

# Harry Hamiltons -- Parents, Kids Alike -- Set Educational Records

By GEORGE VUKELICH

"THE CHILDREN of the world," said Harry Hamilton, "your kids, our kids, everyone's kids, are inheriting a dangerous place in which to live. The least we can do is to educate them. And then pray that they can change it for the better."

His wife, Velma, refilled our coffee cups and we settled back around the coffee table. "That's why we chose to live in Madison," she said. "There were educational opportunities — and social too — here for the children. Those opportunities wouldn't have been possible had we stayed in Alabama."

Harry nodded in agreement.

"There is prejudice and discrimination here, but less than in most places. I would say Madison is above average in this respect." He smiled. "Education is the key."

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The Hamiltons practice what they preach. Harry holds three degrees — a BA from Alabama's Talladega College, a Master's in Chemistry and a PhD in Soils from the University of Wisconsin. He is managing editor of two technical research journals published by the American Society of Agronomy and distributed to subscribers throughout the world.

Velma Bell Hamilton took her BA at Beloit where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, her MA at Wisconsin and is currently serving her second term as a member of the Alumni Council of Beloit College. She teaches English at the Madison Vocational and Adult School and has the unique distinction of being the only fulltime Negro teacher in the city.

All three Hamilton youngsters give every indication of following in their parents' footsteps — and then some.

Harry Jr., 22, came out of the West High Class of 1956 and was an AFS exchange student in Bremen, Germany in 1955.

Upon graduation from Beloit College last June — he was class speaker — he was awarded a \$4,000 scholarship by the Sloane Foundation for graduate study. He is now working in meteorology at the University here and plans to go on for his doctorate.



Muriel Hamilton is shown here reporting to the family on her stay in Milan as an AFS Exchange student. Left to right are Harry Jr., Muriel, Mrs. Hamilton, Patricia and Mr. Hamilton. Mrs. Hamilton's

mother, who lives with the family and "practically raised us all" was out visiting at the time the picture was taken. (Photo by Duane Hopp)

At Beloit he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Omicron Delta Kappa and Tau Kappa Epsilon.

Patricia, 19, is a sophomore at Beloit majoring in International Relations. She was a member of the "Teens Overseas Project" in 1958 — the "TOPper" group which toured eight European countries under the guidance of the Rev. Robert H. Hamill of the Wesley Methodist Church. Last year she was one of 12 Beloit College students in an Overseas Study Seminar which spent 3 months studying the Common Market. Headquartered in Brussels, the group visited Belgium, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France. It was part of a college credit course led by Prof. John Kemler of Beloit's Department of Geography.

Muriel is 17, a senior at West

High, and thinking as she puts it "about Oberlin College." She has recently returned from four months in Milan, Italy as an AFS exchange student.

The Hamiltons are keenly aware of the world around them and are active participants in community affairs.

"We can participate directly," says Mrs. Hamilton, "in the mainstream of community life here. More so than in a city like Chicago where Negro participation for the most part is limited to the Negro community."

She has served two terms (6 years) as a member of the Governor's Commission on Human Rights and is currently in her second three-year term on the Wisconsin Committee for Children and Youth. This is a planning group whose work is pointed toward the Governor's conference. Its purpose is to "improve opportunities throughout the state." She also belongs to the teacher's sorority, Delta Kappa Gamma.

Her husband is president of the Madison Chapter of the United

World Federalists, past-president of the Dane County Mental Health Association, belongs to the Executive Chapter of the NAACP, and the West Side Rotary.

The Hamiltons are members of The First Congregational Church where Harry Sr. is chairman of the Board of Deacons and Harry Jr. is an advisor to Sigma Nu, the church's high school group.

"The Negro people," says Harry Sr., "need to prepare themselves for job opportunities. There is considerable defeatism in the Negro community. Too many of our people drop out and never finish high school. They often aren't prepared for good jobs."

"But we can't feel sorry for ourselves. We don't need sympathy. We need more skills, more professionals."

The Negro community here accounts for less than 1 per cent of Madison's total population. Half of these people are from families that have been situated in Madison for at least 20 years. Only 15 of them are "professional" people — ministers, law-

yers, etc.

"There are two Negro lawyers in town," Harry Sr. says, "but that's about all. I don't think a Negro doctor could make it in private practice here. There are no regular full time Negro teachers in the Madison School system, although there have been a few part time substitute teachers." (Velma Hamilton's employer, the Madison Vocational and Adult School, is not a part of the Madison School System.)

He paused and shrugged his shoulders.

"Those are the facts. That's simply the way things are. But the very worst aspect of discrimination in Madison is the discrimination in housing. Negroes have difficulty in locating housing. As a case in point, there's a Negro Airman out at Truax who lives in his trailer 35 miles from the base because he couldn't find a trailer park here in the Madison area that would accept him."

"But things change," Mrs. Hamilton smiled. "Not so many years ago, a Negro ballplayer couldn't find a major league club that would accept him. Then along came Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey of the Dodgers to change all that."

"We profess in this country," her husband added, "the ideals of equal opportunity for all. And the majority of Americans believe this. If they didn't, they wouldn't support the Constitution, open covenants, the President's, Governors' and Mayors' Commissions on Human Rights and the Jackie Robinsons, the Branch Ricketys just wouldn't be possible. They wouldn't get to first base."

Velma Hamilton nodded as her husband paused.

"And if we ever reach the point," he concluded, "when a man can't get to first base in this country, then the ball game's all over. For everybody."

# GREEN

THE CAPITAL TIMES

MADISON, WIS., Friday, Feb. 24, 1961