

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alex Haley dies

By JAMES L. ENG
Associated Press Writer

SEATTLE — Alex Haley, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer whose book *Roots* told the story of the black experience in America and inspired people of all races to search for their ancestors, died yesterday. He was 70.

Haley, whose other works included *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, died of a heart attack at Swedish Hospital, said hospital spokeswoman Jane Anne Wilder.

Haley spoke at the University's Schwab Auditorium on Nov. 8, 1991. In the speech, sponsored by Colloquy, Haley said that listening to his grandparents spurred him to write about his family history, calling his grandparents "living history books."

Haley had been scheduled to speak today at the Bangor Naval Submarine Base near Bremerton, said Liz Beaton of the base's human resources department.

Survivors include Haley's third wife, Myra; his son William Haley and two daughters, Cynthia Gertrude Haley and Lydia Ann Haley.

William Haley spoke about his father at a news conference yesterday evening.

"I think the things that Dad left to America are something that's going to be here for generations," he said.

Haley won the 1977 Pulitzer Prize for *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, the gripping story of his family's monumental journey from Africa to American slavery and ultimately to freedom.

The result of 12 years of research, the book blended fact and imagined detail in tracing Haley's family back six generations to Kunta Kinte, who was kidnapped from Gambia, West Africa, in 1767 and shipped to this country as a slave.

The book sold millions of copies and has been translated into at least 37 languages. The ABC television miniseries adapted from the book drew 130 million viewers over seven nights in January 1977, then the largest program audience ever.

"Mr. Haley gave African-Americans a renewed sense of themselves, an understanding of their historical journey, a refreshed sense of pride in their heritage," said NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hooks.

President Bush said in a statement, "He will be an inspiration for generations to come. His talent and spirit will be greatly missed."



Alex Haley

Haley's warmhearted and rich descriptions of his ancestors' lives set off a wave of interest in genealogy, lasting long after the book faded from best-seller lists. "He was enormously important, probably more important than most of us really

realize," said U.S. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander. "His importance will be lasting. It wasn't 15 minutes in the sunlight; it'll last forever."

In an interview last Tuesday, Haley said he was still getting reactions from *Roots* 1 1/2 decades later.

"To this day, people, particularly African-American people but white people as well, will just totally, unexpectedly . . . walk up and not say a word, just walk up and hug you and then say 'Thank you,'" he told radio station WKYS in Washington, D.C.

The book made Haley rich, generating a steady stream of royalties and making him a fixture on the lecture circuit.

It also attracted four plagiarism suits. Three were dismissed, but Haley settled out of court with author Harold Cortlander, who charged Haley lifted a 100-word segment from his novel, *The African*. Haley said the passage "was in something somebody had given me."

Haley, the eldest of three sons, was born in Ithaca, N.Y., on Aug. 11, 1921, and raised from infancy in the west Tennessee town of Henning by his maternal grandmother. His father, a college professor, was studying

in the North, and his mother, a grammar school teacher, died young.

"I find that Southern-born people, white or black, tend to be better raised than people from other sections," he said in a 1988 interview. "Grandma taught me like that."

For example, Grandma would not have approved of four-letter words or explicit sex scenes, Haley said, so *Roots* didn't have any.

Haley graduated from high school at 15 and had two years of college before enlisting in the Coast Guard as a mess boy in 1939.

He began his writing career on Coast Guard ships during World War II, first penning love letters for shipmates, then working on manuscripts. The Coast Guard created the special position of chief journalist for him in 1952.

Haley retired from military service in 1959 and began full-time freelance magazine writing. His first book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published in 1965, sprang from a series of Playboy interviews Haley conducted with the black Muslim leader.

His first book after *Roots* was a novella, *A Different Kind of Christmas*, about a son of a wealthy Southern plantation owner who undergoes a moral conversion and joins the Underground Railroad to help free slaves.

Haitians claim persecution upon forcible return

By JAMES ROWLEY
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Haitians who twice escaped their homeland since last fall told U.S. authorities about reprisals they suffered after their forcible return by the Coast Guard, immigration officials said yesterday.

The acknowledgement of the claims of persecution came as the Bush administration again stated it had no documented evidence of reprisals against repatriated Haitians.

State Department press officer Richard Boucher said yesterday that officials had investigated claims by four Haitians who said they were persecuted and "we've not found information to corroborate these stories. We don't have evidence that people are being persecuted upon going back."

