

T.V. star: A self reflection

By Nyewusi Askari

(Editor's Note: This is the final installment of the Observer's interview with T.V. star Michael Roberts)

Observer: How did you break into the Baretta Series?

Roberts: I have been acting for about 13 years. Most of it was off and on. *Baretta* came as a result of just working hard. I did a show with a guy named Bernie Gaworsky. We did a show with MGM and I had these four lines and I really did them well. I knew I did them well. Bernie liked it alot, so when he went over to Universal to do *Baretta*, he called me over, and...I didn't know who in the hell Robert Blake was which was all the better, cuz if I did I'd probably been nervous, know what I mean?

Anyway, we sat down and read the script and Blake looked at Bernie and said, "You think he's good?" Bernie said, "Yes." So Blake said, "We'll go with it." Bobby (Blake) has that type of attitude, he doesn't trip or anything like that. At that point, I wasn't a regular on the show. I had done like, five or six other series as guest roles previous to that, and that's what I was doing this time...doing my lines and saying bye bye.

When we came in to do the show, the character (Rooster) wasn't a pimp or anything...he was kinda a street dude, just sort of written into the script. He had a few lines to carry on the story plan. So, I did the lines and Bobby (Blake) had me back on the show four times, and then Universal offered me a contract. Now, you just don't turn down a contract especially when no one knows who you are.

The next year, I came back to do the show. I had been basically working in theatre and they started developing the character more and more. Some of the things I liked about what they created as far as the character is concerned, some of them I didn't. Er...sometimes you have problems with making changes. Sometimes you don't. But one of the things I realized that I didn't realize until after the show was over, was how much I had learned. That was one of my main reasons for doing the show in the first place. I had decided, talking about decision, about two years previous to getting the series, that I was going to get a series and work in it for three years to just basically find out what television was all about. Well *Baretta* lasted about three and a half years. Now I am working on getting my own series. I just recently did a pilot that was on last year called "Light Side" that I liked a lot. I don't know what the networks thought about it. We are waiting to see.

Observer: What advice do you have for parents?

Roberts: The word is a heavy. It is responsibility. It's so heavy that many parents destroy their children rather than take the responsibility for them. For a example; a young girl gets pregnant, go to her parents for advice and the first thing they think about is an abortion. Now that's heavy! And it really gets heavy when you see it creeping into the Black communities, because you know that it has come thru other communities as well. Example, white middle class. It's heavy when you hear Mexican Americans talking about getting abortions.

You see, in my viewpoint, the people on the lower strata have some strong family ties, you know what I mean? It's like the O'Jays song, "Family Reunion." We are talking about you, me, mamma, daddy, sister, brother and relatives. I have a friend from Texas who told me about his family reunions. Man! Five hundred Black people! I said what! Five hundred people! But you see this among the various communities, regardless of color, so when this bond starts cracking up, you know someone has thrown something into it that's pretty heavy.

It comes right back to responsibility. For a parent, it's respon-



MICHAEL ROBERTS

sibility. I'm not saying we have to give up the bread in our pockets or the food on our table, but as a parent, we have to find out what is going on with our children.

Parents have to be interested in the slightest thing their children are interested in. Being a parent is really a super big job, and either people don't realize it or don't want to do it, or their problems are so heavy that they can't confront the area. A parent must be capable and willing to communicate with the children on any level. Lets face it...you have all kinds of movies coming out with kids doing all kinda things. You know what I'm saying? You got Brooks Shields, or the Jackson sisters, or the Jacksons themselves or the Osmonds, man, the kids themselves are tuned in quicker and they will go to the drug man or the sex man a lot quicker than we do. That's why they are starting younger. They turn on the television, pick this type of stuff off and no one is telling them, "say look...I don't care what you are watching, but do you know what it is you are watching? What did you learn from that?"

Some of the heaviest plays I've dealt with had to do with the distance between the Black father and the son. You see, in the Black family, the Black father had to work so hard just to get over and had to deal with a society that kept trying

to keep him down, that a distance started existing between him and his son. You go into the white neighborhoods and find the same thing. The play "Death of a Salesman" deals with the same thing, where there is distance between the father and son, and the inability to communicate. The father has problems, the son has problems, so in essence, it comes down to being willing to communicate, talk openly and honestly with your children, gain their confidence, admit your own limitations and limited knowledge, and spread some of the love around to them that you received or desired when you were a child.

It comes back down to communication, responsibility, being able to work a extra eight hours more after you leave your job, letting your children know you are willing to listen to anything they have to say.

If children feel that no one is going to listen to them, or that no one understands, then they are going to go off with the guys and girls around the corner. Childhood is spooky enough for children without us making it any worst. It's also all about love.

CZ pays women back wages

The Department of Justice has obtained a consent decree requiring Crown Zellerbach Corporation to pay \$275,000 in back pay to more than 300 women in settlement of an employment discrimination suit.

Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti said the decree was filed in U.S. District Court in New Orleans, Louisiana, resolving the suit filed at the same time.

The suit charged the papermaking company with violating Executive Order 11246, which prohibits federal contractors from discriminating in employment practices, by restricting women to lower-paying, lower-opportunity jobs at its facilities in Bogalusa, Louisiana.

