Pulaski Hwy bar has this on the 'box'

By Helen Glover Cook
AFRO Staff Writer

And She Ran Away with a N . . . r — believe it or not this is a Country Western song found on the jukebox at Novack's Memory, a Pulaski Highway restaurant and bar.

The song numbered #266, is performed by The Texas B S Band. The title on the reverse side of the label is The Lone Star Polka. The song tells the story of a man whose lady left him for a Black man.

I knew you would do it .... My heart couldn't get any bigger so you went and ran off with a nigger.

This is an approximation of the wording because in order not to offend Novack's management, the reporters declined to produce paper and pen in view of the staff because of the apprehension caused by the appearance of the camera.

The employees of Novack's Memory were courteous and helpful at first. Their behavior became suspicious after seeing that the interest taken by their Black customers concerning the jukebox and song #266 was professional rather than leisure.

A waitress was overheard saying to another staff person, "Why does anyone want to take a picture of a jukebox?" Suddenly in mid-song the words could no longer be heard. The management had turned off the box.

Directly hanging over the jukebox is a larger than life photograph of Elvis Presley. The walls are covered with photographs of Elvis Presley. The largest of the Elvis photos hangs on the wall overlooking the jukebox.

Elvis memorabilia covers the remaining wall space, making the restaurant a kind of shrine to Elvis, making the place resemble some sort of shrine to the rock and roller who died in 1977.

Outside pick-up trucks and four wheel drive vehicles line the parking lot. Guys with mud one their brogans stop in after a hard days work for a beer, a bite to eat, play the pinball machine or to just chew that fat.

The AFRO contacted several radio stations to find information on the Texas B S Band and their controversial recording. None of the stations contacted said they had any knowledge of the song or its artist.

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The Afro-American Section B
METRO PROFILE
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Saturday, January 27, 1990

RELATIONSHIPS— Part II

MIXING IT UP

Loving against all odds

By Constance McIver

As of the beginning of 1990, there were approximately 800,000 inter-racial married couples, a 22.9 percent rise over 1980 when the count was 651,000. In more than 117,000 households the husband is African-American which is considerably more than the 47,000 households where the wife is African-American. In fact, according to Interrace Magazine, a new publication for the inter-racial society, African-American women are the least likely group to marry outside of their race. We feature two such couples, the Waters of Harrisburg, PA and the Sagalas of Randallstown, MD.

"I still think people trip over curbs while staring back at you," stated Oscar Waters, an African-American who has been married to his wife, Zara, for almost twenty years. They met and fell in love during the Civil Rights years and have more than a few stories regarding that time. Zara, a petite, blond haired woman of French and German decent was the only daughter of a former Pennsylvania state legislator.

Duane and Deanna Sagala new each other for four years before they took their nuptials on March 25, 1989. Duane, a Mexican-American originally from Texas, met her through his roommate who was dating Deanna's best friend. Deanna, an African-American native of Northern Maryland, says they always got along very well.

In Oscar and Zara Waters' case, it is good that first impressions were not lasting. They both worked in the same building, Oscar for the Department of Justice as an investigator and Zara for the Department of Transportation as a secretary.

He walked into the office that day in 1969 dressed in street clothing and according to him, she thought he was the janitor who had come to fix her light. "I did not, I thought you were the maintenance worker not the janitor," Zara quickly interjected as any wife would to get the story straight. They liked each other and started dating soon after.

Duane, a postal employee, and Deanna, a data processor started off as very good friends and her parents always knew that this was who she should live her life with in matrimony. Their only reaction was, "What took you so long?" Duane's family, in Texas, hadn't met Deanna, which says a lot. They didn't know about her twinkling eyes or her infectious laugh. Neither did they know her skin color.

When they did find out, Duane's father was the only one to disapprove. During their first meeting Mr. Sagalas' softened however, he did respect his decision. Also, after meeting Deanna, his attitude softened somewhat.

As for their friends, they were surprised and pleased.

