

# NORTHERN NEVADA UPDATE

## By Verita Black

The Reno/Sparks area is sparsely populated with African-Americans, but we are here, about 5,000 who live, work and thrive in the valley nestled by the Sierra Nevada Mountain range.

Weekly I will be giving you a report of what's going on at our end of the state, changes that are occurring, movers and shakers that are progressing, and problems that we are facing.

Like most other urban areas in the country, Reno too is facing a problem with the selling and abusing of drugs such as crack cocaine, but the City is trying to combat the problem in its earliest stages.

The Reno Police Department is producing a public service announcement in its "Say No To Drugs" campaign. The announcement, which is still in its production stages, was developed by Sergeant Ondra Berry, Public Information Officer for the Reno Police Department.

As an African-American, Berry wants to develop a campaign that African-American children as well as children of all ethnic backgrounds could relate to. The psa is featuring Demetrius Gaines, 18, of Las Vegas, who is now a Sierra Nevada Job Corps student performing a rap he wrote for the spot.

Dee, as his friend, call him, was delighted to en-

courage children to stay away from drugs, because he has seen the effects of drug selling and using. The native Las Vegas is an outstanding Job Corps student, since his arrival in May 1989 he has been named Senior Hall Leader for his dorm, Outstanding Big Brother, Corpsmember of the Month, Athlete of the Month and Vocational Student of the Month.

Dee's rap says:  
"The way to go out is straight educated; don't ruin your life being drug related."

"That's not the way you want to live your life; smokin' crack can make you lose your life."

"When offered drugs, please say, 'no'; if a friend's a user, please tell him to go."

"To a rehab and seek help. If you want respect, please respect yourself."

"Don't die away for the negative crack; because using drugs is straight up WACK!"

"Just take it from Dee because he knows; Yo, take a stand and just say no."

"Peace."

The spot is expected to air in April on Reno television stations.

## Church News

Rev. and Sis. W.C. Webb of the Second Baptist Church celebrated their 26th Pastor and Wife's Anniversary on March 25.

Recently area songwriters held a Songwriters' Night where they introduced new gospel music. Among those whose work was represented were: Patty Wynn Tau, Anthony LaShawn, Dr. Jesse Hall, Terrell Lamar Taylor and Eugene Wallace.

Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Church will be teaching African American history lessons along with its Sunday school lessons for children. The program is expected to not only educate the children but also instill a sense of pride and to do away with many of the myths and misconceptions we have about ourselves.

Recently the Women's Studies Board at UNR sponsored a lecture on "Combating Campus Racism." The speaker was Dr. Audrey Johnson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Johnson cited numerous examples of violent acts that were racially motivated at college campuses across the country... at Truckee Meadows Community College Jeanette Dean will explore her experiences as an African-American woman and specifically her impressions of the role of the media in depicting negative images.

## JACOB

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appears to be making a good faith effort to count everybody. But the very nature of this enormous undertaking virtually assures that many will be missed.

So even as community organizations are hard at work to help people participate in the count, they're also watching closely as efforts to correct for the assumed undercount continue.

Community groups and the cities will be closely watching to ensure that the final results are as accurate as possible and that any undercount is effectively corrected.

But the best line of defense against undercount that takes political power and government dollars out of minority communities and distributes them to more affluent ones is to stand up and be counted.

## Profiles of Westside School Alumni Association Members

by H.P. "Fitz" Fitzgerald

This is the twelfth in a series of profiles of members of the Westside School Alumni Association, which was organized in May 1988, the year of its first reunion. The next reunion is scheduled for May 1990. Details will be forthcoming later in this publication.

The old Westside School, built in 1922, still stands at 330 West Washington Avenue, but has been refurbished and declared a National Historic Site by the U.S. Department of Commerce. This two-room frame structure housed all students living in the West Las Vegas area from 1922 until 1967, when eleven more rooms were added, with the influx of workers on the Basic Magnesium Plant in Henderson, Nevada during World War II. This is when this writer moved to Las Vegas with his family and became the second teacher hired in the State of Nevada of African American descent. Mrs. Mabel Hoggard was the first Black hired in the state as a teacher.

The teachers at the Old West Side School were mostly white until 1946, and were dedicated to their profession. They arrived at school early and stayed late after school, without pay, just to prepare their students for higher education or to enter the workforce, if they needed special tutoring. Many of these teachers would return to the West Side School on Saturdays, on their own time to tutor some of their students, again without pay.

