

## EYEWITNESS

### HELPING HAITIANS

For three weeks, the cutter Campbell was among the six Coast Guard vessels intercepting Haitian refugees at sea, ferrying them to the naval base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, then collecting others for repatriation to Haiti. U.S. News's Greg Ferguson spoke with crew members:

**Chief Petty Officer Dave Macedo:**

The Campbell was not the Hilton. We had 400 people living on a flight deck that was designed for a helicopter. And even that was better than the boats [the Haitians] came from. . . . On these 30-foot boats, there were anywhere from 75 to 100 Haitians. You would not think it was possible to fit that many people. . . . All they needed was 1- or 2-foot seas to sink them. On one of the boats was a 5-day-old infant with 3 or 4 inches of the umbilical cord still attached. And they had been at sea for 2½ days. The mother couldn't walk.

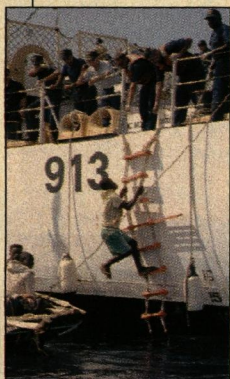
**Lt. Cmdr. Rob Parker:** It was just wall-to-wall people.

You had to see it to believe it, or smell it actually. . . . There were all kinds of open sores and tropical diseases that we're not used to. . . . We were trying to save them from their journey in these boats and take them to Guantánamo Bay. . . .

Whether or not we agree with the practice is moot;

all of the policy decisions are made so far above our pay scale.

**Petty Officer Jack Goodhue:** They thanked us for saving their lives. . . . We had rice and beans for them, and Kool-Aid. And we had Bibles and magazines. . . . A few thought we were going to Miami, and they were very disappointed. . . . But they knew we were only doing our jobs.



**On board.** A cutter makes a pickup.

## DATELINE

### TESTING THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

**POTCHEFSTROOM, SOUTH AFRICA**—There are few signs of the "new" South Africa in this sleepy West Rand town of 100,000. Despite the end of racial zoning laws and segregated schools, black families have yet to move into the town's leafy neighborhoods or enroll their children in its schools. Violent crime, rampant in the white suburbs of major cities, is still largely unknown here. Even drought and recession—devastating to nearby farmers and miners—have barely affected the civil servants, military personnel and businessmen who are "Potch" society.

Yet this week the fate of the new South Africa may be decided here, as the town's white voters choose between National Party and Conservative

Party candidates and their vastly divergent visions of the future. The stakes are highest for F. W. de Klerk's NP, which has held the Potch seat since 1948. After the NP lost a November election in a small mining town, de Klerk said Potchefstroom would be the true test of white support for NP reforms and a negotiated settlement with blacks. For the CP, with support estimated at nearly 50 percent, a victory in Afrikaner-dominated Potch would add to the conservatives' call for a white homeland.

Like the drought-stricken Mooi River that meanders through the center of town, the election divides the white community. Across from the Louis le Grange building, named for the NP parliamentarian whose death last year brought on the election, both parties have voter registration booths. One CP canvasser makes a simple case for snubbing the NP volunteers at the next stall: "I don't talk to traitors."

De Klerk's betrayal of whites was a popular theme at a town meeting held by the ultra-right-wing World Apartheid Movement. WAM leader Koos Vermelen denounced de Klerk, and the crowd of about 100, including protesters wearing the right wing's distinctive brown shirts, shouted slogans such as "America is de Klerk's whore." Yet outside the hall, three white university students derided the racism of a crude mug shot of a black man above a caption that read: "Mr. AIDS."

Indeed, the crucial swing vote lies with the nearly 4,000 eligible student voters at Potchefstroom University for Higher Christian Education (PUKKE), where the new South Africa is readily apparent. Black and white students mingle in the school commons, as Radio PUKKE blares an American speed-metal song. Sitting with supporters of both parties, one student explains why she will vote NP. "For our children, the new South Africa is going to be a better place," says the 20-year-old communications major. "We have to suffer, but it's what's necessary."

CP supporters see the situation differently. Music Prof. Hennie Coetzee says failure to create an Afrikaner homeland could provoke a second Boer War. "It isn't that we don't like the blacks," says the soft-spoken 56-year-old. "It's just that we don't want to be governed by them, overwhelmed by them." Dirk du Toit, a consultant whose grandfather, the Afrikaner poet Totius du Toit, is memorialized by a statue in the center of town, thinks a CP victory will show the world that Afrikaners aren't prepared to accept South Africa's new arrangements. Says du Toit: "If we lose, then I think they can dismantle the CP because, as Hitler said, 'we're not worthy to live on this earth.'" Whatever happens here, it's unlikely the old South Africa will disappear so easily.



**"Potch" politics.** A voter registration booth

BY ERIC RANDELL



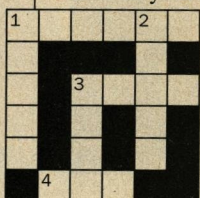
## PEOPLE



**EUGENE MALESKA** assembled his first crossword puzzle as a romantic overture to a woman he would later marry. It was a portent of how he would one day save the mentally nimble [1 down] from boredom [2 down]. As the *New York Times* celebrates the 50th anniversary of its clue and solution [1 across] puzzle, Maleska, after 49 years as a creator and 15 years as its editor, can take

credit for much of its stature. Maleska is also known to toy [3 down] with clues that provide what he calls "an oasis of humor in the *Times* [4 across abbr.]." His fans

are grateful; many send valentines. Maleska, 76, likes those who eschew erasable pencils for puzzles in favor of more indelible means [3 across].



**SOLUTION TO PUZZLE — ACROSS:** 1. ANSWER, 3. PENS, 4. NYT **DOWN:** 1. AGILE, 2. ENNUI, 3. PLAY **PHOTO:** MARK STOCKWELL

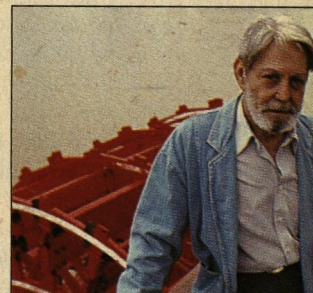
## EPITAPH

### 'A TURTLE ATOP A FENCE POST'

*Alex Haley, who died last week at 70, wrote books that illuminated for America the black experience. The "Roots" author also relished that role outside his writing, as U.S. News's Lewis Lord witnessed last spring during Ole Miss's "College of Southern Studies on the Water," a grits-and-egghead ride down the Mississippi:*

Passengers in blazers and fancy frocks welcomed Alex Haley aboard the Delta Queen at Helena, Ark. He smiled and shook hands, then headed below decks to meet the steamboat's cooks, maids and waiters. The next day, as willows on the levee glided by, the Orleans Room filled for Haley's first talk. The audience soon understood his affinity for servants.

"There is a saying about people who have achieved a position," he said. "Anytime you see a turtle atop a fence post, you know it had some help." He told how his father, Simon Haley, a sharecropper's son, became the first black male in Savannah, Tenn., to finish the eighth grade, but struggled in college at North Carolina A&T. "A professor called Dad in and told him he was going to flunk because he couldn't keep up. Dad couldn't keep up because he had to work. He decided his destiny was to be a cotton sharecropper." But then came a summer job as a Pullman porter. One night, a man riding a Buffalo-to-Pittsburgh train rang at 2 a.m. and asked for a glass of milk, which Simon provided. Weeks later, the man sent North Carolina A&T \$480—enough to return



**Authors.** Shelby Foote and

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