

LAS VEGAS

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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Hero passes

Madeline Beckwith and Catisha Marsh
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No one would ever imagine Dr. James McMillan, red tam donning his crown when he went head to head with the staunchest racists of Las Vegas, as a pilot.

But Mac loved to fly.

"My husband was a top-notch pilot," said Marie McMillan, Dr. McMillan's wife of 35 years. "He got his commercial license before me and he taught me how to fly. The reason why I do it so well is because I learned from his mistakes."

Nevada's first African-American dentist, community and civil rights activist, former leader of the Las Vegas NAACP and certified commercial pilot died of a rare form of bone cancer Saturday, March 20th at 9:50 a.m. at Nathan Adelson Hospital.

James McMillan was born the grandson of a slave in Mississippi in 1917. At five-years-old, McMillan and his mother migrated north, settling in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit and finally Hamtramch, Michigan. As a young man, Dr. McMillan attended the University of Detroit on an athletic scholarship. He then pursued and earned a degree in Dentistry from Meharry Medical College. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1944 and served as a captain in the reserves in 1951.

He married and divorced twice before wedding Marie Stever-Daly, whom he has been with for over three decades.

When Dr. McMillan moved his family to Las Vegas, he became known for speaking out with vehemence against the racial discrimination here.

He served as president of the local branch of the NAACP from 1956 to 1960, and was instrumental in opening the Strip to blacks after he threatened to lead a march down the famous walk.

In 1997, Dr. McMillan authored the book, "Fighting Back: A Life in the Struggle for Civil Rights", chronicling his experiences and analyzing various aspects of the struggle.

It seemed as if it was overnight that McMillan's health took a turn for the worse.

"Just last month, he was fine," Mrs. McMillan said. She recalled how one day, he got up from breakfast and his arm was broken. He went to the doctor, underwent a battery of tests and eventually was diagnosed with spindle cell cancer.

"It (the cancer) wrapped around his spine and paralyzed him," she said. "He was so big and strong. It was hard for me to see him like that."

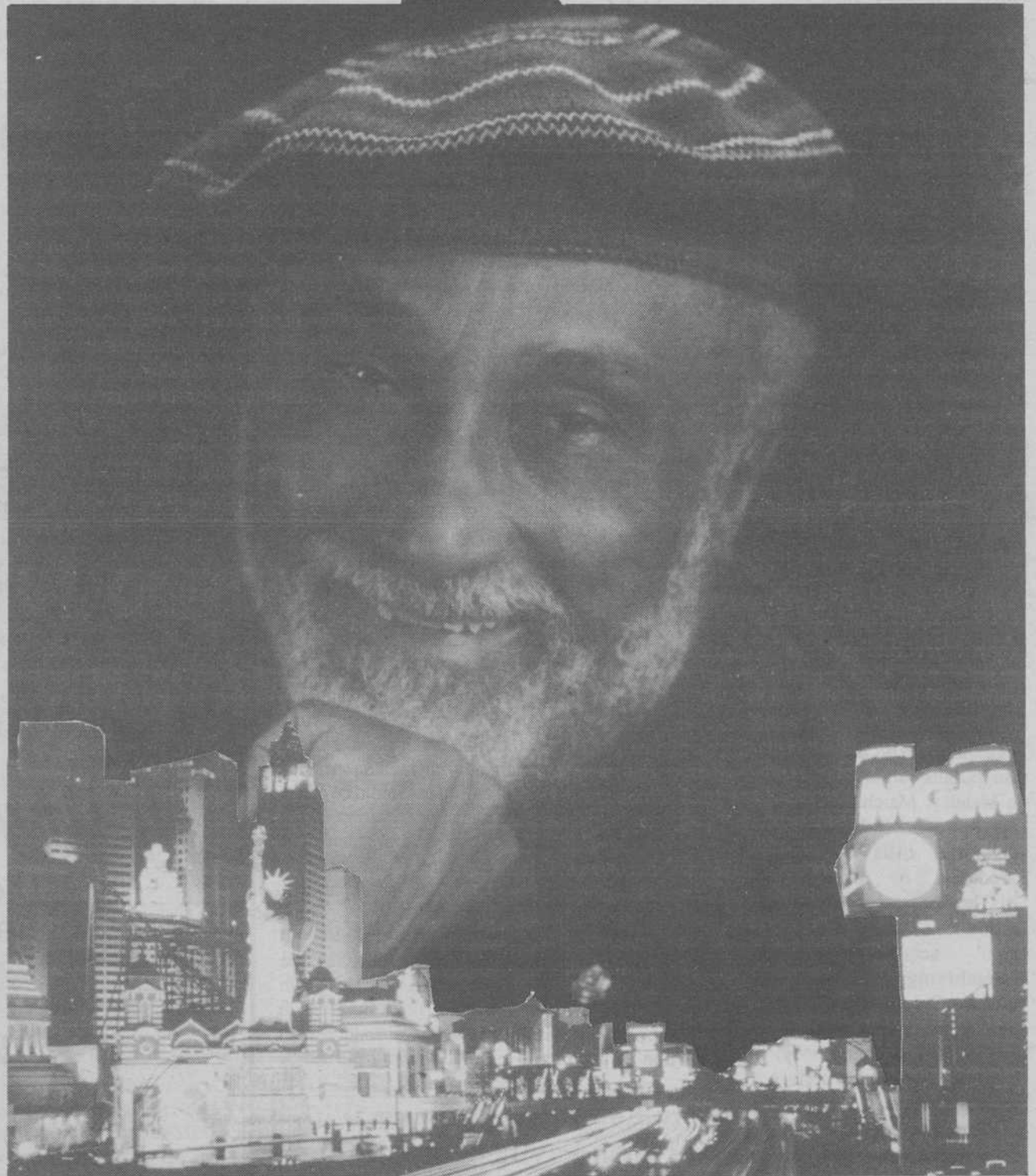
Though the disease advanced rapidly, her husband was "alert" and seemed as if he might pull through, until the last day.

Lou Conners Sr., owner of Seven Seas and McMillan's business partner, visited the doctor until the end. The two

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— Marie McMillan



LOUIS FARRAKHAN

Louis Farrakhan begins four-month sabbatical

By Ernest Tucker
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Although a spokesman for minister Louis Farrakhan said Friday that the Nation of Islam leader is in no imminent medical danger, Farrakhan has begun a four-month sabbatical from public appearances to recover from a combination of ailments.

"This is no deathwatch," Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, Farrakhan's personal physician, told reporters at the Salaam Restaurant, 700 W. 79th. He said that Farrakhan, 65, is in fine spirits at an undisclosed location, which Muhammad said was being kept secret for security purposes. Farrakhan's prostate cancer, first detected

in 1991, has been checked by a procedure involving placing 238 radioactive metal "seeds" around the prostate, said Muhammad, the minister of health and human services for the Nation of Islam.

"It is a complete success," Muhammad said.

He declined to say where the operation was performed, although the Washington-

based doctor said it was in the United States. Farrakhan has battled several flu-like illnesses since December and suffered anemia caused by rectal bleeding, a frequent side effect from radiation, Muhammad said.

During Farrakhan's last public speech, on Feb. 28 at the Savior's Day gathering at McCormick Place, he said

that he had lost 20 pounds and that he had "never been ill like this in my life."

He also said he was healed with divine power. Muhammad said Farrakhan has been forced to curtail his workload, which the doctor said has left Farrakhan feeling frustrated.

Still, Muhammad said, (See Farrakhan, Page 4)