

BLACK HISTORY: *The Way It Was* in Georgia

Donald Grant's history of black people in Georgia stretches from the arrival of the first black—probably Esteban de Dorantes, a scout for a 1528 Spanish expedition—to the current state flag controversy. Here are some highlights of the exhaustively researched 624-page book:

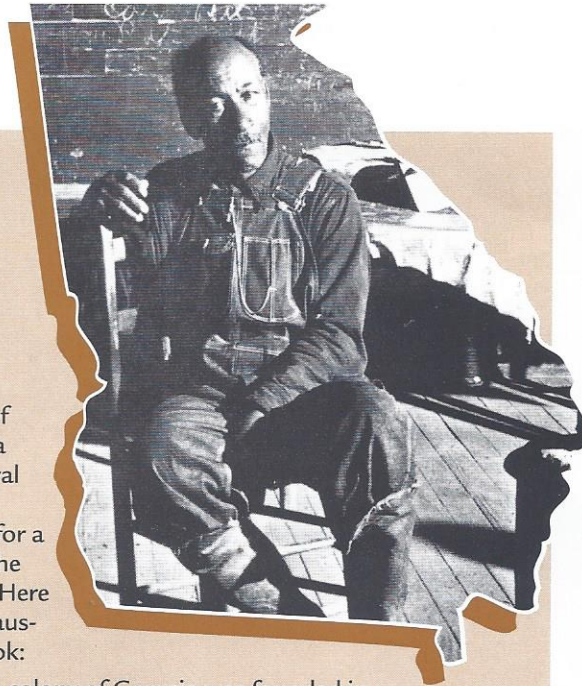
- Slavery was illegal when the colony of Georgia was founded in 1733. The ban was lifted in 1750.
- During the Revolutionary War, the British offered freedom to blacks who would fight against the colonists. Hundreds did so.
- In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, 40 percent of Georgia's white families owned at least one slave—one of the highest percentages in the South.
- Georgia's first black Congressman, Jefferson Long of Macon, had to take refuge from vigilantes on election day in 1870. Seven of the Congressman-elect's followers were killed in the raid.
- During Reconstruction, the Georgia General Assembly expelled all of its black members, claiming their race made them unqualified for office.
- Georgia was put under military rule twice during Reconstruction—after the expulsion of black legislators and again following outrages carried out by the Ku Klux Klan.
- Between 1889 and 1918, more people were lynched in Georgia than in any other state. Four hundred died at the end of a rope between 1893—when an ineffective anti-lynching law was passed—and 1933.
- During World War I, blacks in Chatham County purchased \$200,000 worth of war bonds, drawing praise from the all-white division of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense.
- More than one million black soldiers served in World War II. Half a million of them served overseas. The Army air corps's all-black Ninety-Ninth Pursuit Squadron never lost a bomber it was protecting.

written a 4,000-page manuscript. Indeed, in his original introduction, he said he did not apologize for anything he included, but for the many things he left out. I'm convinced his energy level was almost manic. This was a man who taught a full course load at a small college and did all this research and writing on his own time—with no fellowships and no sabbaticals. How could anyone work so hard and keep

going so long? Obviously, he had never heard of writer's block.

My goal was to survive this marathon rescue mission and emerge with something awesome—and, most importantly, something between hard covers with an ISBN number.

As it turned out, finding a publisher wasn't a problem. While Dad had been a lonely warrior when he started his monumental project, by



the time it arrived on my doorstep there clearly was a demand for it. Later that year the Carol Publishing Group in New York offered us a contract on the book. After some haggling over terms, Mom and I signed a contract in December 1990. I committed to a July 1991 completion date. The book's title was changed to *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia*.

I worked on what I call "the molecular level," poring over the manuscript word by word, turning passive voice to active, eliminating articles, and tightening sentences whenever I could—though Dad's writing proved to be generally clear and fine. He sometimes couldn't read his own handwriting, in which case I had to forego the footnotes and recheck the original source material to figure out what he meant—or needed—to say. When I came across newer sources, I used them to strengthen certain passages. I shifted and condensed chapters, diligently moving endnotes with them. After I had dedicated 4,000 hours to it, *The Way It Was in the South* had become my book, too.

It was not an easy task—"like rewiring the space shuttle," I told my friends. Every chapter had its Footnote Hell, my name for the tortuous and mind-numbing process of proofreading and reshuffling endnotes to match the amended text. My hands ached and my eyes glazed over amidst the non-stop checking, rechecking, and proofing from computer screen to hard copy to computer screen, one version to the next. I longed to be writing a novel, or anything undocumented. I worked in fits and starts from early morning to late at night, every day, with sanity breaks interspersed.

There were days when I had editor's block and had to force myself to sit down at the computer. When I couldn't, I shot baskets in my driveway until I could stand to face the screen again.

There were good times, too, when it