ON BPR'S HORIZONS ON NPR'S HORIZONS

'Twenty-Five Years Later' to salute Black achievers

By Kenneth J. Deacon, Ph.D

During World War II, black engineer troops helped build the 1,540-mile Alcan Highway, a monumental project that provides, even to this day, the only overland route from the lower forty-eight states to Alaska.

Since the Gold Rush of 1898, various groups had urged the governments of Canada and the United States to build a road to Alaska to encourage the development of natural resources and the settlement of vast, sparsely populated regions.

Although the two governments set up commissions to study the feasibility and need of the project, scant attention was given to their reports until the Japanese bombing of U.S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in 1941 left Alaska vulnerable to attack and conquest by sea.

For this reason, early in 1942 the U.S. government directed the Army Corps of Engineers and the Public Roads Administration to build, on the double, the Alcan Highway in two stages.

Engineer troops would first open a pioneer road which would provide access to contractors engaged by the Public Works Administration to work on the permanent highway.

An engineer task force of seven regiments and topographic and pontoon troops was organized under the command of Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge.

Three of the regiments — the 93d, 95th, and 97th — had a combined strength of 3,695 black soldiers who had come from farms, factories, and ranks of the unemployed; from the countryside, small towns, and urban slums and tenements.

Having been brought up during the Depression, most of them previously lacked the education or opportunities to show their stuff in the workaday world.

But now, besides building a difficult road, they would make an honorable niche for themselves in our nation's history.

The Alcan Highway would begin at the Dawson Creek, British Columbia, railhead 455 miles north of Edmonton, and end at Fairbanks in central Alaska, accessible from the coast from Valdez by the Richardson Highway and from Seward by the Alaska Railroad.

Following the Northwest Staging Route, it would support a chain of emergency landing fields at Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, Watson Lake, Teslin Lake, and Whitehorse (all in Canada) and Northway, Tanacross, and Big Delta (in Alaska). All but 300 miles of the highway was to be in Canada.

— —

Meanwhile, prophets of gloom in Washington decried the project as an impossibility. As it took 40 years to extend the Old National Road from Cumberland, Md., to the Mississippi River, just how could troops and workmen dream of finishing the highway in time to contribute to the war effort?

How could they build a road through the raw, uncharted wilderness in which vast tracts of forest, muskeg, permafrost, and ice hills abounded?

What about the hundreds of streams and the mountain ranges which would block the way to central Alaska? To which the Army engineers replied: "Nothing will stop us — we'll get the job done!"

General Hoge deployed the engineer regiments at various points along the route so that they could begin work simultaneously.

The 93d Engineers arrived in April 1942 and worked on the road in Yukon Territory. Arriving the same month, the 97th Engineers built the section along the Tanana River toward the Alaska-Canada border.

The 95th Engineers arrived on May 31, and following the all-white 344th, improved the road in British Columbia from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson and beyond.

All regiments arrived with insufficient equipment. General Hoge demonstrated true executive ability in overcoming this problem.

The regimental tables of equipment called for eight medium bulldozers, but each regiment on the Alcan Highway eventually used 20 heavy and 24 medium bulldozers and lots of other powerful construction equipment, including sawmills.

Just as work was getting underway, the Japanese invaded the Aleutian Islands. They landed on Attu (April 8) and Kiska (June 7). Time became crucial.

In August 1942, the Public Roads Administration started work behind the engineer regiments. This organization operated through four management contractors who supervised 47 construction firms employing 4,500 workers in 1942 and 16,000 in 1943.

The road builders shared extraordinary experiences. They lived under extreme conditions with temperatures from 90 degrees above zero to 70 below.

In the winter, diesel fuel solidified and gasoline lines froze while the men suffered from cold and exposure. Warm weather brought out swarms of flies and mosquitoes.

The long hours of sunlight enabled the regiments to work three shifts a day. The spring thaws transformed trickling streams into torrential rivers which overflowed their banks. The erstwhile frozen ground turned into mud, which, when dried, became dust — and mud again when it rained.

The road builders encountered swampy land and vast tracts of muskeg — bog formed by decaying vegetation and water covered by spagnum moss. When unable to detour around it, the engineer troops stripped it down to the subsoil, which they filled with gravel.

