

Freed young athlete enjoys family reunion

By Vicki T. Lee

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — A White cop pulled Marcus Dixon over during a family trip back from Daytona, Fla., not realizing that the White family in the other car that pulled over was Marcus' dad, mom and brother.

Shooed back to his vehicle when he rushed to inquire why his son and friends — two young Black men — were stopped, Ken Jones returned to hear the cop change his explanation three times — from "speeding" to "following too close" to "swerving" — never settling on one.

Later that trip, a White woman "freaked out when she thought Marcus had jumped in his car and pulled off without paying for the gas," Peri Jones said.

Writers in restaurants also posed a problem, automatically handing out separate checks.

"People couldn't see that we were a family," Jones said, "and it hurt Marcus' feelings."

The incidents stick out in Peri Jones' mind as the worst

that their African-American son growing up in a White family had endured. That is, until she witnessed the treatment Marcus received as a Black man awaiting freedom from the accusations of a White woman.

"I did not realize that African-American men had been through this," Jones said. "I went into this thinking that (Marcus) would be treated fairly and justly, that this wasn't because of race. But they kept doing things that were not right and treating him differently."

Her son knew better, though, and told her so.

During his 14-month stint in jail, Marcus called his parents every night, and every night "I gave him a report" of what they were doing to help his defense Jones said.

"What helped him was hearing our voices and hearing what we've done. Hardest for him was when he felt that everybody had forgotten about him and wondering if the decision was ever going to go down. It was his life he was waiting on."

An honor-roll student and

athlete whose scholarship at Vanderbilt University was rescinded, Marcus filled his waiting time helping inmates fulfill the general education requirements and working in the warehouse handing out clothes.

Lifting weights wasn't permitted, so Marcus did push-ups, sit-ups and improvised with chairs. He played basketball in the gym and instead of participating in the tug-and-pull of channels with the television, played cards and read books, including the Bible.

Two Sundays before Mother's Day, Peri Jones told her son he'd be out and asked, "where will you take me?"

"IHOP," he answered, and there the family celebrated after his release despite Marcus "down and pouty" nervousness about being in public in his hometown.

When the White Joneses brought home their African-American son years before, the reaction of the people in the towns of Lindale and Rome, Ga., was mixed.

"Some looked at you like trash," Jones said. "Then

some said I admire you. And then we had the majority, who said what we did was so wonderful."

She noticed a definite rift in support when Marcus was convicted, but the facts of the case outshone the naysayers.

Marcus knew the deal. "They hate me because they hate Black people," not because it was personal. And his parents knew enough to warn their son to be careful when he started dating.

"We felt that the majority of White couples were fair, but there is an invisible line, they don't mind interracial marriages as long as it's not their daughter," Jones said.

Satisfied with his bacon cheeseburger at Crystal's, "sleeping in his own bed and showering in his own shower, Marcus wants to be a normal kid right now, going to college, majoring in education and playing football," Jones said. "Marcus is not angry at anybody. He realizes he made a mistake, that God loves and forgives and he has forgiven himself."

Vicki T. Lee writes for the Afro Newspapers.

Town of Rosewood gets historic marker

By Vaughn Wilson

Special to Sentinel-Voice

ROSEWOOD, Fla. (NNPA) — In a celebration marking a historic change in fortune for the area that once was the small town of Rosewood, Gov. Jeb Bush recently presented a historic marker to commemorate "seven days of hate that shattered a community."

Just 30 minutes southwest Gainesville, Rosewood's notoriety came from a New Year's Day massacre in 1923.

Racial unrest led to the area's White residents killing of several Blacks, massive destruction of property and displacement of hundreds of other Blacks, whose houses were burned to the ground.

Official reports place the number of dead at eight, but Rosewood descendants claim that hundreds more may have lost their lives that night, said Florida A&M University Dean of Arts & Sciences Larry Rivers, co-principal investigator into Rosewood's history. But some Blacks escaped by running through muck and marsh to do so. In 1994, Sen. Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, presented a bill before the state Legislature to provide reparations in the form of finances, land and scholarships for the families and descendants of the Blacks who were affected by the "Rosewood Massacre."

Ironically, Lawson endured death threats during the years he fought doggedly to advance the bill.

The legislation finally passed and was signed by then-Gov. Lawton Chiles and Rosewood rose again from the ashes.

With a broad and continuous smile at the ceremony last week, Lawson said, "This is the first time I've actually visited the city of Rosewood. I feel an extreme sense of electricity. While nothing we could do can stop the pain of the Rosewood massacre, it makes me feel extremely good for the state of Florida to apologize to the survivors and the descendants of the victims."

