CONDUCTOR IN EXILE

- **LIVED a Harlem boyhood**
- **Left U. S. in 1949**
- **OVERLOOKED by his own country**
- **NO TIME to become bitter**
- **BOOKED until 1969**
- **FEELS like an international citizen**

By RICHARD M. SUDHALTERE

Orchestra conductor Dean Dixon went from the U.S. to Europe in 1949 and won a reputation. "I've had success conducting orchestras all over the world," he says. "I have a respected name here in Europe. Yet I've received not one invitation to conduct a major orchestra in America. Why?" He thinks it is because he is colored.

"It has to be race. I just can't see any other possibility."

New York - born, he came to Europe in 1949 to guest - conduct the Paris Radio Orchestra. He has been here ever since.

Maintaining homes in Frankfurt and Australia, Dixon is regular conductor of the Hessian State Radio and Sydney Symphony Orchestras.

He stared at the fire crackling in the fireplace of his spacious apartment on Frankfurt's fashionable West side. "I made my debut in 1937 at Town Hall. I conducted the NBC Symphony, Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, but nothing happened.

"Since 1944 there has been —nothing — not a thing from America. "What can I conclude."

'One of the best'

Whatever the conclusion, German critics have had consistent and nearly unqualified praise for Dixon's conducting talents. Friedrich Hummel of the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper terms him "one of the best. He is more than just a good conductor — he has a special sort of feeling for the character of the music he conducts. It's a very internal thing."

Dixon the conductor became Dixon the father and family man as his attractive Finnish - born wife and two of their three daughters entered the room.

Raven - haired daughter Marina, 22, said a quick Hello and was off for a fitting at the dress shop where she is learning design. Minutes later Mrs. Dixon left for Heidelberg and a visit to Daniela, 20, who is polishing up her mastery of six languages with an eye to a career as a diplomatic interpreter.

'She's just 11'

"And this is Nina. She's 11, but already knows two languages. With all the Finnish, Swedish, Italian, German and heaven knows what else flying about here, I'm lucky

This is an earlier photo of Dean Dixon taken in early 1940s.

to hold my own," Dixon said.

Dixon drew himself up to his almost six feet and laughed good - naturedly.

"Look here now. If circumstances were otherwise. If I didn't have as much to do as I have, perhaps, I would have time to become bitter about the American Racial situation.

"But I'm booked up solid until 1969 with Frankfurt, Sydney, and many, many guest-conducting engagements. If I died tonight — right now — I'd have died fulfilled, although it goes without saying that at 51 I've quite a few good years ahead of me."

'I have a good life'

He gestured expansively around the apartment, brightly furnished in Scandinavian modern style. "I have a good life. I'm deeply involved here in many musical projects I might not have opportunity to pursue if I were conducting in the United States.

"I think one must be honest about it. The racial situation there is still packed. And the symphony orchestra, I think, will be one of the last barriers to fall. Conducting an orchestra is one of those posts which demands — implies — absolute authority based on intellect, leadership, continuity, organizational ability. If that falls, all the walls come crumbling down. But I don't think we'll see it in this generation."

On the podium, Dixon is a study in authority. His stocky frame moves with catlike litheness. Shoulders, head and arms probe the rhythmic and dynamic nuances of each work.

A look at Dixon

Dixon off the podium is more contained but equally direct. A conversation with him reveals extensive schooling in psychology, a comprehensive knowledge of classic literature, and intense devotion to home and family.

The man who went from boyhood in a Harlem back street to fame in Europe's concert halls stirred the coals in his fireplace and evaluated his almost 30 years as a conductor.

"There is still a lot I want to do. I'm continually finding unknown works by major composers and have an opportunity here to play them.

"My post in Sydney is a source of never-ending delight. The Australians are among my very favorite people," he said.

He paused.

"I feel myself nowadays a kind of international citizen. But I must admit I feel a bit of a twinge now and then at receptions, dinners, given by countries to fete their own artists.

"But I guess that's inevitable, Isn't it?"

BUT NOT U.S. — Dean Dixon, shown conducting here, is an American orchestra conductor in an international setting. The orchestra conductor has had success conducting orchestras all over the world but has not been invited to conduct a major one in the United States.

MARCH 31

Medicare's Date

Q. Who is eligible for benefits?

A. Those persons who have reached age 65 and are entitled to either Social Security or Railroad Retirement Act cash benefits, either because they worked in covered employment or their spouse did.

Those in this group, are also eligible:

(1) if they are already age 65 or older;

or

(2) if they will reach age 65 before 1968;

or

(3) if they will reach age 65 after 1967, and if they have at least three quarters of coverage, regardless of when they got them, for each calendar year after 1965 and before the year they reached age 65. A "quarter coverage" is a calender quarter during which you earned at least $50 in wages or $100 in self-employment covered by Social Security.)