Permafrost posed another problem which they licked. The highway necessitated hundreds of bridges, whose combined length exceeded seven miles, and more than 8,000 culverts, whose total length exceeded 50 miles.

— —

On Oct. 25, 1942, lead bulldozers operated by Technician Fifth Grade Refenes Sims (97th Engineers) and Private Alfred Jalufka (18th Engineers) closed the last gap of the pioneer roadway at Beaver Creek, a few miles east of the Alaska-Canada border.

On Nov. 20, the 18th and 97th Engineers completed a timber trestle bridge over White River, opening the entire length of the highway to traffic. The next day the first trucks from Dawson Creek rolled into Fairbanks.

After working on maintenance and improvement of the pioneer road, the black regiments departed in January and February 1943. The 95th went to Europe, the 93d and 97th to the Pacific, where they continued their part in the struggle against the Axis powers.

Historic dates to remember

1 - Birthday of Langston Hughes (1902-1967) Joplin, Mo. born poet and author whose popular character Jesse B. Simple of Harlem USA mirrored the average working man's inquiry into the racial injustices inherent in American life.

2 - Birthday of John S. Rock (1825-1866). Born in Salem, New Jersey he was one of the many outstanding Black leaders active even before the Civil War.

. Birthday of Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) a free Negro astronomer and mathematician of Maryland.

To Give Forth Love

The Josephite Mission.

"If you have a heart big enough, and a desire to serve God and his people, you are invited to consider becoming a member of the Society of St. Joseph. Give yourself the opportunity to love and share God's love with Black America."

The Josephites: Providing more than a century of service in the Black community.

Rev. Laurence Schmitt, SSJ, Vocation Director
Josephite Priests and Brothers
1200 Varnum St., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017

I am interested in the JOSEPHITE ☐ Priesthood ☐ Brotherhood

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIP
TELEPHONE AGE

2 BA 16

QUENCH YOUR THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.

ENTER THE COCA-COLA COMPANY

$100,000

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SCHOLARSHIP SWEEPSTAKES.

4 GRAND PRIZES:
Four $25,000 4-Year College Scholarships.

Special coupon saves you 25¢ on Coke, diet Coke, or Sprite and makes a donation to the United Negro College Fund.

At this time next year, you could be celebrating Black History Month as a student in college. Four winners are going to win the opportunity to attend the UNCF college of their choice with a 4-year, $25,000 scholarship. One of them could be you. So enter as often as you like and quench your thirst for knowledge.

ENTER THE SCHOLARSHIP SWEEPSTAKES. You could win a scholarship for yourself, a relative or a friend. It must be used at universities supported by the United Negro College Fund.

Four (4) Grand Prize Scholarships worth $25,000 each will be awarded. The persons using the scholarships must meet all of the entrance requirements of the school selected.

USE THE SPECIAL COUPON. You'll save 25¢ when you buy Coke, diet Coke or Sprite. For every coupon redeemed, The Coca-Cola Company will make a donation to the United Negro College Fund. The more coupons redeemed, the more money The Coca-Cola Company will contribute to help the leaders of tomorrow.

UNCF COLLEGES

Atlanta University, Barber-Scotia College, Benedict College, Bennett College, Bethune-Cookman College, Bishop College, Claflin College, Clark College, Dillard University, Fisk University, Florida Memorial College, Houston-Tillotson College, Interdenominational Theological Center, Jarvis Christian College, Johnson C. Smith University, Knoxville College, Lane College, LeMoyne-Owen College, Livingstone College, Miles College, Morehouse College, Morris College, Morris Brown College, Oakwood College, Paine College, Paul Quinn College, Phelander Smith, Rust College, Saint Augustine's College, Saint Paul's College, Shaw University, Spelman College, Stillman College, Talladega College, Texas College, Tougaloo College, Tuskegee Institute, Virginia Union University, Voorhees College, Wilberforce University, Wiley College, Xavier University

WIN A FULL 4 YEAR SCHOLARSHIP

Enter the Scholarship Sweepstakes—you could quench your thirst for knowledge.
4 GRAND PRIZES: Four $25,000 4-Year Scholarships.
Enter my name in the $100,000 Black History Month Scholarship Sweepstakes

Name
Address
City State Zip Code
Telephone (Include Area Code)

Mail All Entries To
$100,000 Black History Month Scholarship Sweepstakes
P.O. Box 88713 Atlanta, GA 30358

Coke diet Coke Sprite 25¢ OFF

SPECIAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND COUPON

To help you celebrate Black History Month, you can save 25¢ when you purchase Coke, diet Coke or Sprite in a multi-pack of cans or 2 liter bottles. For every bottle The Coca-Cola Company will also make a donation to the United Negro College Fund for every coupon redeemed.

