

REMEMBRANCE

By Antoinette Broussard

Due to the passing of time, many patrons in the photographs taken inside the Fillmore nightclubs remain unidentified. Several years ago, Lewis was contacted by someone who recognized a couple sitting at a table inside the Club Flamingo/Texas Playhouse. The photograph was being displayed as part of a history panel on Fillmore Street. Antoinette Broussard, niece of Robert Broussard, tells their story below.

Robert Willard Broussard and his longtime sweetheart, Carrie Bell Patisaw, spent many evenings enjoying what they loved, the nightclub scene in San Francisco. As his niece, I remember how impressive Uncle Bob looked dressed up in East Coast style, prepared for the evening drive to San Francisco where he picked up Carrie Bell in his nice car, with the destination of the Fillmore jazz clubs ever paramount in his mind.

Born in McCloud, California, to parents John and Eugenia Broussard, who migrated from the South during the Jim Crow days, Bob spent his childhood growing up in Stockton, California. He loved horses and dreamed of becoming a jockey. As a youth he would sneak out to the Stockton racetrack, sometimes working as an exercise rider for the racehorses.

Later he settled with his family in Oakland, California. As an adult, he rode with the Black Cowboy's Association, and he rode his beloved horse, Dream, in Oakland's annual cowboy parade. He also liked to bet at the racetrack, where he became a good handicapper.

In 1942, during World War II, Bob joined the navy. He lost a lot of his boot camp buddies in the Port Chicago explosion, when they were assigned to ships to handle ammunition but had no prior training or experience. After leaving the navy in 1946, Bob moved to the East Coast. As a jazz lover he told stories to his nieces and nephews about living in New York City, hanging out in the Cotton Club, and meeting many talented musicians, among them Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Bob returned to California in 1950 and worked at the Naval Air Station in Alameda, retiring in the late 1980s having worked forty years as an aviation structural mechanic. There he developed a love for airplanes and spent time satisfying his flying hours.

Carrie Bell died long before Bob on January 31, 1971. This photo is proof of their bond, and I imagine how much he must have missed her when she departed. Her name was the name you always heard connected to Bob's. He used to take her kids out as he did his nieces

and nephews. As a child he took me to see the San Francisco Ballet productions, and afterward sometimes we visited Carrie Bell and her family, a home filled with warm smiles and joy.

After he retired, Bob kept busy working as a part-time bartender and security guard. Whether he lived on the East Coast or West Coast, you could find him on either side of the bar, pouring drinks and making friends. Since the Fillmore clubs had closed down he spent time off frequenting the Oakland clubs he loved, including The End Zone, Bozen's Locker, and Sweet Jimmy's.

Bob always had a great smile, great jokes, and kindheartedness. Never married, he lived with and provided support for his sister, Simonetta, and mother, Eugenia, as they in turn appreciated and loved him. His humor provided family and friends the answer to a frequently asked question about his everlasting bachelor status. Bob said with a smile, "Why get married? I can be miserable by myself!" Bob died at eighty years old on December 30, 2002, four days before his sister Simonetta died from a long illness, on January 3, 2003. We believe he came back to get her just in time for both of them to catch the tail end of the New Year's festivities in the spirit world.