

April 2019

Volume 11 Issue 1

Oroville, California

Inside this issue:

Membership	2
Cliff Devenger's Shoe Shine Parlor	2
Willie "Shorty" Hogan Barbershop Stories	3

Upcoming Events

Friday

May 31, 2019

12:00 to 6:00pm

Old Fashion Fish Fry

VFW Hall

1901 Elgin St.

Oroville, CA 95966

Saturday

June 29, 2019

1pm

Board of Directors

Meeting

Hooker Oak Elks Lodge

2453 V7 Rd.

Oroville, CA 95966

Members and Public are
invited to attend.

Saturday

November 2, 2019

4:30pm to 8:30pm

11th Annual Legacy Awards
Ceremony

Feather Falls Casino

and Lodge

3 Alverda Dr.

Oroville, CA 95966

Reminder

We are accepting nominations for the 11th Annual Legacy Award. The deadline for applying is June 29, 2019. Send your nomination to:

SOAAHS

936 18th St.

Oroville, CA 95965

The Southside Chronicle

President's Message

By Dr. John Rivers

Greetings Friends; I must apologize for the delay in presenting the first newsletter for the year. The next newsletter will be timelier and informative. We have updated our research and will continue to present information on the authentic Black Southside Community.

We are continuing to raise money to grow the building fund. Our efforts include researching possible funding sources, preparing funding requests, and conducting fund raising events. Our next such event will be held in May of this year. I hope that you and other members of your family, and social network will support our fund-raising efforts by purchasing one or several soulful meals.

In this issue, we feature the dedication of the SOAAHS property on Greenville St. as an historic sight. This marks the first historic recognition of a physical gift left by Black Elders for the benefit of future generations and the entire general public. The Grand Parlor for the Native Sons of the Golden West made the designation at a ceremony on August 3, 2018. One of our members sent us a picture of her visit to The National African American Museum in Washington DC. I'm sure our historic center will not be as grand.

We have described once cohesive nature of the Southside community in previous newsletters. In this issue, we tell the story of two real small business entrepreneurs who excelled in one avenue left unblocked for Black men in a Jim Crow environment. Both men excelled in their craft with no apologies or baseless shame. They made a living with their hands not by pulling green lumber off the green chain, (Continued on page 2 President's Message)



Dr. River along with members of the Native Sons of the Golden West at the ceremony placing a marker on the Greenville St. SOAAHS property, dedicating it as an **Historical Sight**.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE'S CORNER

By Van Bilbo

March 1st was the renewal date for all members. "Thank You" to all of the members who have renewed. Your support is very much appreciated.

For the folks who have not yet renewed their membership. It's not too late to renew your membership. Please join us in the pursuit of another year of researching and documenting the history of African Americans in Oroville and surrounding Northern California communities. Your support is vital to the success of SOAAHS.

(**President's Message**) but by shining shoes. They were called Bootblacks. Another labeling of a Black men's occupation. The "term Negro" is another label created by Whites for People of African Descent. I'm sure that Cliff and Shorty would not have labeled themselves as such.

Dr. King once said "if you are a garbage man or street sweeper, be the best". I take this to mean that excellence does not depend on money, fame, class, or race. It has more to do with pride, human intelligence, opportunity, and hard work.

Be Well Friends.

John



SOAAHS member Roz Margaret King is pictured here standing in front National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC.

Cliff Devenger's Broadway Shoe Shine Parlor by Dr. John Rivers

Like Shorty, Cliff had a shoe shine business. His shine parlor was started in 1933 and located at 227 Broadway in Chico. Remarks made by Professor W.H. Hutchinson (old Hutch) at Cliff's funeral on March 6, 1982 provides an insight into the Man's impact in the Chico Community, and the down town area. "Cliff's Broadway shoe shine parlor is an institution. It is probably Chico's oldest establishment under one proprietor at the same location".

Most of the movers and shakers from business, political circles, and college campus were regulars at the parlor. Regular working men who held the value of well-polished shoes would also have their one on one with Cliff. Old Hutch observed that during this special time a person would experience sitting on a throne, getting the best shine in Chico and catching up on all the latest happenings in town. This was a value-added feature for customers at Shorty's and Cliff's small business.

According to Old Hutch customers could count on Cliff to have sport scores and rankings. "If you wanted to get a refreshing and often shrewd analysis of the current national, state, or local political flurry, or something as practical as just what is the pecking order on a particular issue, Cliff was a fund of background information on Chico and its problems".

Both men were fixtures in their respective towns, and there was a void in the downtown cultural infrastructure when they left the scene.

Willie “Shorty” Hogan, Barbershop Stories

By Steve Christensen

I first saw Shorty back in '47 when I was a little kid and my Dad was a barber at Fischer's on Myers St. I couldn't figure out why they called him Shorty, everyone looked big to me. Shorty had the shoe shine stand outside in front of the barber shop. His rent was paid by sweeping the shop and cleaning the ash trays. Shoe shining was a step down from his previous occupation before the Great Depression he'd been a chef on a passenger train.

