COMMUNITY LIVING

Family ties span centuries and continents

COMING TOGETHER—Louise Carter, Joseph Diggs and Lelia K. Lewis reflect on their cultural ties.

FAMILY TIES—Joseph Diggs and Lester Parker share a smile.

By Jill P. Carter
AFRO Staff Writer

A gripping story featured in the AFRO brought more to the life of Marion Parker Nelson than local recognition.

After an article about her family's rich heritage ran in both the Baltimore and Richmond papers during February, Nelson was united with relatives who had been lost to her for over 150 years.

Nelson, a native Liberian, has searched the world for the past twenty years trying to put together the pieces of her family's fragmented past.

"We thank the AFRO, and we thank God for allowing us to find other descendants of David and Eleanor Payne," Nelson said.

The Payne Family's saga began when David Payne, Nelson's great-great grandfather, an episcopal/methodist minister, moved his family from Virginia to Liberia in 1829.

Over the past century, descendants of the original Paynes have spread across the globe, many coming back to America to settle in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Orleans. Some are believed to be in Washington, D.C. and South Carolina.

In 1968, while on the faculty of Howard University's School of Medicine, Nelson was shaken by her brother's (P. Clarence Parker, III) execution in Liberia, during military coup d'etat.

Discontinuing her work at Howard, Nelson began her crusade to find the missing links of her family history.

"I yearned to know the full story," she said.

She spent long hours, researching and probing, using library records, school records, church records, and information that had been passed down to her.

"I knew where I was and where I was going; I just wanted to know from whence I came," Nelson said.

"History and time had separated this family long enough," she said. "Now we must come together, unite, and give our children some sense of their roots."

Through her efforts, Nelson has discovered that her family has spawned some top achievers. Nelson's grandfather, James Spriggs Payne was Liberia's fourth and seventh president.

Her grandmother, Matilda Payne was a leading educator, equivalent to a university professor. Other members of the Payne family are educators, ministers, doctors, businessmen, and other people of great achievement. But Nelson stresses that she wants to find her relatives from all walks of life.

"Education and money are not important, we just want to find all of our relatives," Nelson said.

Celebrating their family's past and present, the Payne descendants are planning a large family reunion for Labor Day weekend in Richmond, Va.

Nelson desperately wants to get the message to all family members everywhere to contact her. She is seeking any information leading to the location of any remaining lost relatives.

She hopes any Davises who migrated to Liberia from Harrisburg, Pa., will respond to this article.

She is still trying to locate descendants of Collins Payne, Thomas Payne, Mary Elizabeth Payne, Nancy and Caroline Payne. She also believes she is related to some Baltimore Lottiers.

"We need all descendants of our sisters and brothers to respond. Send copies of photographs, copies of documents, anything that will help us bridge this gap that has existed for more than a century," Nelson said.

Recently, Payne descendants in Ardmore, Pa., Harold and Dorothy Rogers, invited family members for a reunion at their home.

A family of diverse talents and backgrounds, some played the piano and organ while others sang along.

"Our brothers and sisters were surprised to hear that we knew the Black American National Anthem," Nelson said.

Because of the integration of Africans and Americans, they also sang African songs.

Marion Parker Nelson's store, International Fashions and Treasures is located at 322 West Baltimore Street. Her phone number is (301) 962-1554.

How the Lyons twins engineer their own reality.

Early on Mamie Lyons taught her twins, Vincent and Elliot, a very important lesson: Life only gives you what you have the courage to demand. So they demanded excellence.

And they got it, from themselves and from others. That's why they were able to graduate from a small town high school in Wynne, Arkansas to a full scholarship in engineering at Southern University, in Baton Rouge, LA. It's also why General Motors is paying for that scholarship and providing them with challenging summer jobs through the GM internship program.

Looking toward the future, General Motors has made a commitment to community development. It's the reason we invest in promising young people like Vincent and Elliot by establishing scholarships at minority colleges and universities across the country. It's also the reason why we have 12.3 billion dollars in property damage insurance managed by minority insurance brokers.

At General Motors we realize that standing behind the people who buy our Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Cadillacs and GMC Trucks is more than just a corporate responsibility—it's good business.

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Bronstein

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secutors may have biased the minds of the jurors by introducing statements made by the Bronstein family members during the trial.

When Mazyck took the witness stand Friday, he said he could not remember what happened and what he had said after the Bronsteins were murdered because he was only 14 years old then.

In an effort to refresh his memory, Doory played a recorded statement Mazyck made after the murder, in the presence of other witnesses.

Mazyck had said in the recorded statement that he was baby sitting for his sister when four people including her sister Veronda Mazyck and her boyfriend Reid came in.

The other two were John "Ace" Booth, a co-defendant in the case, and the lady who later became his wife, Jewel Booth.

He said that Reid had told him that he went to the Bronsteins, pretending to be the gas man. According to the statement, when Reid went to the front door with a flashlight the lady opened the door and looked.

That was when Reid jumped her and stabbed her. When her husband came to see what was going on, Booth grabbed the man and stabbed him.

