

WHAT A YEAR

I didn't even try to hold back the tears. I sat there, alone, in the privacy of my home at 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday night and watched a special report featuring the Runnin' Rebels of UNLV meet the President of The United States. What a day.

I know most of those young men personally. I've had a few in my classes and we've had some conversations over the past one or two years or so. I know something of where they come from and what their ambitions in life are. I do not ever remember hearing any of them say that they had hopes of one day meeting the President.

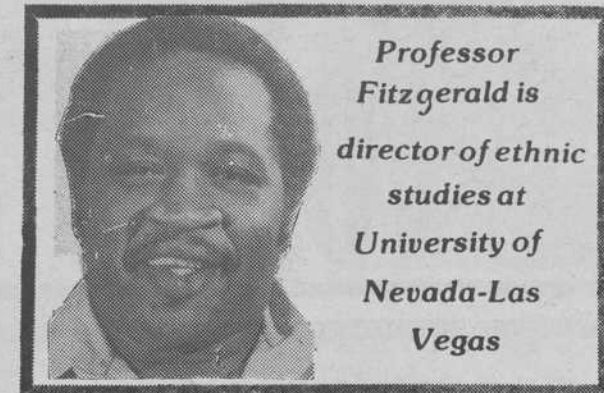
Most people never aspire to such an opportunity and most people never do. The Rebels did and, you know, they made it appear routine. Greg said that the "President is a very personable man." Larry commented on the President's comment that he "was glad to hear that Larry Johnson was going to do a B.A. before the N.B.A." He said, "I guess the President put me on the spot. Now I'll have to come back (to UNLV) for the President." He went on to say that he felt fortunate. "I met the President and he shook my hand. I just want all of the kids in my neighborhood, back home, to be able to see that it is possible. They might not understand the

significance of it right now or just what it means, but later on they will." He encouraged the kids back in his neighborhood in Tyler, Texas and kids all over the country to work hard and do their best and maybe one day what has happened with him might happen for them. What a man among men.

Butler and his team mates visited the elementary school where he had started his educational career. The youngsters there put on a program to a full house of children, even though school was not in session -- Easter break. Butler made a few remarks to them and the heart of it was to encourage them to "go to their classes every day and to study hard because one of these days you won't have basketball." He was visibly moved and his chin quivered as chins do when one is on the verge of "breaking down." What a guy.

I thought back to some events which brought them to the White House. There was a scene at the airport, on their arrival, at Denver. Hunt was among those interviewed. I like Hunt a lot. To the question asked, he responded: "After we got off that plane, there was no more fun. We're here to do a job." What a job he did -- MVP.

Way back in the season,



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by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

on a drive to the basket, Greg went up for a lay-in, was thrown off balance by the hip of an opposing player, crashed to the floor and suffered compound fractures to his jaw. He was clearly in



Stacey Augmon

agony. All the way through the television we heard his chin hit the floor. He rolled over in pain and had to be carried off the floor and to the hospital. The next day he was at practice. The next game he was there--jaw wired and a protective guard across his nose. Wires, bandages and pain and he answered the bell. His team needed him, the school needed him, the state needed him, the fans needed him. Clearly he had heard and understood that old saying: "You gotta be willing to get up one more time than you're knocked down." He got up.

What a man.

Augmon. One of my favorites. Let me take that back -- he is my favorite. Billy Packer said it over and over: "The best finisher in college basketball. The best defender in college basketball. The best all-around player in college basketball." As a person he is almost shy. He's one of the most respectful young men I've met in quite a while. On the court he reminds me of that fellow in Metropolis who changes clothes in a telephone booth. "We don't care what anybody says. We're going out and play our game." When the team needed a stopper, he stopped the opposition's best cold. When the team needed points he added up like an accountant. When the team needed a finisher he was the best there ever was. Packer said that "he soars" but, then, that's what eagles are supposed to do. What a fine young man.

Scurry is an enigma. He has more energy than a tornado. He jumps, he gestures, he smiles, he yells, he enjoys, he juices up. When he comes on the court, the whole tempo of the game accelerates. Some people get down on him because of his role in the fracas of the Utah State game. That's when I really started to like him. There was a fight and people were throwing punches and some of them were landing on his

team mates. Augmon was pushed to the floor right in front of him. He threw a few punches to protect his "family." Like I said, he's like a tornado and, after all, there's no time for sorting things out in a storm. I like that. What a brave young warrior.

There are the other players -- not starters -- who filled in the in-betweens. Stacy, Barry, Bice, Jones, Rice, Jeter and Emerzian. They didn't get a whole lot of playing time but you just gotta know that during that week, practice after practice, they were like sparring partners. They made the first six tough and ready for the tasks ahead. They poked at their weaknesses and made them stronger. They were the opposition team and they provided the opportunity for methods to neutralize that opposition. Their efforts enabled the first six to hone their skills and become as smooth as a well-oiled machine. They had to be instant performers. When they replaced a starter they were called upon to toe the mark. With their illnesses, suspensions, fouls and all the rest, they had to be like the "Minutemen" of old -- ready, capable and willing to carry on the good fight. How do you spell relief? Cvijanovich, Young, Bice, Jones, Rice, Jeter and Emerzian. What a team.

How about those coaches? I admire people who don't give up but who stand a fight for as long as it takes. It pays

off. Coach Tarkanian and his staff made all the right moves. I've never seen substituting more masterfully done. The championship game couldn't have been better scripted if it had been a movie. Tarkanian said: "This game, this tournament, was for all of the people of the state of Nevada...You know, Nevadans get knocked a lot of times..." We do. Some more than others, but his comment galvanized us all, I believe, in a way that I had not seen in all the years that I've lived in this state. What a coach.

They're sitting on top of the world. They can do no wrong. The city, county, state are at their feet. They have carte blanche and the sky's the limit. This is a good time to negotiate. Sure, the players cannot get any of those millions of dollars their efforts have generated. That, after all, is against NCAA rules. There is something they might be able to get and it shouldn't bother anybody. Maybe they could parlay all of the accolades into something that would be good for the university. Maybe they could ask the university to hire a dozen or more black faculty -- across the board -- in every department. The departments would be happy to have one more faculty person each. Wouldn't that be great. If they did that and the university acted on the request, I could end this piece by saying: "What a school."

RAMADAN

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organizations. We could be most effective there. Ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You know, they say the drug industry produces a market of about 160 billion dollars and the United States Federal Government is funding the War On Drugs with 10.6 billion dollars next year. So that's a shortfall of about 150-140 billion dollars. So we can never win with money. We would have to move with changing attitudes. We're going to have to win with people who have a sense of community, who have a sense of self, who have a sense of home, who have a sense of family, who have a sense of city, town and state. Those are the things that we could win with. It's not just a money situation. I think most of us know that, and people support what the Governor and I are approaching and the Commission, subsequently. The Commission knows that. Bob Galli, he had his objectives, he had his action power and I wish him well.

The interview With Mujahid Ramadan, Nevada's Drug Czar will continue in next week's issue of the Sentinel-Voice.

KKVV

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