

Black History Month

A PORTLAND OBSERVER SPECIAL EDITION

Portlander's Son Honored by Alaskans

BY BILL GRAVES
of the Oregonian Staff

Ninety-year-old Lawrence Campbell sinks into the cushy sofa in his living room and gingerly unwraps the newspaper as though it were a silk scarf enfolding diamonds.

Slowly, one by one, he lifts his black-and-white treasures, and spreads them over the dark coffee table. One photograph portrays his son in a suit; another shows him at the wedding altar with his wife, Dolores. The third and most telling shows him as a young man in a flight suit, goggles pushed up on his head, standing by a P-47 fighter plane and gazing proudly into the sky as if he owned it.

This is Lawrence E. Campbell Jr., the first black American to pilot a jet and the first black American group commander in the U.S. Air National Guard.

"They have set aside a special day for him," said his father, who lives in Northeast Portland where his son spent his high school and college years.

Indeed, the Air National Guard gave the junior Campbell the state's highest military honor on Sunday, February 2, 1992: The Alaska Legion of Merit. Gov. Walter J. Hickel also awarded Campbell the Certificate of Distinguished Public Service for "enriching the lives of all Alaskans by your extraordinary leadership."

"I was quite surprised," said Campbell, 65, in a telephone interview from his Anchorage home. "It was sort of overwhelming really."

The pilot was honored for his 23 years of service to the guard, the broader aircraft community and the youth of Alaska. Campbell broke barriers dividing racial groups and separating the military from civilian youth at a critical time in the guard's history, said Capt. Mike Haller, spokesman for the Alaska Air National Guard.

"He's definitely considered a pioneer for us," Haller said. "People still talk about Larry and the guard together around town. He is quite a man."

Campbell moved to Alaska in 1963 and quickly rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the guard. He piloted the first C-123 transport into Seward after the devastating Good Friday earthquake in 1964 and flew many missions in support of the Fairbanks flood-relief operation three years later. In 1972, he



Lawrence E. Campbell, Jr. the first Black American to pilot a jet. The pilot, who attended high school and college in Portland, received Alaska's highest Military honor.

became the nation's first guard group commander by taking charge of the 176th Tactical Airlift Group. He retired in 1986.

He also worked in Alaska on the National Transportation Safety Board, the Alaska Transportation Commission, the office of aircraft services for the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

But Campbell is probably best known for pioneering jet flight for black Americans in 1948, a feat he attributes largely to luck. The Tuskegee Airmen, a famed all-black World War II fighter squadron, already had crossed the barrier that kept black men grounded. The squadron was formed from a group of 926 blacks trained Alabama's Tuskegee Army Flying School, which was created after the Army Air Forces were ordered to lift a color ban.

"By the time I flew the jet, they knew black men could fly," said Campbell. "This was just a normal progression of fighter checkout."

Still, it brought Campbell fame and opened doors that allowed him to spend most of his career where he wanted to be--in the sky. He wanted to fly as far back as his memory will reach. As a boy in Tulsa, Okla., he built model airplanes, loved to go to the local airport, and would gaze dreamily at military recruiting pictures showing fighter

planes zooming over the Taj Mahal.

He moved with his parents and five brothers to Portland in 1940 and attended Washington High School and the University of Portland. He entered cadet training with the Tuskegee all-black fighter outfit in 1944. But after the war ended in 1945, the school closed.

Campbell was accepted again for advanced flight training 1947. He learned to fly P-51 Mustang fighters. Then in June of 1948, by chance, he became the first black man to get a crack at flying the F-80 Shooting Star—a jet.

"He never really made a big deal out of it," said his son, Larry E. Campbell, III, an Anchorage journalist.

But while Campbell may downplay his accomplishments as a pilot, Alaska's leaders took time February 2, to remember them. So did about 1,000 members of the Air National Guard who gathered in Hangar 2 at Kulis Air National Guard Base in Anchorage for the 45-minute ceremony. And so did Campbell's wife, five children, and brother, Richard, who lives in Portland.

His father wanted to be there, too, but was forced to rely on photographs to see his son.

"I'm 90 years old, and it's too damn cold for me," he said.

City Club Presents Black History: Roots and Flowers

In recognition of Black History Month, City Club presents Dr. Darrell Millner, chair of the Black Studies Department, Portland State University, in a program entitled "Black History: Roots and Flowers." The program will be Friday, February 28, noon, in the Portland Hilton Galleria Room.

Dr. Millner will speak on the origins of Black History Month, the lessons of Black History for contemporary Oregonians, and the contributions of African-Americans to the city and state.

The program is open to the public. Call the City Club office at 228-7231 by noon Thursday, February 27, to make lunch reservations. Guests-\$15.00; Club members-\$11.00; coffee-\$2.50. Free and open seating is available in the back. Doors open 11:30 a.m.

The City Club of Portland is a non-profit public affairs organization open to all people in the community.

Black Family Heritage Honored At Nordstrom



"The Black Family Reunion Cookbook is a powerful statement about a simple ritual that binds us together on so many levels," states Dr. Dorothy I. Height, President of the National Council of Negro Women.

Nordstrom, the nation's largest specialty fashion retailer, honors the African-American family during Black History Month with its national launch of "The Black Family Reunion Cookbook." Created by the National Council of Negro Women, the book serves not only as a fund raising vehicle for the 57 year old organization, but according to Dr. Dorothy Height, president and CEO, it helps tell the story of the African American family, its history, values and traditions. "Our hope is that this book will make a difference as we are trying to build on the historic strengths of the family," said Height.

