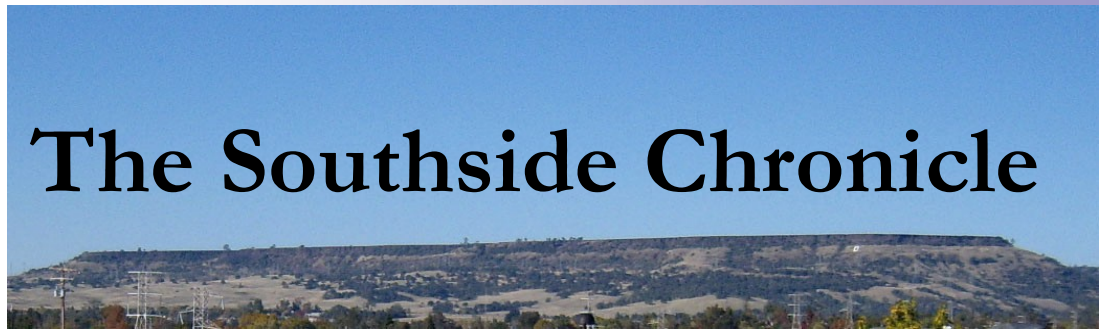


February 2014

Volume 6 Issue 1

Oroville, California

The Southside Chronicle



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President's Message

By Dr. John H. Rivers

I hope the new year begin and continue to bless you with good health, greater joy, and happiness. This newsletter will provide a new addition to the type of articles in our previous additions. Mr. Tony Mackey's written speech is included. This speech was scheduled to be delivered at our 2013 donor dinner, but Mr. Mackey was unable to do so because of an injury. I do appreciate the kind words of assistance I gave him, but the real importance of his speech is the recognition of the true fact that none of us achieve anything without the help of others. His life story is a shared experience of many people of African descent in America.

Mr. Mackey also skillfully observed that character, faith, and honest hard work is needed to overcome the effects of current stigma created in the past through forced migration, bondage, slavery, and segregation. These historical facts have significant influence in the life of most African American citizens today. Tony acknowledges the lessening of the negative historical effects, while clearly identifying the importance of taking personal responsibility for individual and group success.

The fifth annual reunion was an event to remember. We honored Papa William Berry and his extended family. He was our Legacy Award winner last year. His extended family included The Clarks, Gills, and Berry's. Clyde Berry, his Grandson, accepted the Award on behalf of all family members. Papa Berry's great Grandson (Jermaine Malone) played a stunning rendition of "Amazing Grace" on his saxophone. This song was a favorite of the late Papa Berry. We are trying to book Jermaine for our reunion this year (Nov.1, 2014).

The Board will be conducting its annual Donor Dinner on Feb. 16th during Black History month. The event will be a living history activity where our traditional food will be served and prepared by three Sisters in the Community who can really "throw it down". Call me at © 831-521-9540 or 530-533-4341 if you would like to eat Sunday dinner with us. It's free and all society members are welcome. I must have an accurate count so we have enough food. Call me so we can fix you a plate. Because this is a living history event, we ask that you dress in your functional 1940 – 1970 clothes. Work clothes are fine. We are honored to have Jeannette L. Molson as our speaker during the dinner. She is a third generation and descendent of a union between a Caucasian man and African American woman who were a pioneering family. I must hear from you by Feb. 10th to save you a plate. The dinner will be held at the V.F.W. post in Southside on the corner of Lincoln and Elgin St.

Our Board did not meet in Nov. or Dec. in 2013, so I will have more to report to you in the next newsletter. Be blessed and be well.

John.

Upcoming Events

February 22, 2014 11am Board of Directors meeting at New Missionary Baptist Church, 4380 Lower Wyandotte rd., Oroville, CA. Society members and the public are invited to attend.

March 29, 2014 11am Board of Directors meeting at New Missionary Baptist Church, 4380 Lower Wyandotte rd., Oroville, CA. Society members and the public are invited to attend.

November 1, 2014 Save this date. The Sixth Annual Legacy Awards and Dinner, at Gold Country Casino in Oroville, CA.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE'S CORNER

By Van Bilbo

The New Year is upon us. Our mission is still the same, to collect, preserve, and present historical information about the South Oroville African Community. We began our quest more than five years ago and during that time we have conducted oral interviews with elders from the community, collected artifacts, photos, done research at local colleges and governmental offices, had photos exhibits, given out Legacy Awards to deserving people from the community, produced a traveling history show that has appeared at churches, schools and festivals.