After listening to the statement, Doory asked Mazyck if he remembered making the statement. He answered that Doory had instructed him on what to say.

Doory then asked him if he remembered making a similar statement during the 1984 trial and he said he did not remember what he said. Again, Doory read a lengthy transcript containing the statement to refresh his memory.

After listening to the statement, Mazyck implied that the statement was not true, claiming that Doory had instructed him to lie.

At this point, Doory was barely managing to control his frustration.

"When you testified in 1984 under oath, did you tell the court the truth?" he asked.

Mazyck's answer was "No."

Doory went further and reminded him that he (Mazyck) had accepted making those statements as recently as June 17 in his office, in the presence of his lawyer.

Mazyck said, the only reason why he accepted making the statement then was so that he would get the questioning over with, and be taken back to jail. Mazyck is serving a 20-year sentence as a result of his conviction in March for distributing heroin.

Earlier in her testimony, Booth, the wife of the co-defendant "Ace" told a detailed story about how her husband and Reid took her and Reid's girlfriend Veronda to the Bronsteins house for looting after the murder.

She said they stopped at a liquor store to get some cheap wine and beer to calm their nerves. Booth said her husband had warned them, "If you see anything, don't worry about it. It's nothing."

When they arrived at the house and saw the murdered couple, she asked her husband if they were dead.

At first they were told they were not dead, then they were told the couple was still because they were scared and finally they were told the couple was unconscious.

After looting and sharing their booty, they all went back to Veronda's apartment, where they injected one another with heroin to steady their nerves.

In his re-sentencing trial recently, (Ace) Booth received the death penalty. His wife was previously given a 15-year suspended sentence and a 5-year probation for assisting her husband and Reid after the murder. She got a light sentence because she agreed to testify against the defendants in the case.

Reid's trial continues today

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SAM LACY

Nuts

Nuts?

Well, maybe . . . . Maybe not.

It depends on the point of view.

In this corner, it seems that one has to be off his (or her) skull to pay anywhere from $40 to $1500 to watch a fellow on battered knees get banged about by another guy whose fists probably could shatter the armor of a money truck.

Yet, that is what happened last Monday night when people of varying degrees of sanity shelled out in excess of $70 million to witness Mike Tyson's demolition of Michael Spinks, including the latter's knee braces, support stockings and false bravado.

But, I suppose one man's fancy is another man's folly.

And, the truth here is that this column was not meant to be a rehash of the Atlantic City boxing parady . . . . Nor was it on the notepad to refer to the Tyson-Spinks fans in ridicule.

The "nuts" of this piece are the followers of the wrestling circuit.

Hold off now, the explanation of all this rambling is coming.

In the minds of many older fans, Mike Tyson is being compared to Joe Louis, a fighter who was every bit as devastating in the ring and who, like Tyson, had his moments of private confusion out of the arena.

Joe Louis recall

So, when Mike in another of his moods declared later that he was considering retirement, and night-talker Larry King suggested wrestle-macho "Hulk" Hogan might be a profitable next stop for Tyson, a brief flashback to what Louis did in retirement came to mind.

Joe became a wrestler.

He also became educated in the matter of close-up reaction by wrestling aficianados . . . . "I've seen 'em tear down football goal posts," he told me in an interview at the peak of his second (mat) career . . . . "I've seen 'em fire pistols in seventh inning baseball rallies in Cuba, and heard 'em threaten umpires in baseball games in Brooklyn . . . . and I've seen 'em throw chairs in the ring at a boxing match.

"But since I've been in this game," he laughed, "I've discovered that was kid stuff . . . . You haven't seen anything until you watch a woman run a hairpin in a 'bad' guy's leg or hear a 'loaded' beer bottle whiz past your head."

'Loaded' beer

The beer bottle incident was recalled by Louis. It wasn't funny at the time, but Joe said he chuckled every time he thought about it later.

"This was in Canada one night. I had just wound up a match in which a 'villain' known as 'Hardboiled' Hagerty, had been the victor.

"The fans didn't like it and they were fit to be tied . . . . Heading for the dressing room, I made the mistake of walking too close to Hagerty.

"As I went down the ramp leading to the clubhouse, I heard this object hum past my ear. It was a beer bottle, full of beer.

"It struck the concrete walk and smashed to bits. Luckily, nobody got hurt but my trousers took a full dose of the contents and I walked around smelling like a brewery the rest of the evening."

There was more

Numerous other experiences were related by Joe. But the one which probably capped them all was a night in Minneapolis.

This was another of those evenings in which the hated "villain" was the winner.

"As I climbed out of the ring," Louis declared, "I saw a man standing on his front-row chair. He was raving mad, pulling hair out of his head and screaming for blood.

"The 'villain,' I don't remember his name, followed me down on the floor. And as he did, the crowd converged on us."

Shoe in the eye

"Police had to come to our rescue, although the fans didn't seem to be mad at me. They just wanted to get the 'villain' and I happened to be in their way.

