

years later. The black count had even more phenomenal growth from 178 in 1940 to about 3,000 by 1943.

New military installations contributed to this expansion. Army Air

however, preferred to live in West Las Vegas rather than the company housing (Carver Park) provided by BMI.

Because adequate housing was not available for the bursting

opment known as Westwood Park.

1951-1960

The 1950's were years of continued growth for Las Vegas. Nellis, the Nevada Test Site, and the developing resort industry were major sources of employment as the population increased to about 40,000 in the early years of the decade. By 1954 Las Vegas was the fastest-growing city in the nation and such major hotels as the Sands, Desert Inn, and Showboat appeared.

Nevada's black population hit about 16,000 in 1955, most of it in West Las Vegas. Slum conditions remained obvious on the Westside despite many municipal improvements. The City began blacktopping the streets and Marble Manor, a government housing unit, was constructed. Blacks from Southern California and

Strip and downtown were opened to blacks. Most Westside residents preferred to frequent the establishments there and businesses on the Westside went into decline. In spite of this, the Cove Hotel was erected that year.

About 20% of the City's population was on the Westside in 1960 with the majority being blacks. This area also constituted about 70% of the entire State's black population. By that year the Voter's League had gained enough political pull to

have Dr. West named vice-chairman of the state Democratic Party based on respect for the Voter's League.

The state legislature created the Nevada Commission on Equal Rights of Citizens in 1961.

Earle W. White, Jr. became Las Vegas' and Nevada's first black attorney in 1963. He was recently appointed justice of the peace for Clark County. He was followed quickly to the bar by Robert Reed who became Nevada's first black justice of the

peace.

1971-1980

By 1970 an estimated 20,000 blacks lived in Nevada, with most in West Las Vegas.

Compared to the 50's when black tourists avoided Las Vegas, the estimated 90,000 who visited in 1972 was staggering. According to Ebony magazine (April, 1972), Las Vegas had become the "Black Entertainment Capital of the World."

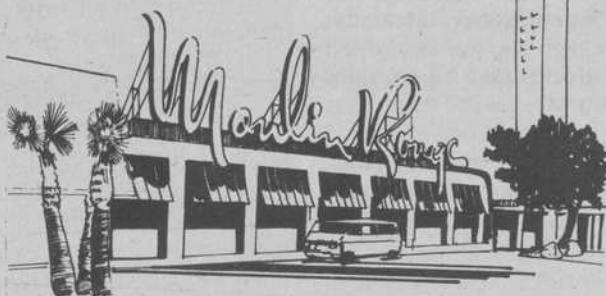
The present black population is around 55,000.



Force Base (later re-named Nellis), brought in thousands of soldiers to its gunnery school. Camp Siebert in Boulder City, which served as an infantry training center, consisted of a regiment of black military police whose job was to guard and protect Hoover Dam. At its height, Camp Siebert had about 135 permanent personnel and 700 trainees. In addition, there were black troops stationed at Camp Clipper near the California-Arizona border who engaged in desert maneuvers. After training they often received weekend passes to visit Las Vegas. Pressured by military authorities, the City Commission outlawed prostitution, thereby forcing the close of Block 16.

Even though these military posts contributed to the growth of Las Vegas, the single biggest cause was the construction of the Basic Magnesium Plant in Henderson. The magnesium produced at this plant was greatly needed for the war effort because it was an essential part of bombs and airplanes. Thousands of workers both black and white were brought in from the South to work at BMI because of labor shortages. The facilities at BMI were segregated but most of the blacks were uneducated and did not rebel over things that were no different from the places they lived previously. Many,

population, the Westside rapidly became a tent and shack city. Many people, including Woodrow Wilson, the State's first black assemblyman, lived in crowded tents with tar roofs that melted in the summer heat, dripping tar onto bedding, furniture and the occupants.



The first hotels on the Strip became to appear in the early 40's. The El Rancho was opened in 1941 and the Last Frontier in 1942. Meanwhile, clubs like the Harlem Club and Frank Wilson's and Jake Ensley's Ebony Club and others sprang up on the Westside to provide entertainment for black residents and soldiers. The Black U.S.O., which functioned as a hostelry for soldiers who found no place to sleep accommodated over 1,000 every month.

The Westside Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1948 with civic improvements as its major concern. The plan was a self help community clean-up program. By '49, the Westside population was around 5,000 and private builders were planning a 150-unit housing devel-

other areas avoided Las Vegas if possible, even traveling alternate routes to destinations because there were no available accommodations.

In 1953, a civil rights bill was introduced to the state assembly to stop all "gentleman's agreements" concerning discrimination in public places such as hotels, restaurants, theatres, and other spots of entertainment but it was never approved.

1961-1970

In 1960 the gaming resorts opened their accommodations to blacks which was a long-awaited goal but had a detrimental effect on West Las Vegas businesses. Prior to 1960 enterprises on the Westside had a more or less built-in clientele. Then the

Special thanks to Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald of U.N.L.V., Larry and Juanita Barr, David Hoggard, and Jimmy Gay for help, encouragement, and information.



Ms. C.L.'s Black Pearl Fashions

Carlean LeFear

MOVING SALE

Ms. C.L.'s Black Pearl Fashions has now relocated

EVERYTHING 50% OFF

Savings like you've never seen before

We still need your business.

Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mon. thru Thurs.
10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fri. & Sat.

900 W. Owens
Nucleus Shopping Plaza

646-1377