In Oscar and Zara's case, the times were different and so too were the attitudes and objections they met. Their marriage caused her parents much concern. Zara came from a well-known family in an all White neighborhood in Pennsylvania. Her parents once received a phone call shortly after their marriage. The caller stated that the marriage was going to produce "...a bunch of little pick-a-ninnies!" However, after time this type of harassment stopped and Zara's parents, after getting to know Oscar, did accept him as part of the family. This is when Zara's father confided in Oscar. He told him, "Well, I didn't know if you were part of the Black Panther Party or what!" The resistance from both families subsided once knowledge replaced myth and fear. They soon started to look at the person inside and not the color on the outside, which is what is most obvious to society.

Duane and Deanna Sagalas

Both the Waters' and the Sagalas have noticed the subtle signs of prejudice, such as unnecessary and prolonged stares, "...which you learn to ignore. It is the not so subtle signs of prejudice which concern them, such as the incident which the Waters' endured in the summer of 1972.

They were travelling to Pittsburgh on business driving a new car they had recently purchased. They stopped at a Howard Johnsons for a meal and gas. After finishing their meal they drove the car over to the gas pump and Oscar got out of the car.

When he did, the gas attendant noticed the gun and holster on his person which he was required to wear for his job, the new car he was driving and the blond woman who was in the car, but said nothing. Once they had received their gas they continued down the turnpike. As they approached the on ramp to the Pennsylvania Turnpike they noticed a large number of state troopers lined up on the top of the ramp.

As they passed the ramp, the troopers began down the ramp one after the other and filed in order behind their car and soon after pulled them over. "You would have thought I was an escaped prisoner." They surrounded the car in ready position and told him to get out. He complied, putting his hands on the car as they had requested. When asked for identification he said, "It is in my jacket which is in the back seat, and I'm not going to get it so you can blow my head off, you can get it yourself." Once the matter was cleared up they let them go, without an apology or an explanation.

Most of the Sagalas' experiences have been positive. Deanna remembers a co-worker commenting on the picture of her and Duane which was placed on her desk by saying,"Boy, you guys make a nice couple." "People see that it is no big deal with me and we are very open with it, so this is what helps them to accept it easier," Deanna says.

Duane and Oscar, both having family and having travelled in the south, say that the north is more understanding or maybe just more tolerant. Throughout their travels in and out of the country the Waters' note that the pressures are less prevalent in larger cities as opposed to smaller towns.

The Sagalas have not started their family yet, but they feel that when they do they will teach the children about both heritages because when the children go out into the world people will inquire as to what its nationality is. "We don't anticipate it as being much of a problem because we don't come from a very cultural background in the sense of tradition. We won't put as much emphasis on you, whether you are Black or whether you are Mexican, as much as telling the child that they are a person, a good person," says Duane.

The Waters' have a son, Adrian, a ninth grader who plays the piano, the drums, receives good grades, is a black belt in karate, loves Nintendo, was not pleased at that fact that he did not make the basketball team,and has a big black German shepherd that his father tries to give away at every chance possible. He sounds pretty ordinary, but he too runs into the occasional child spawned from ignorant parents who chooses to refer to him as a "n——r."

Perhaps if we all learn how to look at each other as people, we will stop treating each other as something less.

Walter Cole, 50, teacher - People are much more tolerant . . . look at the major univ. all you see seems to be interracial couples. The young people seem to be more or less colorblind.

Robert McMahan, Mailroom employee for VSP Industries: "It is odd that you choose me to ask that question. I am presently in an interracial relationship. My girlfriend is Black. In relation to the attitudes of yesteryear I suppose it is easier for an interracial couple to date.

Kristi Tobey, 20 - artist rep. There are still as many problems but people aren't as open or vocal about their feelings. It is a rarity for someone to make overt actions of hostility.

Lori Watkins, 26, model - Yes, the reason I say yes is that there are still many narrow minded people who can't believe that humans are indirectly the same. It's unfortunate that there is still racism in the 90's. I guess it is just reality.

What about the children?

