

Roots... Alex Haley traces Black heritage in television novel series

By JOAN HANAUER
United Press International

NEW YORK — Alex Haley spent 12 years searching for an intangible at slavery stole from black Americans — his identity as part of an ethnic group with an identity and culture beyond the American experience.

Blacks in America traditionally have been identified, by themselves and others, in terms of what was one to them. Their history, as far as they know it, began in slavery, and they can claim only vague roots somewhere in Africa.

Haley went back to find out who his ancestors were, where in Africa they came from, how they came to be sold into slavery, and what happened to them as slaves and freedmen. His story, told in the bestselling book "Roots," comes to television via ABC-TV starting Jan. 23, 10 p.m., Central time in a 12-hour presentation over eight consecutive nights, a method of putting a novel in the air that hasn't been tried before.

After two-hour episodes Jan. 23 and 24, "Roots" will be shown from

9-10 p.m., Central time Jan. 25-27, goes to two hours Jan. 28, back to one hour Jan. 29, and winds up Jan. 30, 9-10 p.m., Central time.

It makes for stunning television theater. The first two segments of the program get "Roots" off to a rousing start, although they are very different.

"Roots" begins in The Gambia, West Africa, in 1750 with the birth of Kunta Kinte, who was "the African" about whom Haley's grandmother once told him stories.

Kunta Kinte is shown growing up in an idyllic pastoral setting, perhaps somewhat romanticized, but a far cry from the old-fashioned stereotype of primitive savagery.

The boy, only recently having completed his manhood rites, is captured by slavers. The scenes that follow, as the captives are caged on a beach, then stuffed into a slave ship like perishable but not very valuable goods — there are arguments for both "tight pack" and "loose pack" of human cargo — are horribly realistic.

LeVar Burton as the young Kunta Kinte, Cicely Tyson as his mother

and Thalmus Rasulala as his father bring to the screen a warm family picture before it is shattered by Ralph Waite as an evil third mate (what's Pa Walton doing in a role like this?) and Edward Asner as a moralistic ship's captain corrupted by slavery.

The slaves aboard ship, most of whom do not speak a common language and don't even understand what the ocean is, try to take over "the white man's canoe," but the rebellion fails, and they are sold at Annapolis. Here Kunta Kinte is bought by Lorne Greene and finds both a friend in Louis Gossett Jr., and a cruel overseer in Vic Morrow.

The story continues through the week until Jan. 30 when the emancipated black family, harassed by nightriders and exploited by the greedy, moves to Henning, Tenn. That's where Alex Haley first heard his grandmother speak of "the African."

Brandon Stoddard, ABC vice president who has seen the "Roots" project through from the beginning, speaks proudly of the show. Those who have read the book will find minor differences, and Stoddard explained in an interview:

"First of all, when we bought 'Roots' two years ago, it was only one-third finished. We worked off of I don't know how many drafts of 'Roots.' At one point we were working with 2,800 pages and there were some things in the drafts that did not wind up in the Doubleday book.

"Then there were the dramatic changes — to have a slave talking inside his head for an hour is okay in a book, but it doesn't play too well on television. But there is nothing in 'Roots' that Alex didn't wholeheartedly approve."

Stoddard said the innovative scheduling was done for maximum impact.

"'Roots' is an event in itself," Stoddard said. "It's not like 'Rich Man, Poor Man,' which spanned 20 years in the amount of television time that 'Roots' covers 117 years."

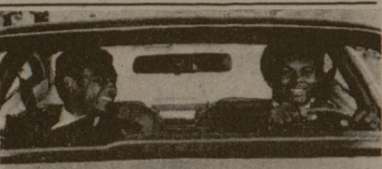
"With 'Rich Man, Poor Man' each episode ended with a man on a cliff. But with 'Roots' the mood changes, the characters change and you can go into 'Roots' at any point, miss a night and go back to it, and not be confused."

"We don't expect 90 million Americans never to go out to dinner or visit Aunt Sally's from Jan. 23

through Jan. 30. I do think a lot of people will be watching at least three or four episodes."

In a way, "Roots," which cost ABC \$6 million, is a gamble.