There is still much to be done, and that's where the support of our membership comes in. At the current

time we have one fundraiser every year. While the proceeds from that event (a BBQ fundraiser in the summer) are vital in contributing to the financial needs of the Society, we mainly depend on membership dues to take care of the most of the operating expenses. That is why it is so important for each member to renew their membership. Please take the time to renew your membership when you receive your renewal notice. For your convenience a stamped self addressed envelope is included with all renewal notices. If you are not a member, please show your support by joining the SOAAHS. Membership applications are available in this issue of the newsletter on page 7, on our website www.soaahs.org or by calling 530 533-7388 and leaving a message.

In Memoriam

This section is dedicated to people of the Southside Community who passed away in the previous calendar year.

May they **Rest in Peace.**

Ollie Bennett

Ertis Jones

Luellar Johnson

Lottie May Jones

Diane Theresa Scott

Yvonne Broadway

Michael Hampton

Warren Widner

Ronnie Cash

Melvin Beck

Lizzie Nellie Scott

Herman Osby Jr.

Please let us know if we have missed anyone, if so we will place the person's name in a future newsletter. Contact SOAAHS, 918 18th St., Oroville, CA 95965 or call 530 533-7388.

BIG PAPA WILLIAM BERRY SR.

By Capt. Leroy Gill Jr.

The Berry family roots lie in the southern states of Texas and Oklahoma, where they remained until the late 1930's. In pursuit of better opportunities, William Berry and his wife Allie decided to move their family west.

They escaped the Dust Bowl of Oklahoma and found a new home in Casa Grande, Arizona.



William Berry Sr.

Shortly after their arrival in Arizona, William's eldest son William Jr., and brother-in-law, Bervin left the family to seek employment in California. They settled just on the cusp of Mt. Shasta in Weed, California. Fortunately they were able to secure employment at the local sawmill. William Sr. (affectionately nicknamed Big Papa) was inspired by their success, and soon left for California to join them. He was also hired at the sawmill as a Green Chain worker, a job that is known to be extremely strenuous and physically demanding.

Although they were securely employed Papa Berry still wanted more for his family. The three continued searching for better opportunities in newer sawmills. They finally settled just south of Weed in Oroville, California. Pleased with the area, Papa Berry called for the rest of the family who were still in Arizona, and all were soon reunited. In 1941 Papa Berry purchased land and built his first house at 3165 Columbia St. in Oroville, Cali-

fornia. He purchased the joining lot 3 years later and built his second house where he and his wife Allie made their home together. Papa Berry was an outdoorsman by nature. He was an avid hunter and loved to savor wild game. Fresh venison, quail, pheasant and duck were his special delights.

Papa Berry and Allie established membership at the #1 Church of God in Christ. They were both loyal members who actively served for many years. He was on the Board of Deacons and Building Committee while Allie served as Church Mother until her passing in 1957. Papa Berry was known as a man of his word and his extreme compassion and generosity became known throughout Oroville.

He was a strong man and was well into his 80's before experiencing his first hospital admittance. Although the admittance was brief, the reminder of his own mortality loomed in the back of his mind. Papa Berry changed his church membership to Wynn Memorial Church of God In Christ. He resonated well with the congregation and took solace in the fact that several members were near him in age.

Needless to say, Papa Berry was a self-made man and lived under his own care well into his 90's before being committed to a senior care facility. William Blain Berry passed away in 1985 in Gridley, California. He left behind a great American Legacy and a beautiful family. He received 2 century letters from President Ronald Regan and lived to an astounding 103 years of age.

Confessions of a Corporate Share Cropper in America

By Tony Mackey

John Rivers, who has been my best friend for over 40 years, has asked me to talk about myself for a few minutes just because I told him that I'm writing a book about what's involved in successfully navigating through life without being a star professional athlete, famous actor, or powerful politician.

I'm trying to write a book about how to have a good successful life as a normal, run-of-the-mill, just trying-to-make it young Black male against the odds. And make no mistake – *the odds are against you if you're a young Black male!* So, the title that I've chosen for my book is “**Confessions of a Corporate Share Cropper in America.**” I've spent most of my working life in organizations of one kind or another, trying to climb the ladder of promotions and salary increases, or in other words, the ladder of success. Share Cropper was a title that I chose, loosely based on the practice that was followed after the end of the Civil War.

Share cropping was a system of farming that replaced historical (actual) slavery with a new virtual form of slavery. Black people who had been recently freed from actual slavery and deprived of any land ownership in the Reconstruction Era of the Confederate States, found it necessary for their survival to enter into farming arrangements that involved their working for white landowners, (often the same plantation owners), for a share of the profit from the crops the land produced. In the share cropping arrangement, the white landowner would provide all the seeds, “food”, and equipment the sharecropper farmer needed on credit through the landowner's store until the planting and harvesting was completed.



Tony Mackey

When the crop was in, an “accounting” would take place which compared the cost of the seeds, “food”, and equipment, i.e. mule, plow, harness, wagon, etc., needed throughout the year against the share cropper's portion of the crop's value. Inevitably, the costs of production would be more than the sharecropper's portion of the crop's value, thereby creating a continual debt from year-to-year, often for a lifetime, generation to generation. Share Cropping also applied to a lesser degree to poor White farmers as well, but was known as subsistence farming.