Bush echoed Lawson's sentiments and characterized the massacre as "one of the darkest moments in our past." He also said Lawson grossly understated the troubles and level of threats he received for trying to get the bill passed. Bush added, "We must own up to the tragedy of Rosewood. We can be proud of the fact that change came in a single lifetime."

Robie Mortin, a survivor of the massacre, was present and was embraced by the crowd of hundreds. She unveiled the historic marker in a shower of tears. As Lawson watched her pull the cover from the marker, he said, "This is by far the most significant legislation I have ever been a part of in my 22 years of service."

Dean Rivers presided over the event held at the community's recreation center. Attendees included FAMU President Fred Gainous, Bethune-Cookman College President Oswald P. Brunson, Rep. Ed Jennings, D-Gainesville, Rosewood Scholarship recipient Edricka Hawkins, Rosewood descendent Lizzie Jenkins, the FAMU Gospel Choir and Arnett Doctor Sr.

Standing on the site where an entire town of Black people was destroyed and where only the ruins — a few chimneys and foundations — remain as silent witnesses to that racially motivated tragedy, participants in the ceremony seemed determined that there would never be another Rosewood.

Vaughn Wilson writes for the Capital Outlook.

Prison

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own actions, or protecting themselves."

Sgt. Davis and his wife have two children — a 4-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter — and live in Maryland.

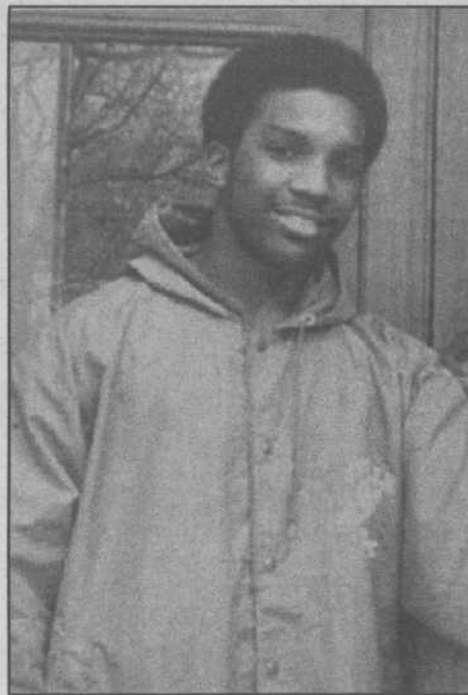
A graduate of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Davis was a track star at Abraham Clark High School in Roselle.

The alleged abuses took place at Abu Ghraib prison between October and November 2003 in a special security section against 20 prisoners.

According to press reports, civilian contractors who interrogated prisoners, military intelligence officers, and agents for the Central Intelligence Agency were also part of the "torture culture" at that section.

Their goal — to exact information from prisoners "by any means necessary" regarding insurgent attacks against occupying U.S. forces.

Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, the Army official who investigated the crimes and issued a scathing report, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he found no evidence of the prison personnel following any directives to commit the atrocities.



Javal S. Davis is seen in the Abraham Clark High School 1994 year-book. Davis, an Army reservist with the 372nd Military Police Company, will be court-martialed for his role in the Iraqi prison abuse scandal.

He added that there was a "Failure in leadership, sir, from the brigade commander on down."

However, some of the accused, such as Sgt. Davis, say they were, in fact, directed to commit the acts against Iraqi prisoners by superiors and intelligence officers.

"It's not just oversight or negligence or neglect or sloppiness, but purposeful willful determination to use these techniques as part of an interrogation process," Sen. Carl Levin said, noting that there is evidence of the abuses being part of an intelligence

protocol.

The question that is still open is from how high up the military chain-of-command did the orders for these abusive tactics come.

Congressional lawmakers blasted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in two televised hearings for not advising them before the pictures were aired.

The Pentagon allowed senators to view more of the controversial and crude torture pictures, and even some videotapes, all still classified, behind closed doors last week for three hours. They are said to be much, much worse than

what have already been released.

President Bush, who was angry that he didn't see any of the pictures until after some aired on 60 Minutes II, has declared his support for Rumsfeld amid calls for his resignation.

The Congressional Black Caucus has joined the chorus of those seeking Rumsfeld's dismissal, which is not expected for now.

"This was not just a failure of leadership at the local command level. This was a failure that ran straight to the top," an editorial in the independent Army Times stated.

"Accountability here is essential — even if that means relieving top leaders from duty in a time of war."

Cash Michaels writes for the Wilmington Journal.

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