In addition, the suit said, women were hired at only two of the four

plants in Bogalusa. Those two plants are no longer in operation.

Under the consent decree, Crown Zellerbach agreed to pay \$120,000 in back pay to women who were rejected for nonclerical jobs between 1974 and 1977 and \$155,000 in compensation to women who worked at the Bogalusa facility in 1976.

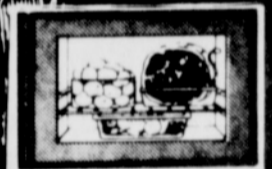
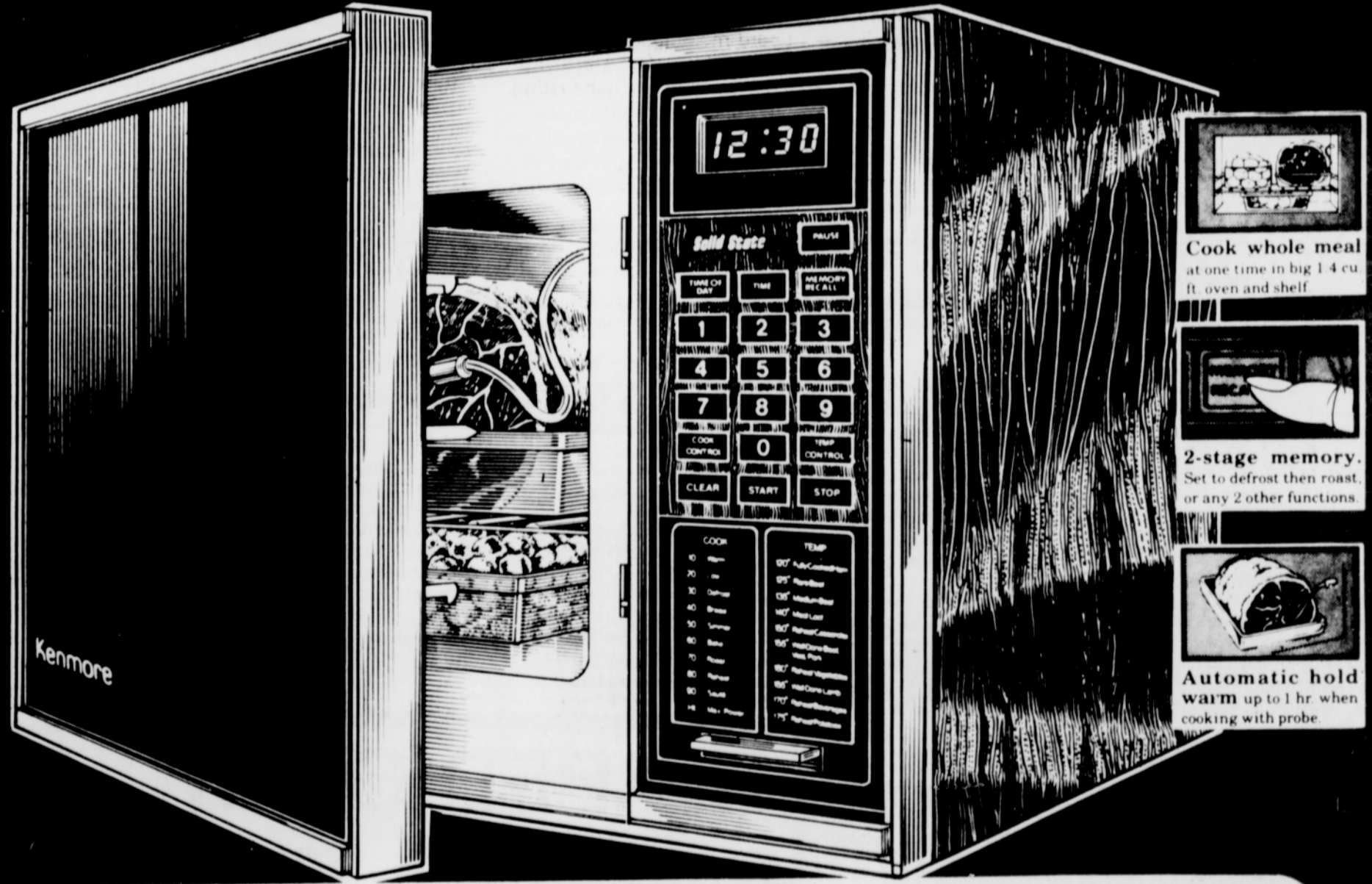
The decree also enjoins the company from engaging in any practice that discriminates against women in violation of the Executive Order.

Crown Zellerbach further agreed to dismiss a 1977 lawsuit against the Secretary of Labor seeking to prevent the company from being debarred from federal contracts without a hearing.

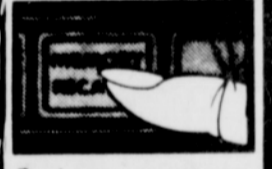
Mrs Maude Banks Young and her family wish to express their appreciation to the many people who extended their condolences, kindness and assistance at the time of the death of her grandson, Michael Banks Shephard, and to those who have known and loved Michael.

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