I believe, in some form and to a certain degree, the Share Cropper system still exists today in corporations, where a Black employee's performance can be exemplary or better than the average rank and file White employee and not be recognized, or promoted, or given a comparable raise because it's *not* in the corporation's interest in profit maximization to do so, or it's *in* the interest of the mid-level manager to act-out his prejudices behind a corporate veil and block any earned recognition, promotion, or comparable raise. I believe this practice is common in today's corporations and has been for quite some time. However, today it is perpetrated against White (men & women) as well as Black employees. It has been a contributing factor to the observed phenomena of the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer, and the middle class shrinking, or working long, hard, *and* smart, but getting nowhere as a result. This is why I chose the title “**Confessions of a Corporate Share Cropper in America.**”

All of the organizations that I have been a member of have had a corporate organizational structure that resembles a pyramid, whether it was called the military, a college, or a corporation. In all of these organizations, there is always one individual at the top of the pyramid and numerous individuals in various levels below the top individual trying to reach higher and higher levels, which are always associated with promotion, more money, more prestige, power, authority, etc., without getting hurt or destroyed in one way or another.

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So, here is a much abbreviated story of how I've made it through life until now to reach a modest level of success measured in terms of health, wealth, and spiritual prosperity.

My journey in life began in a big country town at the southern end of the Great Central Valley of California called Bakersfield. My mother was 1 of 9 siblings and was 18 and unwed when she gave birth to me in 1946. I never knew my paternal father. However, my mother met a Black WW-II Veteran who had recently been discharged at a local Army base, (Meadow Fields), and married him 3 or 4 months later. This marriage has endured for 66 years, and my stepfather is the only father I know. I am the only son that he has known.

I left Bakersfield on the way to East Palo Alto on a sunny Saturday morning in late January 1966, in the first car I ever owned a 1952 Desoto station-wagon. I had \$20 in my pocket, \$5 of which was used to fill-up with gasoline. All of my worldly possessions were packed away in the back. It's hard to describe the feeling of liberation, or emancipation, that I felt as I headed north on Hwy 99, away from Bakersfield, taking care to drive within the speed limit, because I did not want to be stopped by the Hwy Patrol. However, my car broke down on Pacheco Pass on Hwy 152 outside of Los Banos. I had to hitch-hike the rest of the way to my parent's home in East Palo Alto and then spent the rest of the day and night recovering my car.

Once I had a local residence in the Bay Area, I was able to get a job. The first job that I got was with Lockheed Missiles & Space Co. in Sunnyvale. The job was as an Engineering Co-op Student in a program that focused on giving temporary jobs to minority students pursuing math and engineering majors. I worked as a purchasing expeditor supporting an engineering department. When a regular company buyer ordered parts for one of the engineers, it was my job to walk the parts and paperwork through receiving and quality inspection when they came in and hand deliver them to an engineer. It was a great full-time job with great people to work with. I drove an old, half-broken down 1½ ton International pick-up truck to work in Sunnyvale every day until I could save enough money to buy another car. I had to take surface streets to get there and use a screw driver for a shift handle. I think that I worked for Lockheed for about 4 months before I jumped ship to work for Varian Associates in Palo Alto as a mailroom assistant delivering mail within the company, wrapping proposals to mail to the government, and taking packages and letters to the U.S. Post Office in downtown Palo Alto. Believe it or not, in 1966, this job paid \$.05/hour more than the job I left at Lockheed. During that time, the minimum wage was about \$2.50/hr. The Lockheed job paid \$2.55/hr. and Varian paid \$2.60/hr. and was closer to home.

There I was, renting my own apartment in downtown Palo Alto with 2 of my cousins from Bakersfield. Everyone was working. Everyone had good jobs. But, no one was entirely happy. By the end of that year, everyone had gone their own way. As for me, since I had decided to drop-out of college and work full-time, my draft status had changed and Uncle Sam sent me an invitation that year that I couldn't ignore. I had to report to the Oakland Army Induction Center for a physical exam, (which I passed), and before year's end I had committed to serve 4 years in the Air Force to avoid being drafted for 2 years' service in the Army or Marines. My decision to join the Air Force was a calculated risk. I figured that I stood a better chance of coming back home alive and uninjured after 4 years in the AF than 2 years in the Army. It turned-out to be a very good decision.

