

# THIS BUD'S FOR

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

"That's what I want to be when I grow up. I want to drive an airplane." "Boy, they don't let negroes drive airplanes."

Several years ago, following his surpassing Babe Ruth's homerun record, Henry "Hank" Aaron was asked how and why he became involved in baseball. His response was, in effect, that when he was a child he spent a great deal of time with his parents. On some occasions, he would observe certain things of interest to him. Invariably, he would make a comment simi-

lar to other such comments made by children around the country: "That's what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a fireman." "... I want to be a policeman." "... I want to be a . . ."

No matter which of those doctor, lawyer, Indian chief, candlestick maker careers he might have considered in his own boyish fashion, the response was generally the same: "Boy, they don't let negroes be . . ."

That was a harsh reality and it was not unusual for black children

growing up in the greatest country the world has ever known. It was not unusual during Hank's time, before his time and only recently has its totality diminished. There are still some things that "they don't let negroes do." Worse than that, there are a lot of things that some "negroes" have convinced themselves that they cannot do. What a pity.

Here of late, we have been hearing and reading quite a lot about child abuse. Ahhh. These things do not begin to approach the kinds of abuses of the spirit black children have suffered for years

and years and years.

Hank and others had little to look forward to. It would have been quite easy to become despondent to the point of becoming suicidal. After all, if one does not have the hope of a better life, for what reasons does one have to live? Not many. Perhaps this is why the suicide rate among black people is increasing at such an alarming rate. But still, suicide? I'd rather kill somebody else than kill myself. I guess I'd rather go to jail than go to hell.

Why didn't Hank and Leroy and Jackie, Bill, Beulah, Willie, Ethel, Solomon, Zerline, and millions and millions of other black youngsters jump off the Empire State Building or a bridge or slit their wrists or something? Why did they not kill themselves and be done with it? Why did they "hang in there" knowing that their chances of becoming "somebody" were slim to none?

Well, I'll tell you one of the reasons. They "hung in there" because of Miss Lucy, Miss Alice, Miss Corine, Miss Hattie, Miss Forestine or other women who were their mothers.

Mothers are strange creatures. They'll kiss their child right on the lips even though he might have just "threw up" from the colic. They never gag while changing a defecated in diaper. That's normal, I suppose. Every mother is that way regardless of color. Black mothers have been called upon to go beyond vomit and potty. Let me tell you about one — mine.

Harriett. That was her name. Everybody called her "Miss Had." She was a strong and gentle woman both spiritually and physically even though she was small of stature. Her father was part Chickasaw, African and Spanish. Her mother was part African, Choctaw and Irish. In the entire history of her family, on both sides, she received the greatest amount of education up to that point — fifth grade. Her read-

ing and writing required great effort.

She was born and raised in the country near Natchez, Mississippi at a place called Churchhill. She grew up on the Stowers plantation. She started working at the age of seven in cotton fields. As a little girl she picked peas, pulled potatoes, shucked corn, and an assortment of other tasks. Where she came from, everybody worked. The only problem was — nobody got paid. Her family members were tenant farmers. Of the things they raised on the allotted piece of ground, they received only a "shotgun" house and food. Money was as scarce then as honesty is today.

As a young woman, she moved to Natchez and married. She found work as a domestic servant at 50 cents a day and whatever left over food there might be. My father worked but his is a different story.

In the course of her lifetime, she had seven children. The one who would've been the oldest, died during childbirth. When she would go off to work, she would take the children with her. After they grew up, she would leave them alone with the oldest in charge. My sister Dorothy had that responsibility beginning at the age of six years old. She took care of Morris who was three. By the time Jesse arrived, Dorothy was nine and by the time I arrived, she was twelve. In other words, there were three years between the ages of the first four children. Gloria arrived five years after me and Sandy three years after her. Four boys and two girls.

My mother continued with the domestic work and she also began to "take in" washing and ironing. The children helped out some — "toting" water, "chunking" firewood, gathering "kindling" or whatever else had to be done. We had no television or running water and only a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling

which was taken from one room to the other as needed.

In the evenings and on weekends, my mother would always take us for walks. She pointed everything out to us. She showed us how to get from one place to another so we would not get lost. Evenings, after supper, she would tell us stories which make today's television fare dull by comparison. My father and my aunt Sarah would always join in the storytelling.

We'd sit on the front "garry." The children with their legs dangling over the edge, my mother and aunt on the steps with pieces of rolled up newspaper to control the gnats and mosquitoes and my father "rared back" in a chair. She always would begin the evening on the porch by asking us what we had learned in school that day. She made sure we had our homework done before dark. We were each required to read to her for a while and when we would have finished, she always called us to her and hugged us and kissed us and cried. We would then kiss her and tell her not to cry. We didn't know, then, why she cried. She was preparing us for life's great adventure and she did not know if we would ever get a chance. She was determined that we would be ready if and when the chance presented itself.

When I was six years old, I always thought that I was the cause of her tears. I thought that I did not read well enough. I practiced more and more and more. I learned my times tables from the covers of the Pennwright tablets. I learned to add, subtract, divide and all of the rest of it. She called me her little prince. I was everybody's favorite in the family.

She told us that we had to do better than she had done. She only had a fifth grade education. She insisted that we all finish high school and make something of

## Feel Caressed In Your Car



### With The Magic of Sheepskin Seat Covers

- 8 Colors Available
- 100% Sheepskin
- Keeps You Cool in Summer
- Keeps You warm in Winter

**SPECIAL ONLY**..... **\$99<sup>00</sup>** per set

Headrest not included  
Reg. list price..... \$140<sup>00</sup>

#### TOO HOT? BUSY WORKING?

We'll come to you at your home-office-business

CALL ANYTIME **384-8828**

Master charge-Visa or check guarantee card



Mon-Fri. 9-5  
Sat & Sun by appt.

**APOLLO SHEEPSKIN SEAT COVERS**

-Call or visit our new-  
Showroom

1326 Las Vegas Blvd., So.