

Bassett Gets Plum Role

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Carolina, with her father's sister and her husband. She then moved to St. Petersburg, Fla., with her mother, a civil service worker at the State Health and Human Resources office, and younger sister Dannelle. "We lived a very simple, humble life," Bassett said, "but there was a lot of love from my family and the community. I always felt that everyone was in my corner, from my mother to my teachers, to the church choir. It was as though I had an extended family."

That extended family included those whom she calls her "Guardian Angels," specifically Vice Principal Robert Anders of Boca Ciega High School, and George Langhorn, director of Upward Bound, a weekend academic program for gifted students to which Angela belonged. "My mother was always supportive of my desire to be an actress and instilled the idea that the people I associated with should be doing positive things, while Mr. Anders and Mr. Longhorn kept after me about my studies," she says.

During Angela's senior year in high school, as she was

applying to different colleges, and contemplating career choices, Langhorn wrote a letter to Mrs. Bassett suggesting that she make certain that Angela also submit applications and transcripts to Yale, Harvard and Berkeley, among others. "I would never have thought to apply to those great universities," Angela says. "Not because I couldn't get in, but it just wasn't in my consciousness. He (Langhorn) saw something in me that I couldn't see."

Bassett chose Yale for her undergraduate and graduate studies and discovered their drama department. "Yale has one of the best drama schools in the country and I met a lot of people there who were as fervent about acting as I was," she says. It was also the first year that legendary director Lloyd Richards began his tenure at Yale. He became a mentor and eventually directed Angela in the Yale Repertory Theatre and Broadway productions of "Joe Turner's Come and Gone."

After graduation from the drama school, Bassett headed to New York City. A lot of casting people recognized her abilities and expressed inter-

est in her, but it took seven long months before Angela landed her first professional stage role. "In the meantime, I had to keep my confidence up," she says of this transition period, "but I knew it was just a matter of time and perseverance. Meanwhile, I worked at a salon making appointments, and at U.S. News and World Report in the photo department selecting pictures for the magazine. Then I got a call to play 'Antigone,' in an off-off-Broadway showcase."

As the title character in this classic tragedy by Sophocles, Bassett caught the attention of The Negro Ensemble Company who invited her to join them for a bus and truck tour of a play commemorating Black History Month. When the tour was completed, she was promptly cast in the Harvard Stage Company production "The Mystery Plays," in which she played all the women in the Bible. "It was what is known as non-traditional casting," she smiles. "The cast consisted of five white men, and me! I was especially concerned because I didn't know how audiences would respond to this."

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