My favorite story of Shorty was told to me by my Dad in my first year of high school, 1956. The upcoming World Series featured a rematch between the champion Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Yankees. My Dad's customer said he would bet \$500 the Dodgers would win again. Back in '56, \$500 had the same buying power as \$5,000 today. For a single dollar, one could buy a pack of smokes, a gallon of gas, a hamburger and a cup of coffee and still have a few coins left over for his pocket. So \$500 was big. Shorty whispered to my Dad “take the bet” and laid five \$100 bills in his hand. My Dad threw the five bills in his customer's lap and said “You got a bet, put up your money.” The customer was bluffing and got caught called. My Dad said the guys jaw dropped, he shook his head and never said another word for the duration of his haircut. Shorty would have won the bet.

In '62 I worked at Fischer's Barber Shop, Shorty was still there. Every day he would buy a pint of Walkers Deluxe whiskey. Downtown Oroville had a couple of liquor stores then. If Shorty was gone a few minutes, he always had a brown paper sack when he returned. The sack would go in his drawer below the foot racks of the shoe shine stand. He never left the sack in the stand if he needed to leave again. He would hide the sack in the barbershop back closet.

Some days he'd ask for a ride home. If he hadn't got the sack in town, he'd ask if we could stop at Pigg's Liquor Store before I dropped him off at his home on Florence Ave.

One day he'd bought his jug in town and hid it in the closet. He used a new hiding place. At closing time he went to the closet to retrieve the jug, he looked in his usual hiding place and it was not there. He accused Otis, the barber of stealing his whiskey. Otis was a World War 2 vet who had endured 11 days without sleep due to constant artillery explosions. Otis got drunk twice a day. So Shorty figured he was the most likely suspect. Shorty asked Otis if he'd taken his whiskey. Otis was outraged and said “If I took your whiskey I'll kiss your black 'backside' and I can assure you it's black”. Back then, I was a bit of an agitator and asked Otis “How do you know what color his 'backside' is?” Otis said “You skinny punk, I'll KICK your white 'backside'.” Even though Otis had a big beer gut, and weighed close to



Fischer's Barber Shop

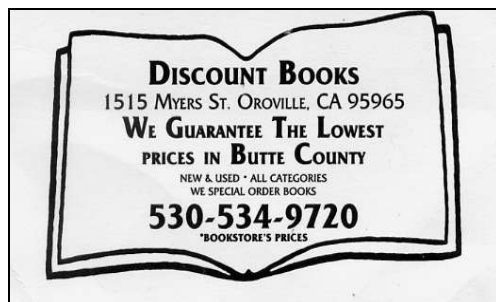
300. I'd seen him win many one dollar bets by kicking the door header which was over six feet above the floor. He could have kicked me through the roof. I decided to refrain from any further agitating. Shorty suddenly remembered he'd changed hiding places, showed us the paper sack, and everything was OK. On the ride home, Shorty asked me “How does he know what color your 'backside' is?” We both laughed all the way to Florence Ave.

Back in the middle, or late 60's, Marcellus Smith told me Shorty moved to Texas to live with a niece for the rest of his days.

SOAAHS

936 18th St

Oroville, CA 95965

An advertisement for Discount Books, featuring a graphic of an open book. The text inside the book reads:

DISCOUNT BOOKS
1515 MYERS ST. OROVILLE, CA 95965
WE GUARANTEE THE LOWEST
PRICES IN BUTTE COUNTY
NEW & USED • ALL CATEGORIES
WE SPECIAL ORDER BOOKS
530-534-9720
*BOOKSTORE'S PRICES

An advertisement for Tong Fong Low, featuring a logo with the name in a decorative frame and the text "since 1912". Below the logo, it says "Charlie's Chop Suey". The address and phone numbers are listed for two locations:

TONG FONG LOW
• since 1912 •
Charlie's Chop Suey

2051 Robinson Street
Oroville, Ca 95965
hungry? 530.533.1488
Tuesday-Sunday 11-9

2072 E 20th St. Ste 100
Chico, Ca 95928
hungry? 530.898.1388
7 days a week 11-9
www.tongfonglow.com

An advertisement for Connelly's Roofing, featuring the company name in a bold, stylized font. The text below reads:

CONNELLY'S
ROOFING

25 Years Experience
Insured
Cool Roof Certified
Free Estimates

Adam Connelly — Manager
Bill Connelly — Owner
530-693-0381 CELL
530-533-1516 PHONE
530-534-3350 FAX

C-39 & General B
CA, Lic. #601524 Email: connellysroof@att.net

An advertisement for Steve The Barber, featuring a logo with the name "Steve" in a large, stylized font and "The Barber" in a script font. Below the logo, it says "Serving Oroville Since 1961". The phone number and address are listed below the logo:

Steve
The Barber
Serving Oroville Since 1961

530 533-5000
2051 Mitchell Ave. Oroville, CA 95966