

Sorority's annual card tourney comes up aces

By Dianna Saffold
Sentinel-Voice

February may be the shortest month of the year, but it is certainly the most exciting, the most culturally enriched—a month filled with memories of as much pain as pleasure.

5 No Trump... I pass!

The ladies of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority celebrated this month by having their annual Bid Whist Card Tournament. There were other games going on, such as spades, dominoes and scrabble, but let's face it, I am from the midwest, and I could hardly pull myself away from the bid whist table! Slapping cards, making that crisp popping sound, then talking s#&t after making the bid—you know, the one your partner bailed you out on...

The card games were held at the Clark County Government Center. There were about 20 tables filled with card players anxiously awaiting the start signal from Sigma soror Joyce Thomas.

Each round lasted exactly thirty minutes, and that was the key. Of course, I did not get the key until the night was over. Each table received rules and score sheets, the object was to play as many games as you could in each

round; it's a shame I didn't grasp the concept until it was too late. That might have been why my bid whist partner, Terry Weatherspoon, was not very pleased with our final score.

They served an attractive, light, tasty food layout, a carefully planned menu eliminating anything that contributed to sticky fingers. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, creating that "house party" feel; the only difference is the winners got prizes instead of the losers getting shots of tequila. The First Place Spades winners were Marilyn Richardson and Dorothy Blake and the First Place Bid Whist winners were Gwen Starks and Gwen Straton.

Actually, my partner and I were doing pretty well.

We had up seated snowbird Evelyn Davenport and her partner Willow Thames; then over swaggered table slapping, fun-loving Dr. William W. Sullivan, UNLV Associate Vice President for Retention and Outreach, and his partner—changing the tide, you know the rest. For you art lovers, famous artist Annie Lee, a lady of Sigma Gamma Rho, was in the house and was Third Place winner in the Bid Whist tournament.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Dianna Saffold

Artist Annie Lee poses with Sigma Gamma Rho sorority member Joyce Thomas at the annual Bid Whist tourney.

The women of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. have been around since 1922. The Las Vegas Chapter, Eta Chi Sigma, established in 1994, encourages high scholastic achievement and career aspirations: "greater service, greater progress." Their most recent civic project is LADES—Leadership and Development Empowering Sisters for the Next Millennium.

The annual Bid Whist Tournament sponsored by these sistahs is a success each year. Next year, all you Bid Whist talkers, come out and play your game, don't just

talk it...like I did this year!

Let us not forget our black soldiers

I've taken you from one end of the strip to the other, from the west side to the east side; but going to the Nellis Air Force Base seeking entertaining news for you was a unique twist. As I watch Bush's war foreplay, being breast-fed all information from the bosoms of the media, the full impact of my people's participation did not hit me until I set foot on that base, and the harsh reality set

in...and I was proud.

As I turned into the base drive on my way to the African-American Cultural Association's (ACA) "Annual Gospel Jubilee," entering the base was almost eerie. For a moment, I thought of a world ruled by the military...did you feel that breeze?

By the way, the purpose of ACA is to support and promote the development of leadership and professionalism among its members and to share an African-American Cultural perspective in an effort to educate the youth, the community and themselves.

The celebration took place in the base chapel. Most of the attendees as well as the participants were dressed in beautiful African garb; bold prints, entwined and embroidered with rich gold thread representing the rich culture we were all there to celebrate. Airman Vince N. Williams read inspirational poetry.

There were several of the church community's choirs on the program, including the Unity Baptist Church Choir, Ebenezer C.O.G.I.C. Choir and Nellis AFB Gospel Choir.

All participants poured their souls into the music, celebrating the rich African-American culture. This precious time together not only included glimpses of our history, but also a moment of silence in memory of the recent death of Astronaut Michael Anderson on Feb. 1, a result of the recent space shuttle tragedy. Anderson was a veteran of space flight who had logged over 211 flight hours.

The members of ACA presented a well organized event with a variety of presentations, including the distribution of certificates of appreciation and an emotionally thought-provoking speech delivered by Chaplain Victor J. Toney. When SSgt. Ron Tann introduced the chaplain and the audience stood and practically roared, I was not surprised when the word he brought was so sincere, so emotion-packed, so well received. He gave us plenty of food for thought, including one tidbit I left with: "Forgiving is forgiving, forgiving is not forgetting; forgetting is a sign of brain damage." (See Celebrations, Page 15)

Art exhibit focuses on stereotypes

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A white gown and hood spread on the museum's floor are the first unsettling images greeting visitors at an exhibit exposing historical stereotypes of blacks in American culture.

"The intended effect is to walk on this symbol of hatred," said Timothy Watkins about the Ku Klux Klan uniform. Watkins' personal collection of memorabilia helped create "Americana, Extremes Meet," on display through May 30 at the Cecil Ferguson Gallery in Los Angeles.

The compilation shows how images that demean blacks are ingrained in American society.

For example, a 1930s print advertisement for Otis Elevators, hailing the advent of "finger tip control" buttons, depicts a black porter in an offensive caricature with oversized lips and bulging eyes. He is leaning over to pick up bags for a white man in a trench coat.

The print copy appears to have a dual meaning, referring at once to the product and the porter: "Elevators that have that lazy uncertain way of getting up and down almost always respond admirably to a program of modernization."

Near the exhibit's entrance, a record album with a red KKK label is mounted on a wall. The record's title track is called "Daddy Swiped Our Last Clean Sheet and Joined the Ku Klux Klan." The album was produced by Columbia Recording Corp.

"You actually have companies that people recognize today that we believe perpetrated these images," Watkins said.

The exhibit showcases the memorabilia in an American-style living room, kitchen and children's bedroom.

"It's not meant just to shock. But it's meant to put in a part of history that is never taught," said curator Cecil Ferguson, 71.

That was the effect when a group of homeschooled students and their parents recently visited the gallery.

Noah Luke, a 10-year-old from Van Nuys, Calif., said he was especially moved by the figurines and postcards that depicted black children as alligator bait. "It's overwhelming and sad," he said, adding that he planned to return with his video camera to make an amateur documentary about the exhibit.

Watkins, 49, said he has spent at least \$250,000 collecting the memorabilia, including \$2,000 spent for a book of sheet music titled, "Coon Songs." His instinct to collect was influenced by his father, Ted Watkins, who escaped a lynch mob in his youth in Mississippi.

One of the few things the elder Watkins managed to bring with him on his trek to California was the front page of a Civil War-era newspaper printed on wallpaper. The July 2, 1863, edition of the Daily Citizen is still in the family.

Over the years, father and son collected old cars, toy trains and fine glass, and memorabilia depicting blacks.

"The stuff is so ugly that if all I do is collect it because it has some value as memorabilia, then I perpetuate the value of slavery," Watkins said.

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