I must say that I became a "man" during my Air Force experience. In many ways I became more aware of myself, i.e. who I was, what I wanted out of life, what I had to do to be successful, what I had to do to avoid the traps and snares placed in my path to prevent me from achieving my goals, and where I had to go to continue to make progress towards achieving my dreams of health, wealth, and spiritual prosperity. I felt that I was on a great adventure, a vital participant in something that was worth pursuing. After all, President Kennedy's inaugural address of "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country" had resonated with me. I was actually doing something important for **my** country. I was doing an honorable thing. I was a member of the Armed Services of my country, ready to serve in any capacity and anywhere the AF wanted me to serve. Sure, it was a dangerous time to be anywhere in Southeast Asia, but I needed a good-paying job and the Air Force was willing to pay me a relatively good monthly salary for performing the job that they had trained me to do:

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Morse Intercept Operator at listening posts in Northern Japan and Northern Thailand. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S. Air Force Security Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Air_Force_Security_Service)).

(**Morse Intercept Operator** was a coded term that the Air Force used to identify some of those airmen in the cryptographic intelligence branch. It was created in October 1948 and operated until 1979, after which it was re-designated the Electronic Security Command, and later re-designated Air Force Intelligence Command, Air Intelligence Agency, and is currently called the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency. This branch was primarily composed of airmen chosen from the top 1/2 of the top 1 percent of the Air Force's enlisted recruits. It was a secretive and tight-knit branch of Air Force cold-war warriors tasked with monitoring, collecting and interpreting military voice and electronic signals of countries of interest (which often were Soviet and their satellite Eastern bloc countries, as well as certain Asian countries). Intelligence collected by this branch was often transferred to the National Security Agency for further analysis and distribution to other intelligence recipients. (These jobs, which required top secret code word clearance, were extremely high pressure and were considered essential to U.S. cold war efforts. Members of the Air Force's Security Service were not allowed to discuss their jobs with outsiders — in fact, members could not talk amongst themselves about their jobs unless they were in a secure location. Because of their value as targets, (e.g. in Cold War Berlin, the capture of an Air Force Security Service member was worth several thousand dollars), their off-base travel was severely restricted. Many adopted "cover jobs" to more easily conceal their real work.)

Besides paying me to serve in their cryptographic intelligence branch, they were also enabling me to have a good time in the far flung places where they sent me. I had the greatest friends during this time - friends of all colors and backgrounds - White friends, Black friends; friends from the East Coast, the Midwest, the South, and the West Coast. Friends that you could laugh with, fight with, argue with, disagree with, and depend on. I also learned a great lesson while in the Air Force — everyone that looked and talked like me was not automatically my friend. *Some* people like this were definitely not to be befriended or trusted.

When I was released from the AF in July 1970, I had spent the previous 6 months deciding where I wanted to continue with college. Out of the 6 colleges that were candidates, Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) had a simple 1-page application and did not require a type-written multi-paragraph explanation of why I wanted to go to school there. There was the application that I completed and returned, and that was where I started college again in September 1970.

I treated attending college the same way as if it was a job. I was on campus Monday thru Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, whether or not I had classes. If I didn't have a class, I was in the library studying for one. I began searching the college catalogs of major colleges and universities to transfer to when the Spring Semester started. I had decided on a major in Urban Economics while I was still in Thailand. Another decision I had made while in Thailand was that I did not want to attend a college that was located in a large metropolitan area. As I researched catalogs, Chico State seemed to fit the criteria. Its catalog had a defined program in Urban Economics and it was located in a rural area. As I searched for more information about Chico State, someone, (I think that it was a counselor), suggested that I talk with Dr. Rivers, since he had been a student there. Little did I know that with God being for me, He was sending me a practical, material blessing by placing Dr. Rivers in my path to be my guidance counselor, benefactor, employer, boss, personal confidant, spiritual advisor, political advisor, social advisor, mentor, life coach, and **life-long friend**. (John's advice, contacts, and personal insights about Chico were as pearls of wisdom, too).

My journey is not over or finished. At least, I hope not. Challenges and obstacles to overcome as well as accomplishments to enjoy are still ahead. There is more in my future than an easy chair in front of a television and John is still on assignment as my **life coach, personal confidant, and life-long friend**.

John, I'm looking forward to the next 30 years.

**South Oroville
African American
Historical Society**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-Mail _____

Select Membership Type:

- ♦ Student(K-12).....\$20.00
- ♦ Student(College).....\$30.00
- ♦ Senior(62 and Older)\$35.00
- ♦ Individual.....\$50.00
- ♦ Sustaining.....\$100.00
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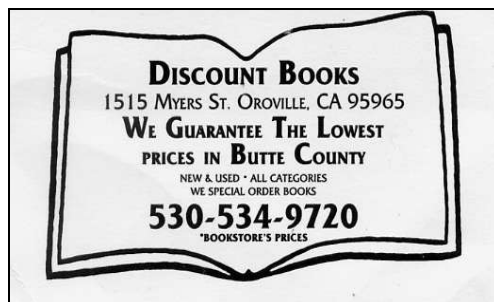
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