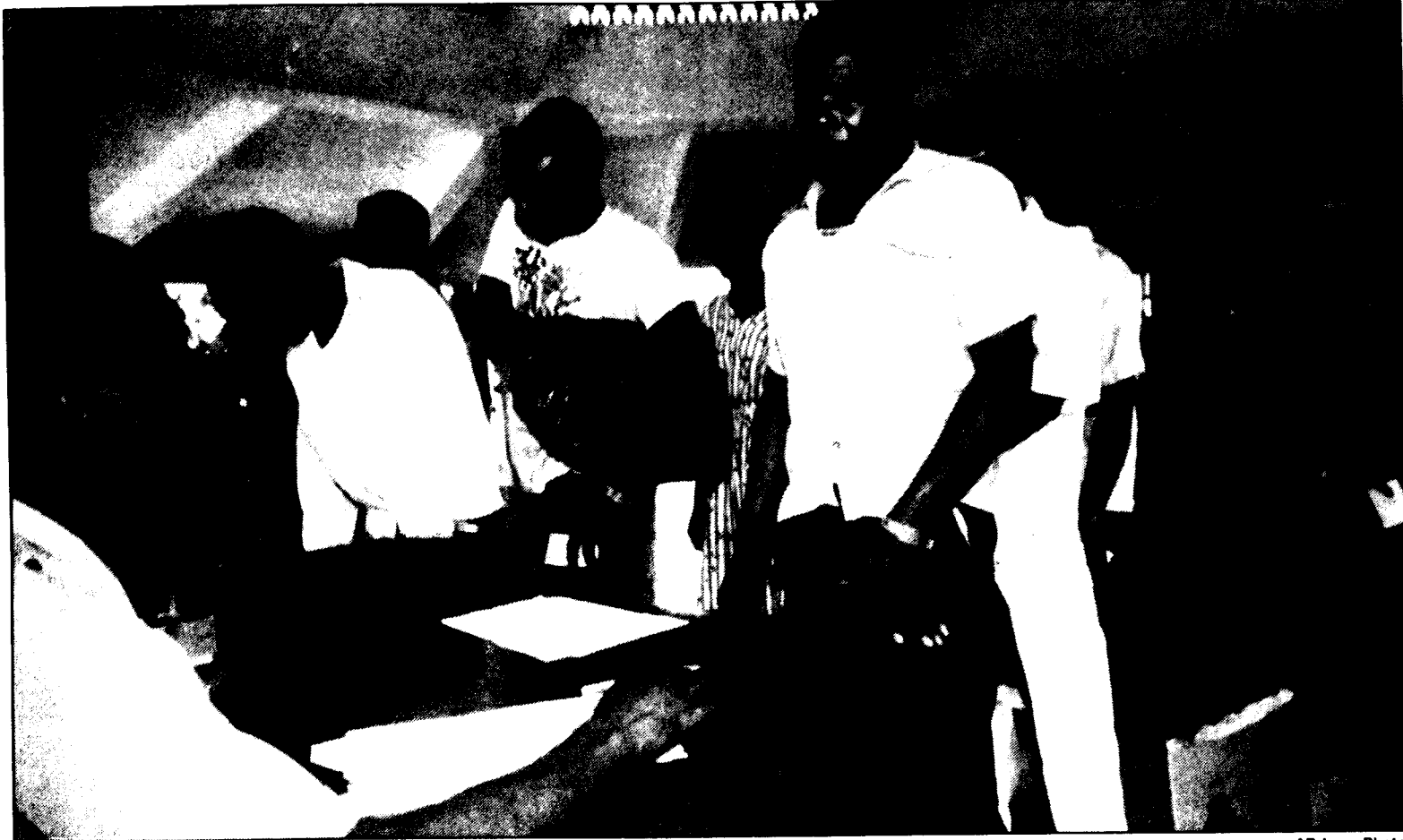
Secretary of State James A. Baker III last week insisted there was "not one single documented case of a repatriated Haitian being persecuted or targeted after their return."

But human rights activists released reports from interviews with Haitians, which told of soldiers murdering and kidnapping people after they were delivered to the docks in Haiti.

Arthur C. Helton, a New York lawyer specializing in refugee affairs, said 41 Haitians who told such stories last month to the Immigration and Naturalization Service were cleared to travel to this country to press political asylum claims.

INS spokesman Verne Jervis couldn't confirm the figure, but said a number of Haitians who recently escaped by boat told stories of abuse during the period after their forced return last fall.

These Haitians are being allowed to apply for political asylum because INS interviewers found their stories had "at least enough credibility" to merit further review, Jervis said.



A Haitian policeman interrogates repatriated refugees after their arrival in Port-au-Prince yesterday. Refugees who escaped twice from Haiti have told U.S. authorities they suffered persecution when they returned to their homeland last fall.

More than 15,000 Haitians have fled the strife-torn Caribbean nation since a Sept. 30 military coup toppled the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

More than 10,000 have been detained at the U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, following their interception on the high seas by Coast Guard cutters. The refugees were interviewed there by INS and United Nations officials.

The INS has cleared 3,912

Haitians to apply for political asylum, Jervis said. Most faced political persecution because of their support of Aristide, he said.

Two Coast Guard cutters returned 510 more Haitians to Port-au-Prince yesterday, bringing to 1,599 the number of refugees forced back to their homeland since the Supreme Court on Jan. 31 lifted an injunction against repatriation.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Haitians armed with the reports of refugee interviews conducted by U.N. officials asked the Supreme

Court to issue an emergency injunction to stop the forced repatriations.

Miami attorney Ira Kurzban charged that during lengthy court battles this year over repatriation, the Bush administration had withheld information that Haitians had been persecuted following their return last fall.

"For the State Department to claim they didn't know what was going on creates a lie within a lie, and I guess they think the American public is simply stupid," said

Kurzban, who represents the Haitian Refugee Center.