NOTE TO DEALER: For each coupon you accept as our authorized agent, we will pay plus the face value of the coupon, plus 8¢ handling charge, provided you and your customers have complied with the terms of this offer. Any other agreement constitutes fraud. Invoices showing your purchase of sufficient stock to cover all coupons must be shown upon request. Void where prohibited, taxed, or restricted. Your customer must pay any required sales tax. Cash value 1/20 of 1¢. Redeem by mailing to: The Coca-Cola Company P.O. Box 1004 Clinton Iowa 52734

OFFER EXPIRES June 30, 1985
ONLY ONE COUPON PER REQUIRED PURCHASE

25¢ OFF 49000 11424 6

"Coca-Cola, Coke, the dynamic ribbon, Sprite and diet Coke are registered trademarks of The Coca-Cola Company. © 1985 The Coca-Cola Company

BIG B FOOD WAREHOUSE

Salutes

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BIG B FOOD WAREHOUSES

Black Heritage depicted in Postal Service stamps

One of the most effortless—and enjoyable—ways to study the historic contributions of Black Americans is collecting U.S. postage stamps. The Postal Service says an estimated 22 million Americans collect stamps and starting a collection around a theme such as Blacks on stamps is an inexpensive way to become involved in this hobby of a lifetime.

Through its Black Heritage USA series of commemoratives and numerous regular stamp issues, the Postal Service has helped focus attention on Black Americans who have helped shape the nation since early colonial days.

Like the people they honor, many of the stamps featuring Black Americans have their own unique stories and historic impact. The first Black Heritage USA stamp, for example, was issued February 1, 1978 to honor abolitionist Harriet Tubman. Tubman was regarded as the conductor of the famed Underground Railroad through which many slaves escaped to freedom in the years leading to the Civil War. She also earned the distinction of being the first Black woman to appear on a U.S. stamp.

The 1984 Black Heritage USA issue, honoring Carter G. Woodson, had its roots in Black History Month. Woodson, who was both a noted historian and the son of former Virginia slaves, is credited with starting the observance of Negro History Week in 1926. Historically observed the second week of February, the week has grown into the observance of Black History Month.

Other issues in the series have celebrated Black History, music and legends.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the second honoree in the series, appearing on a stamp issued January 15, 1979. The distinguished civil rights leader received the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in the nonviolent struggle for racial equality in the U.S.

On June 9, 1983, ragtime composer Scott Joplin was honored in the series. The "King of Ragtime" fought for recognition of his compositions as a significant development in modern music. Some 50 years after his death, Joplin received a Pulitzer Prize for his ragtime opera, "Treemonisha."

The August 2, 1982 stamp honoring Jackie Robinson marked the first time a major league baseball player appeared on a U.S. stamp. Robinson, who broke baseball's color line, remained active in civil rights and youth activities after retiring from baseball in 1956.

Another civil rights leader honored in the Black Heritage USA series was Whitney M. Young, Jr. The Young stamp was issued January 30, 1981, calling attention to his 10 years of service as director of the National Urban League and his 1969 receipt of the nation's highest civilian honor—the Medal of Freedom.

Benjamin Banneker, a noted colonial mathematician and astronomer who assisted in the surveying of the site for the nation's capital in 1791, was added to the Black Heritage USA series February 15, 1980.

The next issue to be added to the series will honor educator Mary McLeod Bethune, noted for her civil rights activities and as the founder of the National Council of Negro Women. The 22-cent Bethune commemorative will bear the new First-Class postage rate and will be issued in Washington, D.C., on March 5.

