

## KEY

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In February of this year, I happened to have been in Southern California during the observance of Black History Month. I was delighted to learn that the Orange County Chapter of Links, as a part of the Links observance of Black History Month, was holding a conference on "Current Issues Facing Black Professionals in the 80s," at the South Coast Plaza Hotel in Costa Mesa.

I might add that I was as surprised as I was delighted to learn that such a conference, comprised of workshops geared to teach black men and women how to succeed in the business world, was being held, because I am a native of a neighboring county (Riverside) and Blacks in Orange County were even scarcer than they were in Riverside.

Even now, as of the '80 census, Blacks comprise only 1 percent of the population in Orange County. To me, this was mightily indicative of how the Links organization has progressed and moved with the times. Of course, it has always been involved in fund-raising activities for such worthy projects and causes as the United Negro College Fund (I believe, nation-wide, the Links have raised a million dollars toward this effort to provide money to black colleges), the on-going civil rights struggle, and now on-going fight against sickle cell anemia and, of course, the usual Thanksgiving and Christmas contributions to needy families, among other national and/or local projects.

As with any organization, local chapters differ in commitment and activities. Like all organizations doing volunteer work, each chapter achieves according to its membership of "mules." All organizational memberships are divided between mules and butterflies. The group with the greatest number of "mules" will, of course, enjoy the greatest achievement. The "mules" will feel the gratification that comes with satisfaction of a job well done as the butterflies flutter while taking bows — But that's the way of the world. The Links must have enjoyed the membership of an inordinate

number of mules to survive.

The Las Vegas Chapter of the Links was organized by the late Thelma Toms who, as I continue to remind readers, brought culture to the desert. I hope the Links remember Thelma and miss her as much as I do, and I hope they will not forget her at their conclave here in Las Vegas where she made an unequalled contribution.

The much heralded "opening of Senator Cannon's campaign headquarters (West)" was a complete disaster. The debacle could be chalked up to many factors, none of which are easily explicable, or needed by the many Cannon supporters who say, "Let's just keep stepping — the issues remain the same and our commitment is just as strong."

Certainly the Senator should not, and I am sure, will not be penalized for the 1982 version of "A Comedy of Errors."

Lots of things happened on Saturday, though, to leave a good taste. Firstly, Ray Blanks, who turned out some finger-licking good barbecue which was every bit as good as he had boasted, is being encouraged to go into the business. I, personally, want to salute Bea Bryant, LaVonne Lewis, Bernice Jenkins and Anita Harbert for matchless support and contributions. Valarie Hunt (and her friend Debra), Ruby Garland, and Tony McCormick proved to be of the stuff that makes one bigger than the occasion by exemplifying all those sterling qualities of loyalty, perseverance, etc., incidentally, while working themselves to the point of exhaustion.

Dorothy Johnson knows I never take her unflagging support and contribution for granted. Equally appreciated is Verlia Grice Davis, who picked up the pieces (and me) with an evening of unalloyed pleasure when she invited me to join her and her 24-year-old, 3-year UCLA law student niece, Denise Massingale, for a pressure relieving night-cap. (And this was after they had done yeoman work in the clean-up chores.)

Verlia's niece, Denise Massingale, made my day, and how good she made the Cannon T-shirts look! I had started the day inspired with hope for the future after having viewed PBS Channel 10's

re-cap of the National NAACP Convention from Boston, Massachusetts, the night previously.

I was so gratified (and relieved) to know the NAACP was still "in there" — alive and aware of the issues and totally committed to its stated goal of freedom and justice for all Americans. I was even more inspired at the interviews with the young men and women of the NAACP. They are not only our hope for the future — they are totally aware of it — and they are totally prepared for the struggle.

Meeting Denise Massingale was an experience I needed and shall not forget. She gave me hope and pride and, to a degree, released me from a half-century of fear and doubt for the future of Blacks in America.

My cup is full — Monday at dinner with my family, I asked my two grandsons, Tony (19) and Aaron (14) if they would give some time to our Voter Registration Program as bird-dogs. When they unhesitatingly offered a couple of evenings a week, I felt as though some of it has been worthwhile, and just maybe, we shall overcome.

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