To pay the teachers for their devotion to their jobs, the parents of the school PTA gave their support 200 percent and the parents and teaching staff developed one of the strongest "teams" to ever exist in the City of Las Vegas during that period. And because of this teacher-parent "teamwork", they developed some of the most famous people to leave this school, who became famous in their careers throughout the country and abroad. More former teachers, principals and students have buildings named after them than any other one school in the State of Nevada. The Clark County School District named a to-be-built elementary school in the Greater Las Vegas area after this writer on February 13, 1990.

Our profile this week is of an alumn who attended the Old West Side School in the

early 50s, at a very early age. Today she is one of the very few African American females holding down the position of Floor Supervisor of several games in one of the most famous Hotel/Casinos in the country.

DELOIS SMITH was born in Talullah, Louisiana, the sixth of ten children. She arrived in Las Vegas with her mother, father and nine other children in the early 1950s. However, her parents' marriage ended in a divorce soon after their arrival in Las Vegas, leaving her mother Bernice Smith alone to support ten children.

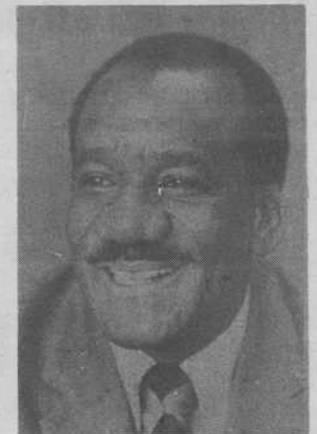


Delois Smith

ages fourteen years and down, head of the household, a single parent without any outside assistance. The federal program, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) was virtually unheard of in West Las Vegas at the time.

Observing her strong-willed but understanding and patient mother, with her stamina and perseverance to support and educate ten children with no help from outside the home, helped Delois choose her mother as her role model at a very early age, she told this writer during the interview. Delois says her family is a close knit family, happily pointing out the newly paneled room in her modest home, and the patio under construction in the rear of the home, all built by herself, her two sons and family members all working as a team. She is particularly proud of the patio being built, because the family's building it for \$600.00 when the lowest building contractor's price was \$18,000.00.

Delois is from a family of high achievers. A Westside High School graduate with the class of 1970, where she



H.P. "Fitz" Fitzgerald

was a drill team twirler. Delois served her apprenticeship in the Nevada Resort Hotel industry by working at a variety of crafts, while attending Granite Institute in Los Angeles, California, majoring in Computer Programming. At the present time Delois is attending Clark County Community College taking a refresher course in Pai Gow, an Oriental game that is becoming popular in casinos around the country. She is the only African American in the class.

Delois is a Floor Supervisor of "21" roulette, Pai Gow poker and mini bacarat at Caesars Palace on the Strip in Las Vegas. Prior to becoming a floor supervisor, Delois attended Caesars Palace Dealers School, and has been employed by Caesars Palace for almost two decades.

Delois' sister Bernice Avadella (Della) is employed by the City of Las Vegas as a Senior Office Assistant working for Mayor Ron Lurie. She also worked in the same capacity for former Mayor Bill Briare on the tenth floor of City Hall in downtown Las Vegas.

One brother, Floyd Smith, Sr., is an athletic coach at K.O. Knudson Junior High School in Las Vegas. He was trained at the Old West Side School by legendary coach Henry J. Moore, Sr. Brother Morise Smith is an installer for Centel. Sister Janice Smith is a Change Person at Circus Circus in Las Vegas. Sister Peggy Lynn Smith is a Room Reservation Clerk at the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel. Sister Aurgie Lee Phillips and brother Eugene Smith are world travelers and adventurers. Brother Samuel Smith is engaged in the Construction Industry, where he is skilled in many crafts such as carpentry, tile setting, plumbing and the electrical trade.

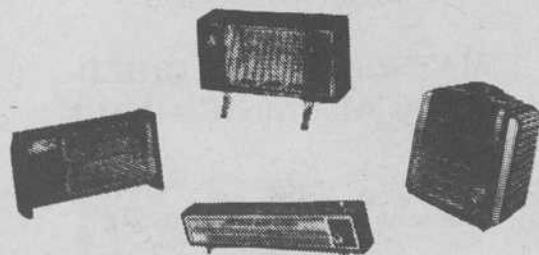
Delois is the mother of two boys who she is raising as a

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