In addition to the Black Heritage USA series, the Postal Service has issued numerous regular stamps honoring the contributions of Black painters, poets and peacemakers. In January, 1982, a 20-cent regular stamp was issued in honor of Dr. Ralph Bunche. The stamp was part of the Great Americans series, which recognizes widely known international civil servants. Bunche served with the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Office of Strategic Services and the State Department. In 1946, he joined the United Nations secretariat. Four years later, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his United Nations work, the first time this award was made to a Black American.

A regular stamp was issued June 3, 1981, to honor Dr. Charles Drew, best known for developing techniques for separating and preserving blood. His research in the vital field of blood plasma helped save countless lives during World War II.

The first U.S. stamp honoring a Negro was issued in 1940. It bore the likeness of Booker T. Washington, the noted educator, statesman and founder of Tuskegee Institute. Dr. George Washington Carver, the noted scientist, was one of several famous Americans selected to appear in a series of stamps issued in 1948. Frederick Douglass, the 19th century civil rights advocate, orator and journalist was honored with a stamp in 1967, and a year later, Revolutionary War figure Peter Salem appeared on a stamp highlighting the work of prominent American artist John Trumbull. And a 1975 stamp honored Salem Poor for "Contributions to the Cause" in the American Revolution.

Musician W. C. Handy, the Father of the Blues, (1969) painter Henry O. Tanner (1973) and poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1975) have also appeared on U.S. stamps. And baseball immortal and humanitarian Roberto Clemente was commemorated in 1984.

Black historical events have also been commemorated on stamps. A 1940 stamp depicting Abraham Lincoln freeing a slave honored the Thirteenth Amendment. In 1956, 1968 and 1979, black youths appeared on stamps respectively promoting "Friendship—the Key to World Peace," "Support Our Youth," and "International Year of the Child."

The Postal Service also commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation with a stamp showing a broken chain. The stamp was issued in 1963 on the opening day of the Century of Negro Progress Exposition in Chicago. And in 1973, innovative stamps honoring the nation's mail workers featured several Black postal employees.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Black History Month

Calendar for February 14-20

Informal concert with Gene Ashton, featuring handmade instruments. Museum of American History. Feb. 14 at noon.

J. H. Kwabena Nketia, Univ. of Pittsburgh, discusses Praise Poems in African Music. Museum of African Art. Feb. 14 at 7 p.m.

Artist Winnie Owens-Hart, Howard Univ., discusses her stoneware sculpture. Museum of American Art. Feb. 15 at 6 p.m. Reservations: 357-3095.

D.C. Youth Orchestra plays chamber music composed and performed by 19th-century Afro-Americans. Museum of American Art. Feb. 16 at 1 p.m. Reservations: 357-3095.

Siren of the Tropics (film), with Josephine Baker. Comments by music historian Bill Quinn. Museum of American Art. Feb. 17 at 1 p.m. Reservations: 357-3095.

Sam Gilliam, Washington artist, discusses his life in art. Museum of American Art. Feb. 19 at 6 p.m. Reservations: 357-3095.

The life of Fannie Lou Hamer, late civil rights activist, portrayed in a monologue by Billy Jean Young. Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Feb. 19 at 10 a.m. Reservations: 287-3369.

Hunters of Evil Spirits: Senufo Masks (film). Museum of African Art. Feb. 19 at 7 p.m.

Gylbert Garvin Coker, art historian, discusses Afro-American artists, abolitionists and other 19th-century art patrons. Museum of American Art. Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. Reservations: 357-3095.

Strange Victory (film). 1948. Museum of American History. Feb. 20 at Noon.

■ Sharing Traditions: Five Black Artists in 19th Century America. Museum. Museum of American Art. Through April 7.

■ Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds. Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Through June 30.

■ Black Wings: The Role of American Blacks in Aviation. National Air and Space Museum. Permanent.

■ Working in Space: The flight suit of astronaut Guy Bluford is included in this permanent exhibit.

■ Praise Poems. Fifty art masterpieces from regions of west and central Africa. Museum of African Art. Through Feb. 24.

DISCOVERY THEATER

Folktales from Africa, Cape Verde and the Caribbean with storyteller Len Cabral (Feb. 12-March 2)—4th to junior high. Arts & Industries Building. Tuesdays through Fridays—10 and 11 a.m., Saturdays—1 and 3 p.m. $2 children; $2.50 adults. Call 357-1500 for ticket information.

