

Laying the groundwork for racial equality

By JENIFER FRANK
Courant Staff Writer

Boce W. Barlow Jr. was born in Americus, Ga., in 1915 and grew up in Hartford, where he lives with his wife, Catherine. He graduated from Hartford Public High School in 1933 and attended Howard University in 1939 cum laude as president of the senior class. He served in the Army from 1943 to 1946 in a segregated unit in the southeast Pacific. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1949. In 1957, at 42, he became the first black judge in Connecticut history. In 1966, he was the first black elected to the state senate. In 1968, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

OLDER VOICES

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son was a Democrat. In those days, not too many blacks from the South were Democrats. I can remember relatives calling my father all kinds of names.

You have to remember, we had all been reared in the South, and conditions were awful there. At that time, there was a one-party situation all over the South, and that was Democrats. So any Democrat who blacks ever worked for or knew was a part of the system. After what we'd seen, how could we ever embrace the Democrats? Anyway, my father was a Democrat in Connecticut.

No, no, he couldn't become a Democrat in Georgia; he couldn't register in Georgia. Long after my father died, blacks couldn't register in Georgia.

My father, who was black, like his



Corey Lowenstein / Special to The Courant

Boce Barlow Jr., 79, was the first black judge and first elected black state senator in Connecticut.

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Footnotes

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

She sings, she writes

Songstress Celine Dion is about to turn into Celine Dion, songwriter, for her next English-language album.

"Throughout my career," says the hot French-Canadian singer, "people have said, 'Celine, you should write some songs!' and I said, 'Forget it. It's two different careers — singing and writing. Elvis Presley never wrote a song in his life. . . . I don't want to write just to have more money.'"

But, Dion says, she had a change of heart during the two months she took off after marrying her manager, Rene Angelil, last year. "Because I had empty spaces and moments for the first time in my life, I started having these beautiful ideas about songs."

Dion, whose "The French Album" was just released, is off to Monte Carlo to perform on "The 1995 World Music Awards," to be shown on ABC May 30. Then she wings to

Europe for a monthlong tour before heading back to the states to continue working on the new English-language album. She expects to mount her next major U.S./Canada tour in early '96.

Weekend's top movies

Here are the estimated top movie ticket sales Friday through Sunday according to Exhibitor Relations (figures in millions of dollars).

ON SCREEN	WEEKEND	TOTAL WEEKS	
1. French Kiss	\$9.0	\$9.0	1
2. While You Were Sleeping	8.5	34.6	3
3. Friday	4.0	14.0	2
4. Bad Boys	2.9	54.4	5
5. Panther	2.4	3.1	1 1/2
6. My Family	2.2	2.7	1 1/2
7. Rob Roy	2.12	26.8	5
8. A Goofy Movie	2.05	28.7	5
9. Village of the Damned	1.9	6.0	2
10. Kiss of Death	1.6	12.5	3

All Martha, all the time

It's official. New York magazine has declared Martha Stewart to be as visible a presence in the national landscape as Starbucks' coffee — and just as lucrative. In a May 13 cover story, New York calls the Westport tastemaker a "living trademark" to be reckoned with. "She's a combination of Amazonia strength, Olympian omnipotence, and Emersonian self-reliance," says novelist Mark Leyner. "Soon she's going to branch into nuclear weaponry, cold fusion and voodoo. There's nothing this woman can't do."

We'll be seeing a lot more of Martha: She just renegotiated her deal with Time Warner as chairman of Martha Stewart Living enterprises. And beginning in June, her syndicated television series, "Martha Stewart Living," will run on the Lifetime network as often as three times a day, along with infomercials on her new products line.

World War II

"Out of that attachment theory, the so-called child-rearing experts devised their theories," Thurer says, although they extrapolated from extreme cases: motherless babies who lay in cribs all day. Somehow this led to advice that mothers should be at home all day with their children for years, she says. Even though this view has been altered slightly by economic need and greater acceptance of working women, it's still with us.

Certainly every child needs a nurturing, caring parent to develop well, Thurer says, but the ideal has become extreme.

Even if common sense tells you otherwise, it's nearly impossible to get out from under the myth. You know, for example, that a baby and mother are not doomed to a lesser life because they were unable to "bond" right after birth.

Would that stop you from worrying a bit if it were your situation? So how bad is it, really, if you are not available to go to every single gymnastics competition or T-ball game? Thurer herself, who has a teenage daughter, recalls "practically standing on my head" to arrange her schedule so she would be available to pick up her daughter after school.

"I wanted to convey to people there are many good ways of mothering, and people are probably overly guilty about how they mother," Thurer says. "We've done it every which way, and there certainly hasn't been any evidence that one way is that much better than any other way."

What she sees as indisputable, though, is that many women suffer greatly from unwarranted guilt. Her message: "The main thing is to sort of stop worrying and not be overly conscientious."

Write to Family affairs at The Courant, 285 Broad St., Hartford, CT 06115.

Laying path toward racial equality

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Anyway, in Hartford he got to know a man by the name of Thomas J. Spellacy, who was the Democratic boss. We lived over on Bellevue Street at the time, which is sort of east side. And my father had organized clubs of blacks — young blacks you could attract to the party — and he had a little store down there, a restaurant, two-by-four place, where people hung out. He had these meetings, and they would follow Barlow. He had a little bit more magnetism than I did.