Helton said the interview reports show "an astounding discrepancy" between credible evidence of persecution and "bland assurances from the State Department that returned Haitians need not fear harm."

Helton's organization asked Attorney General William P. Barr in a letter to suspend repatriations until the Bush administration determines it is safe to return Haitians.

Specter kicks off election attempt

Stresses economy, staying in touch

HONESDALE — U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter kicked off his re-election campaign yesterday by stressing a subject on most folks' minds — the economy.

"This campaign is about staying in touch with the people of Pennsylvania, to learn about the people's priorities and then to do something about it," the two-term senator said.

The Philadelphia Republican said that in recent visits around the state, constituents have told him the economy is their top priority.

"I have pending legislation to stimulate consumer purchasing power to take us out of the recession, to provide millions of jobs for this country and tens of thousands of jobs for Pennsylvania."

Specter pointed to his proposal to give savers a one-time use, without penalty, of up to \$10,000 from their savings plans for home down payments or car purchases.

He added that health care, unfair foreign trade practices, educational reform, crime control and environmental protection were also high on his priority list this campaign.

Specter, who has the endorsement of the state Republican Committee, is being challenged by Republican state Rep. Steven Freind of Delaware County. The senator is on a five-day, 20-county trip through Pennsylvania.

Los Angeles suburbs hit with fierce rain, floods

By JEFF WILSON
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Drenching rains from a fierce winter storm flooded two square miles of a suburban area yesterday, stranding motorists who climbed atop their submerged automobiles and were plucked to safety by helicopters.

The usually dry Los Angeles River spilled over its banks and at least 20 automobiles on Burbank Boulevard and other roads in the San Fernando Valley were submerged within minutes. There were no immediate reports of serious injuries.

The storm moved into Southern California on Sunday evening and soaked the drought-parched region, while heavy snow fell in the mountains, lowering the snow level to 4,500 feet.

Towering waves, lightning strikes, rain and snow also caused landslides, power outages and road closures throughout the region.

"I think it's like one of those horrible movies. It's like a nightmare. It was really bad. We were scared that we're not going to be able



Atle Bakken of Norway, center, is carried to safety after being rescued from a tree he climbed to escape flood waters.

to come out," Frieda Malkugian said after being rescued from her submerged car.

Firefighters in canoes paddled from car rooftop to rooftop as water rose to 25 feet in some areas, swamping cars, fire equipment and a TV news van. Forty-seven people were rescued, including some who clung to tree branches.

One man being hoisted by a Fire Department helicopter fell 50 feet when a firefighter lost his grip, but he wasn't hurt in the fall.

"I was scared. I was so scared. The water was coming up to my window so I decided to open the window and get out," said Nasrin Karimee, 21, of Van Nuys.

She made her way to a tree branch, where she clung for two hours before a rescue helicopter plucked her to safety.

By late afternoon, the storm had dumped 6.14 inches of rain in the west Valley, said meteorologist Scott Entekin of the National Weather Service. Downtown Los Angeles had

recorded a little more than a half-inch.

The newsroom of the Daily News of Los Angeles was evacuated after a lightning strike knocked out power to the newspaper's headquarters in Woodland Hills, about 25 miles northwest of downtown. About 400 employees were evacuated from the complex, which was without power for more than two hours.

More storms lining up in the Pacific Ocean were expected to move ashore later in the week.

Baker sends first planeload of aid to former Soviet Union

By RUTH SINAI
Associated Press Writer

FRANKFURT — Secretary of State James A. Baker III yesterday sent off the first planeload of food and medicine for the former Soviet Union, saying America is determined to help the newly free Soviet people persevere.

"These aircraft will be our messengers, symbolizing our commitment to help freedom flourish in these new lands," Baker told a small ceremony at the U.S. Air Force Rhein-Main base where the airlift dubbed Operation Provide Hope was launched.

Baker was leaving later in the day for Moldova, the first of seven newly independent states he will visit over the next week to assess the effectiveness of the international aid effort.

He will also take up the dismantling of nuclear weapons, proposed programs to employ nuclear scientists so they are not lured to hostile nations and progress toward formalizing state-to-state relations.

Washington has recognized the three Baltic states and six of the 12 other former Soviet republics. Baker has said that diplomatic ties with the others will come after they agree to basic principles on human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and commitment to democratic reform.

"These aircraft will be our messengers, symbolizing our commitment to help freedom flourish in these new lands."

— James A. Baker III
secretary of state

The United States and 13 other countries are contributing to the airlift, which over the next two weeks will consist of as many as 64 flights delivering some 16 million meals to needy residents of the republics.

Richard Armitage, the troubleshooter appointed by the administration to coordinate humanitarian aid, said he would seek to channel future aid by ships and rail as a more efficient method than flights. He estimated it would take 4 to 6 months to spend the \$100 million provided by Congress for transportation of further aid.

The main message being sent by the airlift was summarized in Russian and English signs pasted on each pallet of food and medicine loaded onto the planes:

"From the American people who assure you that the struggle for democracy is worthwhile."