



*"I dedicated 'Roots' as a birthday offering to my country, within which most of 'Roots' happened."*

-- Alex Haley

## The Author

Author Alex Haley spent much of his boyhood with his grandmother in Henning, Tennessee, listening to the old people remembering stories that led back to a mysterious man they called "the African."

It was those stories, the oral history of his family that helped to pass the slow southern evenings, that stayed with Alex Haley, nagged at the back of his mind, until he decided in 1962 to follow the slender threads of memory as far back as they would take him.

They took him, over a 12-year period of research, to Gambia, West Africa, the birthplace of "the African" -- a child named Kunta Kinte who was ripped out of his village in 1767 and sold into slavery, bringing to America the seed that would lead to dimly-remembered stories planted in a child's mind in Henning, Tennessee over 150 years later. Stories that led to "Roots," Haley's monumental saga of an American family.

Haley himself was born in Ithaca, New York; after spending his growing-up summers in Henning he attended college for two years before he began his life as a wanderer by joining the U.S. Coast Guard, through which he traveled the world until his retirement from the service at the age of 37. In 1959 he began writing fulltime, an occupation he had begun to pursue during his years as the Coast Guard's first Chief Journalist and soon began selling to such magazines as "Harper's," "The Atlantic Monthly," and "The New York Times Magazine." For several years he wrote the "Playboy Interviews," a feature he originated. Following his interview with Malcom X he spent two years writing "The Autobiography of Malcom X," which was published in eight languages and has sold well over 5 1/2 million copies.

Haley's life since has been devoted to the pursuit of "Roots," which was published by Doubleday in October of 1976 and quickly became the nation's No. 1 best-seller. A bachelor, Haley has residences in Los Angeles and on the island of Jamaica, but from April, when "Roots" began filming in Georgia, through film's completion in September, he was with the film company every day, living -- as is his custom -- out of a suitcase.

Alex Haley has found his roots -- but they are movable.

*The Observer is happy to present this special issue on 'Roots' and we thank our advertisers for making it possible*

Saturday the winner of 9 Emmy Awards begins again

# ROOTS

LeVar Burton  
Cicely Tyson

Edward Asner  
O.J. Simpson

8:00

KPTV 12

