

ROBYN'S NEST



by Robyn-Denise Berryhill

With the airing of Alex Haley's "Roots" on ABC less than two weeks ago, it became the most watched program in the history of television. According to the surveys taken, an estimated three-fifth of the nation's population viewed it in its entirety for the eight successive nights.

Continuing dramas adapted from a major novel have become almost a fad on prime-time television. It began last year when ABC aired Irwin Shaw's "Rich Man, Poor Man" on a weekly basis for eight weeks. Earlier this television season NBC brought "The Captains and the Kings" and "Once An Eagle" on the air. So "Roots" became the fourth major novel to be viewed on nation-wide television.

The success of "Roots" as a novel comes as no real surprise. Alex Haley had certainly established his ability as a writer when he shared co-authorship on "The Autobiography of Malcolm X." In addition to this, "Roots" had already received advanced publicity as much as up to two years ago on national television and in national publications. Prior to coming to television as a drama, it had already spent six weeks in the number one position on "The New York Times" best seller list and since the program has re-assumed that position.

In terms of getting one's just due, this obviously is Haley's reward for a job well done on a twelve-year search. However, it must be slightly disheartening to have some of the original content of the book completely altered or omitted altogether. But with the price of television time being what it is, it would have

been rather difficult to fuse 175 chapters worth of reading into twelve hours viewing time.

Having read the book I would say as a whole the majority of the episodes fell together in a cohesive pattern. This is in no way to say that the show was without flaws. Many people feel that the character of Cicely Tyson should have been expanded to "showcase" her talents. Being a well-established actress in her own right, this was hardly necessary. Her part although brief was convincing and to the point.

The brief appearance of author Maya Angelou was quite a different story. Being the marvelous teller of tales that she is, her role as the grandmother could have been used in establishing a wealth of knowledge in the history of the village. For that matter more of the everyday lifestyle of the village could have been examined.

Seemingly more interest was put on the institution of slavery, and the familiar horror stories of how slaves were treated came forward. Although true, conditions were far worse than could be imagined and were described rightfully so in the novel, but were stricken from the television screen.

What distinguished "Roots" however from the ordinarily-heard slave stories was that we were able to see the essence of slavery as it affected one family. We were able to see the "roots" that were established in their heritage and culture and how they were stripped away. The "roots" so to speak were set in Africa. The injustices of slavery showed how they were washed away and since one family was viewed intensively, our emotions as an audience came into

play. It did in a sense affect each of us personally.

In its entirety, "Roots" was aired for twelve hours and had almost as many directors. In several instances, for example, when it was aired for two continuous hours, a different director was used for each hour. This perhaps did not alter the outcome of the story but a lot of the emotional impact was either changed or lost.

For me, the first two episodes of the series really established the tone. This is not to say that the others were not effective, but the first two episodes were by far the best. The last episode, in terms of directing, was a big let down. For an emotionally packed series, the climax episode came off to me no differently than a typical version of "Gunsmoke" (music included). The two highlights of the entire evening were when Haley told what became of the rest of the family and George Sanford — Brown got ready to beat Lloyd Bridges with the whip. It was supposed to show humility and compassion when he declined to do this, but I was highly disappointed. He could have hit him at least once.

The best performances overall in the series were given by Lamar Burton who played the young Kunta Kinte, Lou Gossett as Fiddler, Leslie Uggams as Kizzy, Madge Sinclair as her mother and Ben Vereen as Chicken George. John Amos gave a good performance as Toby but there seemed to be something lacking that didn't quite convince me that he felt secure in the part.

Undoubtedly "Roots" will go down as one of the finest produced programs in the history of television.

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Dept. to Make Some Revisions

by Joyce Bass

After March of 1977, students enrolled in the Department of Special Education may notice a few revisions and new additions to their curriculum.

According to Mrs. Mary Scarlette, assistant professor and acting chairman in the Department of Elementary and Special Education, "All school programs geared to training persons who are handicapped must go through an extensive review. We, at Bennett, are taking a look at our program to see if our students know 'what's happening' in special education."

She said that the department will be reviewing and trying to strengthen its own program. In March, the State Department of Public Instruction will be sending a three member panel to review the program "to see if we are doing what we say we are doing." The panel will talk with instructors and they will also interview students in the education field at random.

The department has been revising and adding new courses to its curriculum. The department has discovered that the students in special education need to know how to teach sex education to EMR students or mentally retarded students.

"We are trying to increase the observation experiences for our students. Certification for teachers here at Bennett reads K-3. We're trying to expose the girls to the reverse—12-K," said Mrs. Scarlette.

The teaching members of the department have been taking field trips to various institutions where there are EMR students to see what their needs are. In this way they will be able to know what the girls will be expected to do.

Mrs. Scarlette said that most of the staff members who went on the trips called them "mind-bending."

Bennett College and Guilford College are the only schools in this area that offer special education on the undergraduate level. Mrs. Scarlette said that Bennett wants to do its best. The department wants to increase the student's ability to do diagnostic testing.

Some people may look at the March review as a pass or fail type of test. Mrs. Scarlette says that this is not the case.

"Our program is not in jeopardy. We want to strengthen our

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