

## BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

### HIGH MARKS FOR BOOKER T'S CLASS OF '41

NORFOLK, VA. -- There is an air of notabilia about a class reunion which transcends any other gathering. It forms with emotional memories and brims with nostalgia. In that spirit many of the surviving members of the Booker T. Washington High School's Class of '41 came together to explore the days when they were young and the world offered them more promises than plights, as they stood on the threshold of adulthood in the doorway of decision. Back then, BTWH, founded at the turn of the century, was the finest black hi'school in Virginia. Its student population count ranged between 2,500 and 3000 Afro-Americans, with teachers of matching colors. Today, its student body is about 5000 and is 50% white and all are taught by approximately 105 white and 22 black teachers. It is still among the highest rated in the country and one of the finest in the state. All those who are involved in the reunion are as proud of it now as they were when they made up the student body. What they have achieved speaks well for the academic prowess of the institution. All of those who came back went on to higher learning as they gathered knowledge in human experiences. The interesting story revolved around those who left here being called "boy," to now return to enjoy a Virginia where they are addressed as "Mister" and answered "Yes and No Sir" to, as guests in the finest hotels, as their ladies are accorded the proper salutation befitting their station in life.

Like Sonny and Mae Carson, Albert and Flora McLaran, this scribe and his Isadorable were the guests of Jim Cuffee, whose business empire now stretches from Bkly'n, N.Y. thru Atlantic City to Libera, West Africa. It was a shocking surprise that Jim was

not only a son of Virginia, born in this city, but the most popular member of the class of '41. We also learned from Sonny Carson, during the after dinner "bull session," that Jim is a direct descendant of America's first black ship builder/captain and millionaire, Paul Cuffee. A Merchant and philanthropist, he played a major role in America's fight for independence from England. His wealth included large parcels of land in N'England and several vessels. He established cultural relations with Africa, taught navigation in Sierra Leone and brought African products to Europe and America and used his own funds to carry black settlers back to Africa. The son of an ex-slave, he died a respected member of the New Bedford community in 1817. However, that's another story, so write back to the gathering of the Class of '41 where we ran into Ruth Munford Hamit. Bet she never thought she would wind up in St. Albans, N.Y., OR WORKING FOR 33-yrs with the N.Y. State Dept. of Motor Vehicles, from which she retired in May '83. With time on her hands, it was she who organized this class get-to-gether. It brought out Flossie and James Walker of Baltimore. They invited their son, Michael, and daughter Francis Waterhouse of Greenbelt, Md. Also their nieces Shirley McCoy and Erma Morrow, a couple hometowners.

After graduation, Dr. Arthur Allen answered the call of Uncle Sam and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp. During the big bang he served with the famed 99th Fighter Sqdn. and the 318th. Hdq. and Air Base Sqdn. After WW-11 he picked-up a number of degrees: An AB in Sociology from Virginia State, An MSW degree from Atlanta U. School of Social Work and a Ph.D from Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. He has been a professor and Urban League executive direc-

tor. He's now retired and the father of two. We wished time would have allowed conversation with all the returning members of the Class of '41 of the Booker T. Washington High School. It was a rewarding experience, one which lead a backward trail to the days when anticipation was the elixir which made every tomorrow worth the awakening.

**NEWSY NOTES:**--You had better start throwing your "write hand" at your senator, fast and continuous. According to The Kiplinger Washington Letter, the eyes and ears of the nat'l political capital, there will be no national Holiday for the immortal Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Not enough support in the Senate... ..A strange assortment of politicians and community leaders combined efforts to fashion a welcome back to



N'York bash for Cicely Tyson the other ayem. She opens on the big street shortly as the center star of "The Corn Is Green."..Black Entertainment Network is getting serious. It has a black soap. "Paradise Valley," in store for its CATV customers. It has also wisely hired young David Brooker, son of the famed Virginia, who... ..It... ..are getting... ..for our teevee lads. Max Robinson is allegedly slated to lose his ABC News anchor spotlight and they keep talking about silencing Bryant Gumble any Today... "Black is learning at an early age that equality is only skin-deep"...Langston Hughes...STAY LOOSE...Billy Rowe is a syndicated columnist.



HOME SWEET HARLEM was the theme of the Cultural Events Committee's Annual Benefit Reception and Fashion Show honoring Harlemite Susan Taylor, Editor-in-Chief of Essence Magazine. CEC's Chairman, John Atchinson (L) and Lionel Hampton congratulate the honoree during the Hennessy Cocktail Party at the 369th Armory in New York City. Proceeds of the evening went to the famous Boy's Choir of Harlem. Schieffelin & Co. is the sole importer and distributor of Hennessy Cognac and other fine wines and spirits.

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Cocktail Shows 8 pm and midnight



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