So he got to know Spellacy. And when [John] Bailey came out of law school, from what I understand, I didn't know him then, I think he went into Spellacy's office, and he worked there for a long time. And when I came out of law school, I got to know Bailey. Spellacy I still saw. Spellacy was on my papers when I went to law school; he helped me in every way. And Bailey, I kept up that acquaintance. Bailey had known my father also. We both went to the same law school. I think he felt a little close to me, you know; he was decent to me, really. And when I first started practicing, he knew I was starving and had a wife and a baby, and he was always interested in what I was doing.

So anyway, we went along, and as time went on, I became more and more active in politics.

In 1968, I got a call from Bailey [by then national chairman of the Democratic Party]. I was a delegate to the national convention. Chicago. When I became a delegate, I didn't realize how expensive it was to go because most of the people who go, money is no problem with them. But anyway, I had planned to stay a week, and I got a call from Bailey from Washington, who wanted to know was it possible for me to get away an additional week.

He said, "I want you to be on the Credentials Committee." He said, "I think you'll find it very interesting and very worthwhile."

At the time, to tell you the truth, I didn't get the real significance of what he was talking about. But there was a lady going also. We used to call her Miss Hat. Bea Rosenthal. She was a national committeewoman. I think Bailey wanted a little more analysis.

But anyway, he suggested, he urged me to go. So I said I'll go. And it was the most dramatic experience I've ever had. The Credentials Committee was going to have to rule on whether or not Democratic delegates from several Southern states were legitimate, because there were fights going on by blacks in the South who hadn't been allowed to participate.

Two delegates from each state were to sit in judgment, and we filled up this big hotel auditorium. And we heard all these cases of these Southern delegations trying to keep their seats.

It went on for a whole week, all day long except for lunch, and sometimes we'd have a good long lunch, but most of the time we didn't and we'd go on through the night. Bea Rosenthal and I were representing Connecticut. For the first time, we had a delegation from Mississippi that was knocked out — it was history — and replaced by a compromise Mississippi slate, including blacks.

The vice chairlady of that delegation from Mississippi was just like a

storybook. The Southern lady? She epitomized it. In every degree. I can see her now. Her family went back as long as there were Democrats. And they had always controlled things in that section of Mississippi and the state. But just to see her, and listen to her talk, I don't think she ever got her fingers dirty. She was there because she was the daughter of X, the granddaughter of XX.

Anyway, when we were dealing with the Georgia delegation, there was a very significant question that I asked them.

Nothing's worse than a person sick with power, and the way these people used to handle it, it was something awful. They didn't have to regard anyone. And the blacks were there trying to show what they had done trying to qualify to become a delegate, and what their education was. Many of them were college graduates.

So this gentleman from Georgia was on the stand, and I posed the question to him.

"Pardon me, Reverend. But I was born in Americus, Ga. Do you think, if I were to return there today, I might qualify to be sent back here to Chicago as a delegate to this Convention?"

The minister whispered back, "Most unlikely!"

I went to a law school class reunion at Harvard one year. And we were staying at a hotel near the law school.

I heard this voice, and I knew damn well it was from the Deep South. And as we turned around at the registration table, I saw the fellow who had been the chairman of the Mississippi delegation.

And we turned around about the same time, we saw each other, and I

said, "I'm sorry, but haven't I met you?"

"You sho' did!" I'm not joking, that's how they talk! "You sho' did! Wasn't that at the convention?" I said, Yes.

He says, "Well, we done a lot of thinking since that time. Anybody you see from Mississippi could tell you things have really changed for the better. Maybe you all made the right decision."

Jenifer Frank, who writes Older Voices, is a Courant copy editor. To get in touch with her, call 241-3904 or 1-800-524-4242, Ext. 3904, during business hours and leave a message. Or you may write to her at The Courant, c/o the Features Dept., 285 Broad St., Hartford, CT 06115.

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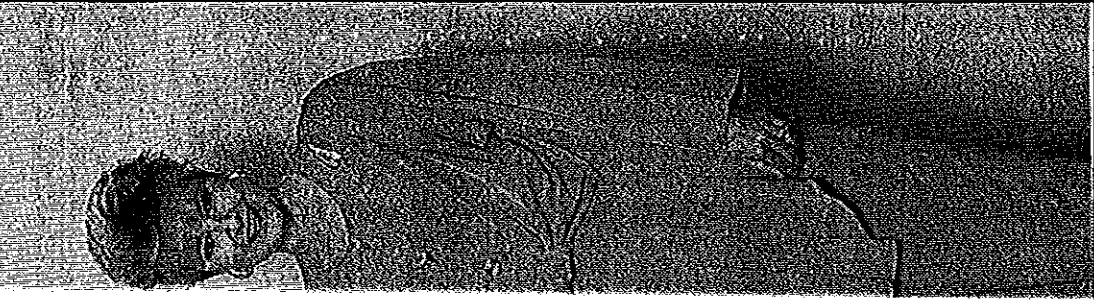
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