EXPLORE YOUR HERITAGE. Call for FREE black heritage brochure: 357-2700. Unless otherwise noted, all events listed above are FREE.

Press pioneers began in 1827

In New York City during the dying days of 1826, an intense campaign of vilification and slander was launched against the black community through the white press. The integrity and courage of black men were openly questioned. Worse, editors invaded homes and impugned the chastity of black women.

After a long and heated discussion, the black leaders decided to organize a newspaper to answer not only the charges of individual editors, but also the collective assault of white America on the black psyche.

Samuel E. Cornish and John B. Russwurm, two of the youngest and most promising of the New York leaders, were assigned the task of investing a journal that could speak forcibly to both the enemy and faint friend without, and the "brethren" within, the veil. They were eminently fitted for the task. Both were the free stock and articulate exponents of persistent protest.

On Friday, March 16, 1827, the first issue of "Freedom's Journal," the first black newspaper in the Western world, appeared on the streets of New York City. With the idealistic Cornish at the helm as senior editor and the practical Russwurm in second place as junior editor, they made an excellent team.

The prospectus for the proposed paper was a masterly blend of idealism and practicality. "We shall ever regard the constitution of the United States as our polar star," Cornish and Russwurm wrote.

"Pledged to no party, we shall endeavor to urge our brethren to use their rights to the elective franchise as free citizens. It shall never be our object to court controversy though we must at all times consider ourselves as champions in defense of oppressed humanity. Daily slandered, we think that there ought to be some channel of communication between us and the public, through which a single voice may be heard, in defense of five hundred thousand free people of colour.

"Too often has injustice been heaped upon us, when our only defense was an appeal to the Almighty, but we believe that the time has now arrived, when the calumnies of our enemies should be refuted by forcible arguments."

Today, more than a century after the founding of "Freedom's Journal," the same message leaps from the pages of hundreds of newspapers and magazines that are lengthened shadows of Cornish and Russwurm who, as Bella Gross said, delivered "the first authentic messages of the New Negro to the World."

ACCORDING TO HISTORIANS

MARY ELLEN PLEASANT

BETTER KNOWN AS "MAMMY PLEASANT", CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, HOUSEKEEPER, BOARDING HOUSE PROPRIETOR AND KNOWN THROUGHOUT SAN FRANCISCO IN THE MID-1800'S FOR HER FINE SOUTHERN COOKING SHE SERVED SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MEN OF THE 19th CENTURY IN HER BOARDING HOUSES. BORN A SLAVE ON AN AUGUSTA, GA., PLANTATION IN 1814. FREED BY HER MASTER AND GIVEN PASSAGE TO BOSTON. SHE MARRIED A WELL-TO-DO CUBAN WHOSE HOME WAS A MEETING PLACE FOR ABOLITIONISTS. HE DIED AND LEFT HER QUITE COMFORTABLE.

Pride

February is Black History Month. It's a proud time when the many historical achievements of the Black Community are acknowledged. And saluted. This year's theme centers around: Two Centuries of Black Education. Thus, we are reminded that 200 years ago there was no such thing as a "formal education" among the Blacks in America. But what did exist were families. Families filled with enormous pride. Families who, among themselves, attained an education, and more importantly, set examples for generations to come.

Commitment

They knew what their goals were. They knew not to settle back and have others determine their future. In 1826, for example, two young men—Edward A. Jones from Amherst and John Russwurm from Bowdoin—realized their commitment to their goals as they became the first two Black college graduates in America. Later on in 1854, Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania was founded as the first Black college in the United States.

It's easy to give in, stop trying, and say "I can't." In 1872, Charlotte E. Ray was determined to overcome barriers which to the majority of people seemed insurmountable. She persevered and became the first Black American woman to graduate from a university law school (Howard University in Washington, D.C.). The example she left for the entire world to follow was clear: there is no obstacle so high that it cannot be overcome. Be determined enough to say "I can" and "I will."

Determination

For over 200 years, Black Americans have strived for excellence through education. And it was because of their pride in themselves, their commitment to their goals, and their strong determination that they've succeeded. And will continue to do so.

Success

KOOL Filter Kings MENTHOL

Kool honors Black History Month: Two Centuries of Black Education.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

KOOL Kings, 17 mg. "tar", 1.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Mar. '84.