

Issue #41 - January 16, 2009 DAN'S PAPERS

## Greatness in Montauk

Louis Stokes Tells Us How History Can Be Made

By T.J. Clemente

Former Ohio Representative Louis Stokes, a veteran of 30 years in the House of Representatives, was at Gurney's Inn with his family. The 83-year-old gentleman, the only African American ever elected to Congress from the great state of Ohio, used his distinguished baritone voice to share with me his front-step view of American history. Louis and Carl Stokes were raised by a single Mom in Cleveland who worked hard as a house cleaner to insure that the boys got a great education. Both sons went all the way to law school and actually opened one of the first black law practices in Cleveland, Stokes and Stokes.

In 1967 in the full heat of racial discord and Dr. Martin Luther King's quest for racial equality, Louis's brother Carl won election in Cleveland as the nation's first black mayor of a major U.S. City. Louis fondly recalled, "Upstairs in the hotel suite watching the returns with the Stokes brother was Dr. King himself." When Carl won, Louis said they asked Dr. King to come down and share in the accomplishment, Dr. King said, "No Carl, if I come down it will be that an Afro-American has won, if you go down alone it will be that the best man won who just happens to be an Afro-American."

Louis stopped and looked right into my eyes. His point was made. When asked about his own stellar career representing Ohio in the U.S. House of Representatives Stokes was very proud of being Chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee. During his tenure he held meetings on many things. One was the Committee on Assassinations, which he said convinced him that there were two shooters. The convincing evidence to Rep. Stokes was the recorded sound track of a Dallas Policeman's radio belt that by chance, while turned on picked up and recorded the shots as they were fired. He said the committee went down to Dallas and reenacted the whole assignment with a skilled sniper and dummies in the same car. The skilled sniper also did not miss.



Photos Courtesy WVH-TV

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Another hearing Rep. Stokes chaired was on the Abscam scandal in which Rep. Jenrette was convicted and

sent to prison after the FBI had film of him stuffing wads of cash into every pocket of his suit during a sting operation.

He also told a story that was about recent events. Just a few months ago when black Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones passed away from an untimely illness, Stokes was in Ohio at the Memorial service in Cleveland which was also attended by Barack Obama, Bill and Hilary Clinton, and many other notables. Louis spoke at the funeral, but in the middle of his eulogy he just stopped in the emotion and said, "By the way, Barack, never in my lifetime did I think that I would ever see the day when a black man would become President."

In an emotional moment for all three, Obama came forward, hugged Stokes, and whispered in his ear, "If it weren't for you and your brother Carl, I wouldn't be here."

And that is the essence of what Louis and Carl Stokes meant to the future of this nation. Their mother's hard work and sacrifice laid the foundation. It is what this country is truly all about.

Former Representative Louis Stokes was at Gurney's to be included in Ingrid Lemme's American Dream TV show. His daughter Lori Stokes was also filmed for another show that day. It was just by chance Louis Stokes and I shared lunch on the set that day.

And on that day I was able to hear history from a man who made it. Finally, at the end, I asked my last question, my big question, I asked former Rep. Stokes what was his most important and memorable vote. He paused, looked me dead in the eye, and said, "Well that's a difficult question, but I guess the vote I made to establish Dr. King's national holiday has to be it."

Then he smiled. Perhaps he had actually realized it was a powerful answer. He said it again, "Definitely the vote to make Dr. King's birthday a holiday." You had to think about what it meant to Louis Stokes to honor a man who touched his life by starting a process to peacefully knock down barrier after barrier.

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### American Dream Show

#### A Sneak Peak Into the 2009 Line-up

By T.J. Clemente



Esther Beckman Barry King Jack Graham Lorraine Ferretti

Photos Courtesy WVVH-TV

Once again the velvet like magic that is the interviewing style of Ingrid Lemme was manifested at Gurney's. Lemme taped her first eight shows for 2009 a few days ago. The award winning show, which is beamed into over five million households during prime time, is classic Americana. Produced and directed by Ernest and Gregory Schimizzi, the show zeroes in on heritage, family, and the dreams of the successful and how they unfolded. The show is titled "The American Dream Show" and airs on VVH-TV.

The taping starting at 10 a.m. and the first guest was Lorraine Ferretti who is both director of Regional Development for Remax as well as president of the Long Island Connection of Reike.

For all those interested in the spiritual ramifications of Reike or how to learn more about it, this show is a must. Just listening to Ferretti talk about Reike made the audience feel some new energy flowing right there in the studio. Lemme does her usual smooth interview and gets Lorraine to open up and tell her whole story.

The second show featured Montauk's own Jack Graham, who besides working for Banfi Vintners, played a huge role along with Paul Monte in the rebuilding of St. Theresa in Montauk. A true Montauk icon, gentleman, father, and husband, Jack has been married to his lovely wife Peggy for over 55 years and also received the Nick Monte Community Lifetime Achievement Award later that evening for a life's worth of service to Montauk. Witty and personable Jack talked of his Georgetown University days, his lifetime, and hearing him only brought true warmth and appreciation for the legend that Montauk knows as Jack P. Graham.



Lori Stokes, TV anchor-woman for NY WABC, and American Dream Show Host Ingrid Lemme

Talk about star power, the third show featured the renowned TV anchor-woman Lori Stokes, presently now hosting the morning how on NY WABC Ch 7. The attractive and personable Stokes, who is also a mother, was a fill in on the hit show "The View," until, due to her busy schedule, she was replaced by Whoopi Goldberg. Stokes' life has been a ride through history. Her father, Rep. Louis Stokes, was the first black Congressman ever in Ohio (1968), her uncle Carl Stokes, was the first mayor of a large U.S. City who happened to be black,

back in 1967.

The show featuring former Representative Louis Stokes is another one of Ingrid's classics. She talks first hand with someone who is part of American history in many ways. In fact during the show Rep. Stokes will unveil a story that has Barack Obama thanking Louis for paving the way for him. Powerful television. Rep. Stokes credits his mother, a single parent who cleaned houses for his and his brother's success and always saying about schoolwork, "Get something in your head so you won't have to work with your hands."

Show 6 featured the entrepreneur Barry King who is now putting the finishing touches on his rating system for hospitality. Barry once was on top of the perfume world and has lived a diverse life with love from his wife and family always being the true yardstick of his success.

Professor David Reynolds is the star of show number seven, in which the focal point is his new historical biography of Andrew Jackson, titled, *Waking Giant, America in the Age of Jackson*. The author of 13 scholarly novels, Dr. Reynolds is proud to have perfected a way of abstracting down history so that it's readable to a broader public instead of just graduate students. His wit and charm come off both on air and in the book. He is presently a distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

The 7th show also featured the life work and observations of Robbie Woliver who compiled them all in a book called "Alphabet Kids." In this book Robbie explains the many illnesses that go undiagnosed in children. His determination in this field was very personal. His prize for his life's work is that his daughter, once diagnosed as troubled, is an honor student.

The final show was a great way to end a long day of taping. Show eight basically displays the singing talent of Esther Beckman of West Islip, and how this woman, now over 50, has become an award winning Idol Singer in New York State. With Tom Pandel accompanying her on guitar, she sings three tunes including, "Over You, Baby Baby," and "What a Wonderful World." Coming from a large family, Esther's story is full of family warmth, hard work and love.

Check your local listings for American Dream on VVH-TV, starring Montauk legend, and all around good person Ingrid Lemme.