By Charles H. Brown

Nowadays, love comes in all sizes, shapes and colors and often more than one color at a time. You hear the advice, you listen to the warnings but still...still, you just can't help disregarding your head when it comes to matters of the heart and following your feelings (against the popular reason) into a situation your momma told you, "Would lead to no-good." But for the nations 800,000 inter-racial couples "...no-good" is good enough for them; it's good enough to date, good enough to propose and good enough to say, "I do."

Some people just prefer living dangerously. They navigate hazardous situations at treacherous speeds, they define tomorrow as that thing you deal with when today is past and when they find themselves the recipients of the predicted emotional trauma some will say what they say best: "I told you so!" But what about the children.

Inter-racial couples see themselves as no different. They want the three bedroom home with the double-car garage and the 2.6 children, pretty much the same as you and I. The good part is they tend to get the things they work for - the bad part is society tends to give them more than they ask for. It's a twisted version of the old saying - A spoon full of medicine helps the sugar go down.

Jane and Hailey Griggs

"It happens," says Jane Griggs, White mother of two mixed-marriage children, "you still have prejudiced people who take it out on the children."

Griggs' two children, Torry, 10 and Hailey, 2 (in February), romp roll and play in the small Columbia apartment a little rougher than most children. Diving across the room, Torrie bouncing an official size soccer ball off of Hailey's head and two year old Hailey taking and giving with Tory's best.

"She's bloodied his nose before," Mrs. Griggs says. "You can see why," she adds as the two fall backward onto the carpeted floor, laughing on the way down and on the way up again.

But the lessons in toughness may come in handy for Hailey as Mrs. Griggs paints a picture of Columbia that doesn't fit in with James Rouses vision of a 21st century utopia. "The white boys around here harass inter-racial girls," Mrs. Griggs says. "They come from one of the nearby high schools and beat up on them. It's different with Torrie, he's like his father, he'll fight back. We worry about our little girl."

For two month old Evan Lambert the problems are a ways off but seldom far from the thoughts of his parents, Linda and Craig Lambert. The image the couple sees of the son they always wanted is clouded by the doubts of not how, but how often Evan will have to deal with his mixed heritage.

"He's going to have problems," Craig Lambert says pointedly. "It's just a matter of what we do to teach him how to cope with his problems."

"We are going to give him a good sense of family and high self esteem," adds Linda Lambert, formerly Linda Seaman. Linda's Jewish background added another element to couples inter-racial marriage when Linda's parents refused to come to the wedding saying they objected to the relationship on religious grounds.

"Originally they objected saying they didn't want anything to do with us," recalls Linda. "They told me it was more religious than a Black/White thing. It's getting better, but it took my getting pregnant. My mom heard about it and began coming around."

That bell signalled the end of round one but now the Leonards face their second problem - Religion. Linda Seaman's family is very traditional in the practice of their Jewish faith and according to tradition a child must be brought up according to the religion of the mother. As a result, the parents who objected to the relationship on religious grounds now anticipate a Jewish grandson.

"We've had arguments about that," Linda says, hesitantly glancing towards her husband....

"In today's world he is going to be considered Black," interrupts Craig. "I'm telling you."

"We're going to bring him up both ways....."

As a result the tug of war that took place between the young couple and Linda's parents may shift footing too a tug between heritages as the couples grapple with the slippery titles of Christian or Jew. Titles made even more complicated by the added qualifiers, "White Christian" or "Black Jew."

"We're going to bring him up to know both ways," Craig corrects. "Then we are going to let him choose."

But Jane Griggs says her son Tory has already faced ten years worth of the problems which will lie ahead for Evan Lambert. According to Tory he was allegedly called a "n——r" by one of the teachers at Swansfield Elementary School which he attended up until three months ago. The episode had such a devastating effect on him that he would get sick and sometimes throw up at the thought of having to return to school.

Tory has since transferred to an area private school, but the incident has left him confused. He often asks his mother if he will grow to be as dark as his father and at this point has not decided whether he would rather be Black or White.

"Growing up so many kids were told you couldn't play with Black kids or you couldn't play with White kids, even then I knew I wanted to have a mixed family - I thought it would make it easier. I get a little perturbed at times when that it is still the way it was. From 15 to 25 years ago the situation is not resolving itself. Is it?"