In addition, to qualify, persons must be either a resident citizen of the United States or an alien 5 - year resident lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

Those persons who are covered under the Federal Employee's Health Benefits Act, are NOT eligible for Medicare benefits. However, a retired federal employee who retired before Feb. 16, 1965, and who was not covered by FEHBA on that date, is eligible for the Medicare program.

Q. When does eligibility for these benefits start?

A. For hospital benefits, outpatient diagnostic service benefits and home nursing care, the effective date is July 1, 1966. Nursing home care under the plan will not be available until Jan. 1, 1967.

Q. What is the deadline date for applying for Medicare?

A. March 31, 1966. Those who do not apply then, will have to wait until a general enrollment period in 1967. Each year the premium will also increase.

Q. Can I get Medicare benefits and social security retirement or survivor benefits at the same time?

A. Yes. Your eligibility for and use of the Medicare program does not affect in any way your receipt of these social security benefits.

Q. What is not covered by Medicare?

A. A private room in a hospital or nursing home unless required for medical reasons; a private nurse or attendant; drugs taken at home—unless a physician administers them in connection with his professional service; dentists' bills for ordinary service and dentures; orthopedic shoes, eyeglasses or hearing aids; routine physical check - ups; custodial care (for example, someone who is confined to a nursing home because he could not take care of himself would NOT be covered and any items furnished just for the patient's convenience).

Q. What about the insurance I now own that pays hospital, medical and doctor bills?

A. Be sure to KEEP your existing hospital and medical insurance policy in force until after you are 65 and KNOW that your coverage has begun. Then you may wish to talk with your insurance agent about a new policy to give you extras not covered by the government program.

Q. Where and how can I get more information on Medicare.

A. Call, write or visit your nearest Social Security district office. You may get its address from your local post office or your local telephone directory under "Social Security Administration."

AFRO GOES TO GHANA

YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

- **FIRST Impressions of Ghana**
- **SIGNS of America everywhere**
- **QUICK tour of the city**

By JAMES D. WILLIAMS

(ED NOTE —This is the first in a series of articles based on a recent trip to Ghana by Mr. Williams, editor of the Washington AFRO, to report on the opening of the Volta River Dam.)

Ghana begins aboard a sleek VC-10 jet plane at the London International Airport, perched like some giant bird on a rain glistened runway, waiting for its four motors to flame into life and lift it 30,000 feet above the damp earth.

A brown-skinned hostess waits at the door of the Ghana Airways plane, trim in her gray uniform, with the standard hostess cap tilted to one side.

All Ghanaians

This is an introduction to Ghana, a presaging things to come in this land, independant for less than ten years, but the oldest of the black nations in sub-Sahara Africa.

The members of the cabin crew are all Ghanaians.

Up front, the co-pilot and other officers, save one—the captain — are also Ghanaians.

Africans will soon sit in the captain's seat.

This is the way things are in Ghana.

Six hours and 15 minutes later, after a flight across the English Channel, France, Spain, the Mediterranean, Algeria, the desolate Sahara Desert, the plane touches down softly at the Accra Airport and trembles to a stop.

Pleasant 70's

It is night in Accra, the capital of Ghana, but the African night still carries the warmth of the day.

The woolen suit that wasn't quite enough in London, is too much in Accra.

The heat—in the high 70's—is not unpleasant, but a world away from cold Washington, D.C., and even colder London.

A driver takes your bag and locks it in the trunk of a cream colored Peugeot.

The car noses down the road leading to the highway, pauses a moment for the traffic, and then darts out, on the left hand side of the road.

No Question of Who's Running the Country

"Leaving the plane, two pleasant faced girls, in brown uniforms, direct the disembarking passengers to a bus.

"It swings past parked planes to the terminal and the control tower.

"Everywhere there are dark faces - the custom officials, the airport personnel. From the very beginning, there is no question as to who is running the country.

"The visitor's lounge is alive with life. From the four corners of the world men and women have flown into Ghana for the dedication of the Volta River Dam. M. A. Ribero, Ghana's ambassador to the U. S., is there with his son, Miguel both with warm smiles to make visitors welcome.

"This is the way it is to be in Ghana. Warm smiles, a natural friendliness, a sense of a hand outstretched."

Like Baltimore

The first two things that become noticeable are the large number of cars on the highway and the profusion of gas stations with familiar American names.

It could be old Route 1 from Baltimore to the Delaware Memorial Bridge, gas stations to the right and the left.

Along the highway are strung garlands of multi-colored lights, similar to those the merchants of America hang along their streets at Christmas.

The driver tells you these lights have been erected for a recent meeting of the Organization of African Unity and still remain to light the night sky.

The airport road leads into the city, past Flagstaff House, residence of the President, Kwame Nkrumah into wide and brilliantly illuminated streets.

Modern, clean

On both sides, new and modern buildings stretch starkly upward. Slim and cool, they blend almost imperceptibly into the warmness of the night.

The wide streets are clean, there are people and traffic moving about. It is at this moment that the thought of a savage, pagan, barbaric land — the Dark Continent—flashes just briefly across the mind.

