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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

## BANK OF AMERICAN HOLDS GRAND OPENING CEREMONY FOR WEST LAS VEGAS BRANCH

By Bonita H. Armstrong

Bank of America opened its newest and probably most controversial branch Saturday, March 6, in West Las Vegas.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Branch, located at 835 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., was officially opened for business with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting by bank and government officials.

There has been some skepticism generating around West Las Vegas and other predominantly black areas of Las Vegas about the small size of the facility, but officials say the size of the building, 1800 square feet, is not what is important.

Sen. Joe Neal told the crowd of about 200 people that "The smallness of the building doesn't mean anything... what is important is the service provided. Let's try to develop this institution and make it the best it can be."

Paul Stowell, public relations manager for Bank of America, who served as master of ceremonies, said that the main concern of Bank of America was to get the new bank open and to get it open as quickly as possible. He also pointed out that the facility could be



From left: State Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams; County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson-Gates; branch Service Manager, Kenny Barnes; Branch Manager, Patricia Davis; Bank of America Chairman and CEO, Richard A. Etter, and Public Relations Manager, Paul Stowell, take part in grand opening ceremony.

Photo by Bill Lee

easily expanded as the need arised.

At present there are nine people employed at the MLK branch, including branch manager Patricia Davis.

"I'm really positive about the grand opening," Davis said. "I think there is

hope. We can do great things.

These sentiments were shared by County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson-Gates who said, "Today's activities represent hope for our children and hope for revitalization of our community. This new building also represents hope that other needed facilities will follow in this community."

(See Bank of America, Page 5)

## BILLY ECKSTINE DIES AT AGE 78



One of America's most popular vocalists in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Las Vegas-based jazzman, Billy Eckstine, died Monday of cardiac arrest in his hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at age 78.

Considered the first Black singer to become a national sex symbol, the romantic baritone

was known for his smooth vocals and image, both of which defied Black stereotypes of the day.

Born William Clarence Eckstine, July 8, 1914, in Pittsburgh, he was raised in Washington, D.C. and later attended Howard University.

While known most for his vocal hits, jazz enthusiasts remember him most for his earlier works. It was during the mid 1940s that the Billy Eckstine Band helped launch the careers of such greats as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, and Art Blakey, just to name a few.

The charismatic Eckstine had lived in Las Vegas off and on since the 1960s. His last public appearance here was at Vegas World in 1991.

He is survived by seven children, Kenney, Ronnie, Billy Jr., Ed, Guy, Charlotte Carole, and Gina, who performs locally; four grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

## KING TAKES STAND FOR FIRST TIME

After almost two years of silence, Rodney King took the stand for the first time Tuesday in the federal trial of four white police officers accused of violating his civil rights - and gave his first public account of the night he was pursued by officers and eventually beaten.

Speaking in a gentle voice, King said he never attacked the officers, as testified, but was attacked and taunted anyway.

"I'm not exactly sure but I heard while they were hitting me chants of 'killer, nigger, how do you feel killer?'" "I was just trying to stay alive," King told the jury in closing, after 40 minutes of questioning by prosecutors.

In cross-examination, King faced Michael Stone, the lawyer representing suspended officer Lawrence Powell, who is seen in the now famous videotape of the incident, striking King the most.

Stone focused on King's criminal record and his behavior when police tried to stop him. He also attempted to point out inconsistencies in King's statements to police and his parole officer - all in an effort to question King's credibility.

King, 27, admitted that he is no angel. When prosecutors questioned him about his drinking the night of the beating, he freely admitted "I had a lot



DEFENSE ATTORNEYS ARE FOCUSING ON RODNEY KING'S CRIMINAL RECORD

to drink."

King added that at one point, officers asked him how he felt, to which he replied that he felt fine; not wanting them to know that what they had done had really gotten to him. "I didn't want them to have the satisfaction."

Defense attorneys grilled King again Wednesday, but admitted he held up well under questioning. "He was mild mannered, polite and thoughtful. All of these things spell credibility," Stone said.

If convicted of all of the charges, the officers could be sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined \$250,000.

## GOYNES WITHDRAWS FROM NAACP PRESIDENTIAL RACE

by Lee Brown

In a letter to William Penn, NAACP National Director of Branch Services, local candidate Byron Goynes withdrew his name from the local branch's newly ordered, second presidential election.

The branch's first election, held December 20, 1992, was challenged by both Goynes and candidate Joanna Wesley-Lee, who felt some voters who paid their dues - making them eligible to vote - were not permitted to; that there were irregularities in the counting of ballots; and that they were denied equal access to the branch's list of eligible voters.

Incumbent president, Rev. Jesse Scott, went on to win the election by a 2-1 margin.

In the letter, dated March 9, 1993,

Goynes stated to Penn that between the first election and waiting for the national office to make a ruling on the protested first election, he had taken on the roll of Committee Chairman of the Boy Scouts of America Troop #158 of Second Baptist Church, the city's only Black troop.

"This is going to be a tremendous challenge and I feel in order to fully concentrate and dedicate myself to the young men of Troop #158, I need to step down from the NAACP Presidential race. Our community, right now, needs effective leadership in all areas," the letter read.

Stating that his decision to withdraw from the race was not based on a meeting he had with Wesley-Lee in February,



Former candidate Bryon Goynes plans to remain active in local NAACP. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

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