"Obviously there has never been



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Darkness, cold slow search

A&M professor finds Baugh's body

By MARY HESALROAD
Dr. William P. Fife of Texas A&M University played a major role in the investigation of the murder

of Lawrence Tipton Baugh. He found the body last Saturday by Scuba diving in the Navasota River. The Brazos County Sheriff's Of-

fice asked Fife to help in the search for Baugh's body last Friday. Fife is a professor of biology and sponsor of the Scuba Club at A&M.

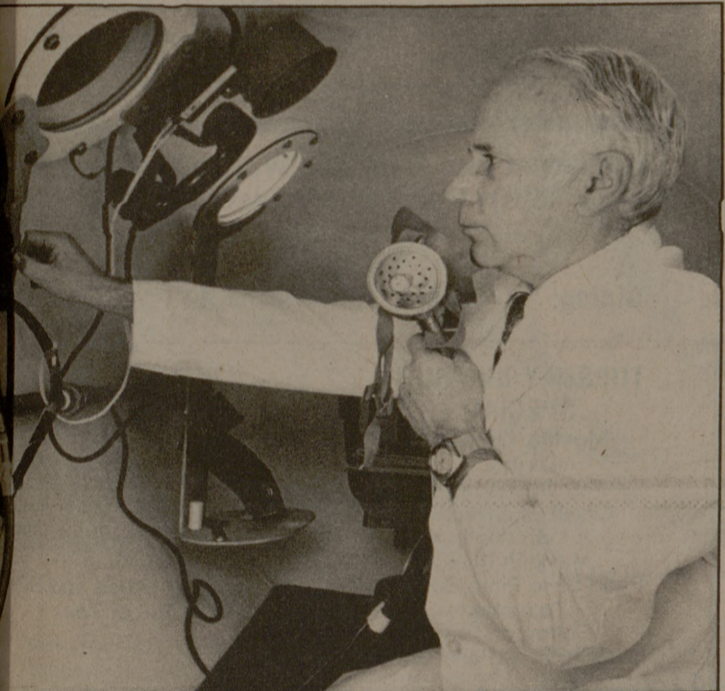
body drops under those conditions and you begin to lose your judgment."

He explained that the divers had to get out of the water frequently to get warm.

"This is more common than rare when you're searching for things like this," he said.

"The people who do a lot of this work said the body usually doesn't move too far," Fife said.

He found the body near where College Station police have said Walter Joe Coleman told them he had thrown it. Coleman is charged with Baugh's murder.



Dr. William P. Fife

"This business of trying to find things under water is a lot more difficult than many people realize, because rarely do you have the visibility you see in picture books," Fife said yesterday.

Wayne Hughes, Dennis Denton and Tracy Treybig, undergraduates at A&M, assisted Fife in the search. Hughes and Denton are assistants for Fife at the hyperbaric testing laboratory.

Fife has worked with the Texas Rangers in similar circumstances. Last year he made an unsuccessful search in the Red River for a gun that may have been used to kill a Hearne man.

Fife compared his dive in the Navasota River to being in a totally dark room.

"I couldn't see a thing," he said. "Everything had to be done by feeling along the river bed. When you are in this kind of position and you have currents in the water as well as extreme cold you just aren't very efficient."

Diving in such conditions could be dangerous, Fife said. "The core temperature of the

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Mademoiselle says... we're one of three places in Texas to have your hair cut.*

HAIR UPDATE

TO QUOTE:
The update you see here's the pooling of resources — a long list of hairdresser friends from past research — and names our College Board recommended. We sent them questionnaires on cuts/care/color. The replies, some treatment you'd get as a customer. The replies, some so good they deserve special mention (NEWS NOW, next door), some so much alike they make for majority rule. Three directions hair's taking: longer, sleeker, or tousled. We've dropped a few names so you'll know where to go near you.
* NOVEMBER 1976 ISSUE
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The Test

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Capt. John HILL (Aviation Officer, F-4 Pilot) and Capt. Joe LEINENBACH (Infantry Officer) will be in the MSC on the 24th, 25th and 26th of January. Come by and speak with them between 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. or call Houston (collect) anytime 226-5465.

*NOTE: All current PLC's and PLC applicants. There will be a Semper Fidelis meeting at the TRIGON on Tuesday, January 25, at 7:30 P.M. The basic School will be discussed by Lt. J. T. RYBERG, USMC, who has just completed the school.

The Marines