There is no easy way to wipe away the years of brainwashing, of Tarzan and the great white hunter.

You know the picture is false, but the last image stubbornly refuses to die until you have seen and felt.

This is the beginning and before the visit is over, the last trace of that picture will be wiped from mind. Already the smell of the warm night stirs shadows within you.

Not a stranger

Your roots lie here in Africa. You are a stranger and yet you are not a stranger. From this land you came, no matter how many other bloods have been washed into yours.

You drink deeply of the air that rushes through the windows.

The lights flash by, the sparkling white buildings spin by, and you know that you can go home again with pride in your heritage.

The car turns into a driveway leading to the Ambassador Hotel, built for the independence celebration in 1936. Spotlights bathe the white building in a soft pleasant glow.

The smell of tropical flowers push against the nostrils.

The cool lobby could be London, or Paris, or New York, or San Francisco.

Much to see

The Ghanaian clerk at the desk has the same difficulty in checking the reservation as any other clerk, but the brief delay is of no importance, there is too much to see, just standing in the lobby of a hotel in Accra, watching the world in miniature pass by.

An Indian woman in brightly colored sari, an olive-skinned Italian tanned darker by the sun, a pale Englishmen, all met here in the heart of Africa.

Fans push back the heat. To the left is an outdoor cafe, the source of the soft hum of conversation that drifts into the lobby.

People come, people go, leaving in their wakes a sense of motion, a sense of dynamic action.

A bellboy helps you with your baggage to the elevator which speeds up to the fourth floor.

He leads you down a carpeted corridor into a room where the air conditioning has already been turned on and where he looks at you and asks is the room satisfactory.

Saying "yes' is not enough, but that is all you say. It is more than satisfactory. It's today and yesterday all rolled up in one great big ball. It's a taste of what black men can do.

U.S. ballads

After a shower and a change of clothes, Ambassador Rivero is waiting downstairs with a friend— a doctor who came from the West Indies 35 years ago, who practices in the bush country, and speaks of this land as home.

The dining room is dim in the shadows thrown by candles on the gleaming white tablecloths. Near the window that leads to a terrace and a garden, a band—three Ghanians and two Europeans—are playing soft American ballads, with a trace of the highlife beat, the music of Ghana.

Clear onion soup begins the dinner.

Cold fish bursting with fresh sweetness, chicken touched with African spices, thick delicious bread, native fruits filled with their own juices and wine . . . here in the heart of Africa.

Left-handed Driving No Easy Adjustment

"Driving on the left hand side of the road is difficult enough for an American to adjust to, but when the driver pulls to the right to pass another car, and the headlights of a third vehicle bear down on you in earnest from the opposite direction, there comes a moment of truth when you feel the wisest thing would be to jump from the car and take your chances on survival.

"Miracle of miracles, the driver always manages to get back to his side of the road before disaster, though close enough, that if you were not still shaking from the traumatic experience, you could have reached out and shaken hands with the other driver."

Tour of city

The night is still early and there is time for a tour of the city. Through the shuttered and dark business center, past large department stores, automobile showrooms.

Past the Black Star Square where important days are commemorated with parades and pageants;

Through residential sections where neat homes are warmed by the light gleaming from their windows;

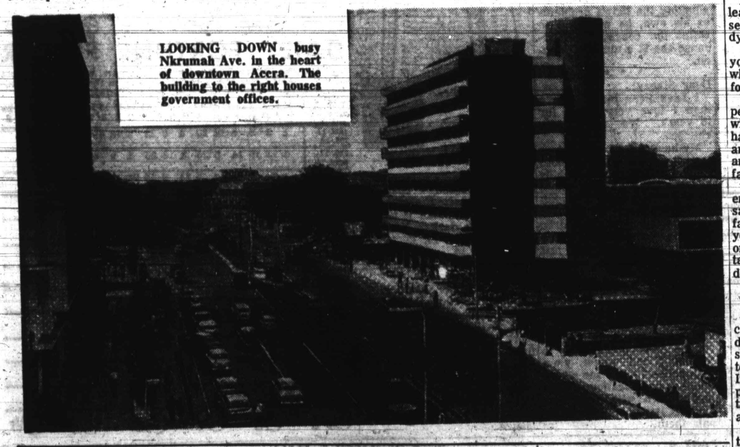
Past Kwame Nkrumah Circle, and finally to the beach to listen to the gentle sound of the waves.

This is not all of Ghana, not all of it by any means. There are tremendous problems to be solved, mountains to be scaled, a people to be educated.

But as you close the door of the hotel room and lean against it for a moment, you think back on what you have seen already, of what you have felt in the air, and you realize, really for the first time, the impact of what it means for a black man to be in a country ruled by native Africans.

The knowledge warms more deeply than the wine.

Next Week: Look for number two in this series - "A River Is Tamed."



LOOKING DOWN busy Nkrumah Ave. in the heart of downtown Accra. The building to the right houses government offices.