

Lunch, 'Oprah'

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with Pottier's determination to stick to his goals without compromising his values.

Pottier "talks about his life experience" in the biography, Hayes-Brown said. "I just find that fascinating because I'm not even there yet, but I can be true to myself."

Hayes-Brown didn't expect lunch and a show from Winfrey. Representatives of Winfrey's production company swore Hayes-Brown's wife Sharon to secrecy, then

surprised him with a camera crew at their home last week.

"I was very surprised (by the invitation)," he said. "In fact, I was shocked. I just said thank you and stared into the camera. I know I looked kind of cornball."

With the shock worn off, Hayes-Brown said the experience is one he'll never forget.

"It's truly an honor because Sidney Pottier is a legend," he said.

Hayes-Brown's "Oprah" episode airs March 28.

No clear successor for Nation of Islam

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a religious studies and humanities professor at Rice University, who said he can't think of anyone positioned within the Nation at this point to assume leadership. "Whoever takes over after the Minister Louis Farrakhan will have rather large shoes to fill. What the Nation of Islam is able to do will depend to some extent on the weight this person will carry."

Farrakhan has been a controversial and powerful leader for the Nation of Islam for nearly three decades. The sect was founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad as a separatist black religious and political organization and continued for more than 40 years under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. Farrakhan reconstituted the Nation after Elijah Muhammad's son - also known as W.D. Muhammad - had dissolved it and moved toward traditional Sunni Islam.

But membership in the organization - while no one knows the exact numbers - is thought to have dwindled to somewhere between 30,000 and 70,000 today. Still, while more African-American Muslims today may follow more mainstream brands of Islam such as Imam W. D. Muhammad's, the Nation's political power and influence persist.

"Whenever African-Americans bump up against racial discrimination, lots of folks within African-American communities assume the Nation of Islam will have something to say," says Professor Pinn. "It still holds the popular imagination of the United States in significant ways, and it still has significance for African-American communities and will for some time."

Farrakhan helped return the Nation of Islam to Elijah Muhammad's controversial teachings: that the original founder was an incarnation of God, for instance, and that a "Mother Plane" - like a UFO - will eventually descend. Farrakhan also helped turn the Nation into a more outwardly focused group.



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