Nordstrom now carries the 320 page book in all of its Oregon stores while supplies last. All proceeds from the special \$12.95 sales price are distributed among the NCNW community-based sections and the organization's national headquarters. "Our goal is to raise \$50,000 for this fine organization," says Charles Dudley, Nordstrom Human Resources vice president. "Nordstrom is founded on family values and wholeheartedly agree with the efforts of the NCNW. They believe, as our company founders believed, that our heritage and values serve as our

anchor." Nordstrom's involvement in offering our cookbook says something to the country of which we are immensely proud," said Height. "To have a corporation of this magnitude and significance standing behind us will help bring our message home."

"The Black Family Reunion Cookbook" is an extension of the Council's celebrated annual reunions which have developed since the first reunion in 1985 to include participation from some six million people around the country.

Woven among its recipes, ranging from Peppercorn Roast to the now famous Sweet Potato Pie, are historical and African-American cultural messages and descriptions. Cultural origins and classic African-American fabric which are now integrated into everyday life are highlighted, Kente and Wax Hollandais fabrics.

The Black Family Reunion cookbook is one important element of Nordstrom's overall cultural diversity program which, over the last several years, has been dedicated along four major prongs: development of minority vendor relationships, community relations, contributions and employment.



PORTLAND SICKLE CELL ANEMIA FOUNDATION

The Least Everyone Should Know About African American History

Did you know that in 1894, Booker T. Washington became the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard? Or, that in 1903, Maggie L. Walker became the first African American woman to head a bank--Richmond's St. Luke Bank and Trust? Understanding the obscure and hidden facts that our schools don't cover are essential to the African American experience. Since the arrival of Pedro Alonzo Nino in 1492, with Christopher Columbus and the highly debated "discovery" of the new world, African American contributions have flourished, shaping the foundation of America. However, many of our African founders remain unknown.

Choice Production's founder Wilie L. Anderson Jr., a 21 year old college student, has created an audio chronology of African American life from 1492 to 1955--The Least Everyone Should Know About African American History. The tapes are narrated by Sherry Anderson and feature dramatic readings highlighted with music and sound effects. The production includes four audio tapes packaged with original art works by Darrell F. Robinson.

Introduction booklets and workbooks, by Christie Smith, are available as well. Recently, at a social studies fair in Oakland, CA, the production was overwhelmingly received by staff and educators of the Oakland Unified School District. The production was also featured on KGO-TV, channel 7, in San Francisco.

It is often stated that without a past there can be no future. Each day is an effort towards placing The Least Everyone Should Know About African American History into the curriculum of every school across the United States. The sets include a Family Set for \$49.95 and a Classroom Set for \$99.95.



Portland Public Schools

Salutes

The organizations and individuals that build understanding through action

during

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY, 1992

DYNAMIC CONGRESSWOMAN

BARBARA JORDAN

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (D) FROM TEXAS, THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN EVER ELECTED TO CONGRESS FROM THE SOUTH (1972). A NATIVE OF HOUSTON SHE WAS GRADUATED MAGNA CUM LAUDE FROM TEXAS SOUTHERN U. SHE RECEIVED HER LAW DEGREE FROM BOSTON U. IN 1959. PRACTICED LAW IN HOUSTON, ENTERED POLITICS IN 1962 AND RAN FOR THE TEXAS HOUSE BUT LOST TWICE. IN 1968 RAN FOR STATE SENATE AND WON. A BRILLIANT CONSTITUTIONAL LAWMAKER REP. JORDAN WAS APPOINTED

TO THE JUDICIARY COMM. AND LOOKS AS A POWERFUL INFLUENCE IN THE CAPITOL. A FINE ORATOR SHE WAS SELECTED AS KEYNOTER AT THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION IN 1976 IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN. A CHAMPION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND FREEDOM.



Resources Documenting Connections And Continuity Of Historical Identities In The Pacific West (Oregon, Utah, Washington & California)

By J. M. Gates, MBA

"Independent Scholar Projects" (The Voice of Work)

with research and interpretive history by Gates implemented 1977 - 1992 regarding 19th century and 20th century endeavors...

c/o Circle Forum
P.O. Box 176
Portland, OR 97207

National Public Radio Celebrates Black History Month With An Exuberant Mix Of Music

The music of the house party, the roadhouse, and the church come together in *Juke Joints & Jubilee*, a two-hour special to be broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) member stations this February in celebration of Black History Month. (Call your local public radio station for broadcast times.)

The program draws upon the talents of the soulful, hard-rocking Holmes Brothers, singer/pianist Fontella Bass, North Carolina bluesman and juba dancer John Dee Holeman, and acappella gospel quartet, the Birmingham Sunlights, for an extraordinary blend of secular and sacred sounds from the heart of black America.

As an expression of the soul and experience of a people, the music created by black Americans is unequalled. *Juke Joints & Jubilee* celebrates this music in many of its forms--mournful and playful, rowdy and righteous, sensual and sanctified.

The performers assembled for this special have never before appeared together, and may never again. The Holmes Brothers offer a unique blend of blues and gospel, seasoned with

soul, R&B, and even a little country. Fontella Bass is a singer whose musical talent was nurtured in the strong gospel traditions of her family and community. The Birmingham Sunlights are a rare treasure: a dynamic, young gospel quartet carrying on the art of four-part acappella gospel harmony.

Juke Joints & Jubilee provides a setting in which to experience and appreciate the exceptional artistry and range of these musicians and the traditions they represent. The music speaks to the human condition with a power and eloquence that reverberates far beyond the community from which it springs, profoundly influencing American music and culture as a whole.

Juke Joints & Jubilee is a production of NPR and the National Council for the Traditional Arts. Support for this program comes from NPR member stations, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. NPR programming can be heard on nearly 440 stations nationwide.

Letting our colors show through...
The Portland Observer newspaper
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