"Finally the cops got us through, but at the last minute someone swung a shoe and caught me in the eye.

"As I said before, nobody was mad at me. Yet, when I got back to the dressing room I was something to see.

"There I stood with a handful of another guy's hair and a black eye from the heel of a shoe that had been aimed at somebody else."

Nuts!

Notable quotable

Sportscaster Tim McCarver, recalling a game in which he was catching Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Gibson:

"I went to the mound to talk with Bob. He looked at me with that scowl that scared the hell out of most hitters. Then he told me to get back behind the batter, that the only thing I knew about pitching was it was hard to hit."

SPORTS on deck

JESSE REMEMBERED: Congress to vote on bill to establish Olympic gold medal as memorium to Jesse Owens (Streamer column 1st Sports).

* * *

AND THEY SUCCEEDED: "We wanted an unusual name," said Lisa Strawberry after introducing the little daughter born last week to her and New York Mets star Darryl. They got "Diamond" (2nd Sports).

Former boxing head admits thievery while in DC job

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Former District of Columbia boxing commissioner Cora Wilds has pleaded guilty to theft charges stemming from activities that occurred while she held the post, U.S. Attornev Jav Stephens announced.

Wilds entered her plea in Federal Court Friday before Judge Louis Oberdorfer.

Last month, the U.S. Attorney's Office charged Wilds with one count of mail fraud and one count of second-degree theft. Wilds pleaded guilty to the latter charge as the result of a plea agreement, Stephens said in a release from his office.

Charges against Wilds arose from an investigation by the D.C. Inspector General. Wilds allegedly received nearly $2,700 in reimbursements between 1983 and 1985 from boxing associations for travel expenses while also receiving reimbursement from the city for the same expenses.

Wilds' plea stems from a 1985 trip to the Philippines, for which she was reimbursed by both the International Boxing Federation-United States Boxing Association and the D.C. government.

Wilds, 42, who resigned last October at the request of Mayor Marion Barry, is scheduled to be sentenced September 15. She could receive up to one year in prison and be fined up to $1,000.

TAKING THE BATON? — Whether she'll be able to do anything with the role her older colleagues are bequeathing her remains to be determined. But Katrina Adams (right) at 19, is showing considerable promise as a successor to Zina Garrison (left). But Katrina, from Chicago, and 24-year-old Zina reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon last week before being defeated. Each scored unexpected victories — Katrina over veteran Sylvia Hanika of West Germany, and Zina over Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina. In the quarters, Adams bowed to Chris Evert, and Garrison lost to Pam Shriver.

Olympic medal urged in Owens name

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Louis Stokes (D-Shaker Heights) announces that the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage will hold a hearing on Tuesday (12) on a bill to award a gold medal to Mrs. Ruth Owens in honor of her late husband, and Olympic hero, Jesse Owens.

Jesse Owens, who attended Ohio State University, rose to international prominence during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, becoming the first athlete in the history of the games to win four gold medals.

It was a time of political unrest marked by wars abroad and Adolph Hitler's "White Supremacy" theory. The 11th Olympiad was charged with political, social, and world-altering significance when Jesse Owens, a Black American, entered the oppressive atmosphere of the Olympic Games and stunned the world with his phenomenal performance.

Louis Stokes
urges congressional push

The German spectators, captivated by Owens's achievement, rose to their feet chanting his name in approval.

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"It is unfortunate," Stokes said, "that following his great Olympic showing, Jesse Owens returned to a country in which he could not ride in the front of a bus nor live where he wanted." It was not until 40 years later that Owens received official recognition from his country, when he was presented with the Medal of Freedom by President Ford in 1976.

Three years later, President Carter presented him the Living Legends Award. H.R. 1270 is the first Congressional recogpition proposed for Owens.

Stokes stated that, "A Congressional Gold Medal for Jesse Owens would continue a tradition of recognizing great Americans and remembering great events. The 116 Congressional Medal recipients, ranging from George Washington to Charles Lindbergh and Roberto Clemente, have all excelled in their fields, impacting on American history and culture in a manner that will long be remembered. Jesse Owens clearly deserves to be numbered in this select group."

Jesse Owens
long time remembering

In addition to Jesse Owens's stellar Olympic performance, he will also be remembered for what some have called the greatest day in track history." At a university track meet on May 25, 1935, an injured Jesse Owens set 3 world records and tied a 4th within 45 minutes. In 1950 he was named the world's top track star of the century.

"Jesse Owens was more than a sports legend, more than a national figure, greater than a hero," stated Congressmman Stokes. "He was the embodiment of fair play, perseverance under tremendous pressure, and dignity in the face of discrimination and prejudice. On the eve of the 24th Olympiad, which will begin in September in Seoul, it is fitting to recognize not only Owens's accomplishments at the 11th Olympiad in Berlin, but also to cite his contributions to public service, civil rights, and international goodwill."

More than 218 Members of Congress have signed on to H.R. 1270 as co-sponsors. A similar measure has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Howard Metzenbaum.