-half years before the March on Washington on August 28, 1963, four years before the Civil Rights Bill was enacted by the U.S. Congress and just two months before the Freedom Riders embarked on their fact-finding trip through the South in May of 1961. The Moulin Rouge had opened the doors as the NAACP made certain that they remained opened.

Bull Connors of Selma, Alabama had used hoses, hounds and helmeted helpers to scatter marchers in a helter skelter manner while giving local whites the heebie jeebies. Sheriff Leypoldt had merely said that he would "not

tolerate any disturbance of the peace during a demonstration" Unlike in

notoriety it would cause. Business leaders realized that few people would

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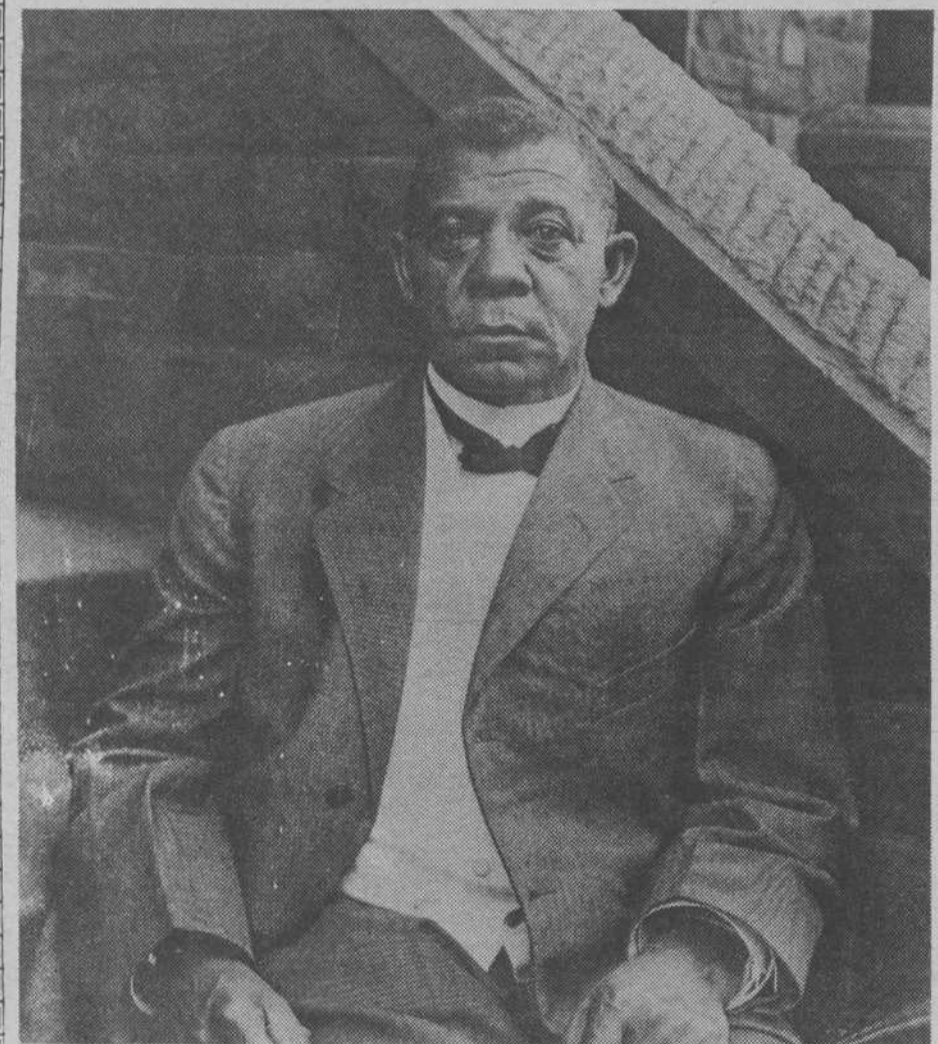
GARWOOD VAN and His Orchestra

