

Journalism pioneer John Sengstacke memorialized in recent services

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A memorial service was held Saturday, June 7 for the late John H. Sengstacke, 84, owner and editor of the *Chicago Defender*, who died Wednesday, May 28 after an extended illness.

Leaders from across the community mourned the death of the great journalism pioneer who at the time of his death, owned three other newspapers: *The Michigan Chronicle*, the *Tri-State Defender* and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

"For more than 40 years, John Sengstacke guided the development of the *Chicago Daily Defender* until it became this nation's preeminent African-American daily," said Cong. Bobby Rush (D-IL). "We will miss him."

"We are shocked and saddened at the news of his transition," said the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., "but today we rejoice in the tradition he sustained and because of the hope he put in the hearts of millions of people by chronicling our hopes, our losses, our victories and our struggles."

National Newspaper Publishers Association President, Dorothy R. Leavell, expressed her appreciation for the man who helped to found the association some 57 years ago.

"I am truly saddened by his passing and I will remain ever mindful of the great contributions he made to the black press. We — not just the black press, but black America — will always be grateful to him."

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley called Mr. Sengstacke, "the voice of justice" and said, "His passing is an enormous loss for our nation and our city."

One of seven children, Mr. Sengstacke was born to the Rev. Herman and Mrs. Ross Sengstacke in Savannah, GA on Nov. 25, 1912.

After graduation from Hampton Institute in 1934, he went to work for his uncle Robert S. Abbot, founder of the *Chicago Defender*.

Mr. Sengstacke inherited the paper after Mr. Abbot's death in 1910 and on Feb. 6, 1956, converted the *Defender* from a weekly

to a daily newspaper. Today, it continues to be the nation's largest African-American owned daily newspaper.

As a young man, Mr. Sengstacke wasn't sure the newspaper business was for him. "I wasn't too keen on it," he recalled in a 1975 interview with United Press International.

However, following his uncle's death, Mr. Sengstacke used the paper to champion the rights of African-Americans and other underprivileged people. And in the six decades that he controlled the *Defender*, he expanded his entrepreneurial reach well into black America.

He added several newspapers to the fold and the Abbot-Sengstacke empire has included the *Michigan Chronicle*, the *Louisville Defender*, the *Cincinnati News*, the *St. Louis News*, the *Toledo Press*, the *Tri-City Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Florida Courier*, the *Georgia Courier*, the *Detroit Courier*, the *Philadelphia Courier*, the *National Courier* and the *New York Age*.

In 1940, Mr. Sengstacke founded the National Negro Newspaper Publishers Association. Known today as the National Newspaper Publishers Association, it is an organization that has a membership of over 200 newspapers.

Through his influence with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mr. Sengstacke arranged for the first African-American correspondent in White House history, Harry McAlpin, to report news from the legendary building.

In the 1940s, Mr. Sengstacke, together with Paul Robeson, arranged a meeting with Brooklyn Dodgers manager Branch Rickey and Commissioner of the Major League Baseball, Jim Landis, which led to the hiring of Jackie Robinson as the first African-American in the all-white league.

During his lifetime Mr. Sengstacke received 10 presidential appointments, one of the most important of which was his selection by President Harry S. Truman to serve on the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, which resulted in the desegregation of the military.

He was treasurer of the Chicago Defender Charities, Inc., the organization that puts on the annual Bud Billiken Parade — an event that is among the nation's top five parades each year. Proceeds from the charities have been used to feed the poor, clothe the needy and create scholarships for scores of students over the years.

As Chairman of the Board of Provident Hospital & Training School Association, he built the new \$50 million Provident Medical Center into a legendary hospital, where the world's first heart operation was performed. It continues to be a life-saving service to African-Americans and others on Chicago's South Side.

Mr. Sengstacke was also a Trustee of Hampton Institute and Bethune Cookman College and a member of the Advisory Board of the Boy Scouts of America.

Sierra

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in owning and managing residential complexes, QNH agreed to counsel Shepherd Hills.

QNH will handle all negotiations with HUD and foot the \$16 million bill before handing the reigns to Shepherd Hills, Brookins said.

Brookins said the partnership will offer residents a chance to fulfill the American dream of homeownership.

Shepherd Hills is the first minority-owned development company awarded a contract of this magnitude, said Beatrice Thompson, wife of founder A.J. Thompson.

Shepherd Hills will develop the northwest third of the 28-acre property. HUD has opened bidding for the remaining two-thirds to developers who agree to piggyback on Shepherd Hill's concept.

Italia Taylor, of the Shepherd Hills Advisory Board, praised the Las Vegas City Council for providing African Americans the chance of a lifetime.

"We will make you proud," she said during Wednesday's event.

QNH official Loretta Orme said the development's 352 units will be demolished and replaced with 193 townhomes, available only to families earning less than 80 percent of the Las Vegas area's median income. A community center is also slated.

In 1994, a congressional subcommittee named Sierra Nevada Arms as one of the nation's 10 worst federally subsidized housing complexes. In 1995, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development foreclosed on the property. The City of Las Vegas then had the first right to purchase the 28-acre plot for \$1.

Last year Congresswoman Maxine Waters, D-Calif., pushed the Las Vegas City Council to waive its rights to the property and allow Shepherd Hills to purchase the HUD property.

Richardson

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the seven allegations and the executive board agreed Richardson should resign. Members of the 2,000 strong local group, backed the decision, according to the article. On Wednesday, Howard refused comment to the *Sentinel-Voice*.

Richardson blamed the complaints to a bunch of "crazies" bent on exacting revenge. He said nobody forced him to resign as office manager, but that he did to allow the

investigation to clear his name.

He said the entire situation weakens the effectiveness of the local chapter which has 2,000 members.

Richardson said branch president the Rev. James Rogers will decide if he keeps his job as special assistant to the president. Rogers was unavailable for comment. Both jobs were volunteer, non-paid positions.

It is unclear why the complaints weren't brought up while national officers monitored the recent elections or if the group will pursue police action for Richardson.

"I am astounded that the situation how the situation got blown out of proportion," said Rosalind Boulware, chairwoman of the NAACP ad hoc committee.

Boulware said the no one in the local branch knew about the complaints since they were filed with the national office. Once the national offices complete its investigation and return the findings, then the local branch will examine the validity of the complaints, she said. She said she asked Richardson to take a leave of absence in the interim.

After the national office examines the case, Richardson must respond within 15 days of notification, said secretary Tarsha Crockett. Next, a hearing officer investigates the complaints and forwards the findings to the Executive Committee on Disciplinary Action. Lastly, the national board passes final judgment. Defendants can an appeal unsavory ruling, Crockett said.

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PHOTO WORKSHOP

Bob Morgan, one of the top photographers in Las Vegas, will share the basics and finer skills of his craft on Monday, June 23 at 7 p.m. at **Borders Books Music & Cafe Espresso**, at Rainbow Blvd. and Lake Mead. Morgan, formerly selected by Kodak for its "For the Time of Your Life" national campaign, has been a photographer for 30 years. During the workshop, Morgan will teach, answer questions and display photographs. He operates Morgan's Photography, located at 727 South 9th St., Suite B.



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