NEW FRONTIER HOTEL
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Selma, cooler heads prevailed in Las Vegas. Seeking redress for grievances was an old American custom. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph had proposed a march on Washington to protest employment practices in war industries. It was averted because of the realization of the notoriety it would cause internationally. The Las Vegas march was averted through the intervention of the Governor, the Mayor, an editor, representatives of the several hotels and the NAACP because of the

have been interested in coming to Las Vegas simply to see yet another demonstration. They could stay home and see such free of charge. Las Vegas had to offer the tourist something other than what they could get at home. If it did not, there would be no need for Las Vegas. Las Vegas was forced to realize that it must serve as a "trail blazer" in all aspects of social inter-action. Las Vegas, the entertainment capital of the world, had to become a model for other places in the United States. Like

EBONY'S GALLERY OF FAME



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON (b. Halesford, Virginia, April 5, 1856; d. November 14, 1915). Head of Tuskegee Institute for 34 years, noted educator founded National Negro Business League, established Negro Health Week, was first Negro elected to New York University Hall of Fame.

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Rome, of ancient times, all roads led to Las Vegas. Even in 1960 there were millions of tourists who flocked here. They came from places like Macon, Ga., Baton Rouge, La., Misoula, Mont., Ames, Iowa, Manhattan, Kan. and all of the other more familiar places. After March of 1960 all of these visitors were able to see integrated hotels, restaurants and casinos. They saw integration in action and it was not the "boggie man" they had feared it would be. The leadership of our community failed to capitalize on this discovery. It felt that it had done enough and began to ask that same old question. "What do they want now?"

There were die-hards. The Overland Hotel would put up "Closed For Repairs" signs whenever Blacks would approach. The Sal Sage also refused to serve Blacks until the following year. Across the country there were those kinds of businesses which did not view Blacks as Americans. Our own Congressman, Walter Baring, as a response to the efforts of Blacks to bring about equity, had said that "Morals cannot be legislated, nor can private rights be dominated, nor can any group intimidate the American people and the Congress of the United States." In effect he said

that Blacks were not Americans. He was also unaware of the Judicial system which spends most of its time legislating morals and invading rights of privacy. Almost a year before, in July of 1963, Senator Cannon's estimation of the racial condition in Nevada and the quality of life experienced by Blacks had prompted him to suggest that "Local Negro woes are minor". Fortunately, for him, he was not Black.

Governor Sawyer, however, recognized that "Nevada needed a law that would provide punishment for racial discrimination. Discrimination is going to hurt tourism. It's going to hurt whatever town that discrimination is practiced in." To some extent, his words were heeded. Unfortunately, his warning was not rapidly or comprehensively heard and acted upon by the masses.

Since the early 1960's there have been some positive gains made by Blacks in Las Vegas. Woodrow Wilson has become the first Black elected to the State Assembly. Mrs. Mable Hoggard, the first Black credentialed teacher, has been joined by several hundred others. Dr. Claude Perkins has become the first Black Superintendent of Clark County School District. Ms. Ouida Brown has been elected the first

Black President of the Clark County Classroom Teachers Association. Mr. Joe Neal has been elected first Black Senator. There are realtors, contractors, laborers, business people, nurses, attorneys, physicians, professors and Blacks who are in all of the other occupations there are. Yet, in the media, we generally only hear of the criminal who is black. The artifacts being left today maintains the trend established seventy-five years ago.

There is cause for Black Las Vegas to celebrate hardships encountered and the triumphs



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achieved point out glaringly well the "stuff" which Black people are made of. We have not a history of having it easy. We have not even a history of having it rough

when times are hard. No matter how hard times have been and continue to be for all, the condition for Blacks is worse. We have become stronger with the adversity.



Insurance Corner

By ALEX THOMAS
Ebony Insurance Agency

MIDDLE AGE DISABILITY

The statistical figures prove conclusively that in those all-important middle years, the chances of being disabled are greater than those of dying. Not a pleasant thought- but a reality.

At age 32, the chance of disability is 6 1/2 times greater; at age 42, it's 4 times greater; at age 52, it's 2 1/2 times greater. Does it pay to take this kind of gamble? Ask yourself these questions:

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This information has been brought to you as a public service by EBONY INSURANCE AGENCY, 808 So. 6th Street, Las Vegas. Phone: 382-2431. Your one-stop answer to complete insurance protection.

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