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PROGRAM

Presentation of Purple Heart and Cuban Occupation Medals of the U. S. Army

to

Sergeant Samuel Miller

THIRD BAPTIST CHURCH
5th and Q Sts., N. W

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 1939

1. Music
Church Choir

2. Remarks
Col. West A. Hamilton
Commanding Officer, 428th Infantry
Officers Reserve Corps

3. Remarks
Dr. G. O. Bullock
Pastor, Third Baptist Church

4. Music
Church Choir

5. Remarks
W. L. Lee, Esq.
Attorney-at-Law

6. Presentation of Medals
Dr. Emmett J. Scott
Former Special Assistant to the Secretary of War

7. Acceptance of Medals
Sergeant Samuel Miller
Formerly 24th Infantry, U. S. A.

8. The Star Spangled Banner

HAMILTON PRINTING CO., WASH., D.C.
Sketch of Life of Sergt. Samuel Miller, U. S. A., Retired

By William I. Lee.

The greatest heritage that a man can leave behind him for his posterity is a worthwhile record made in some field of endeavor.

Most persons think it useless to record important events that have taken place in their lives; but it is well to remember that history is nothing but the recordation of facts that have been accomplished by man from the dawn of civilization to the present day.

The subject of this sketch did not discover unknown parts of this world nor did he disclose a planet hitherto uncharted by the telescope of man; but he did otherwise make history for himself and for his country.

Our hero, Samuel Miller, was ushered into this world June 4, 1855, at Jonesboro, Tennessee. He was like the average boy during his minority and though born in a section and at a time when manhood rights were not universal, and when human beings were subject to the involuntary control of others, he was molded from that species of clay whose desire for progress and achievement could not be daunted.

As soon as he brought himself to the point where he felt his country could make use of his services, he enlisted in the army at Cincinnati, Ohio, August 28, 1888. Hardly had he entered the service as a trooper in the famous United States Tenth Calvary than he, with his troop (L) was called for active duty against the Arizona and New Mexico Indians for a thirty to a sixty day campaign. Fighting against Indians in those days was not a Sunday-school picnic as such an old veteran as...
the late General Nelson A. Miles has upon more than one occasion attested.

Private Miller was under Lieutenant Ayers who was in command of the expedition. His immediate troop commander was Lieutenant Evans while the headquarters of the expedition centered at Lorsburg, New Mexico.

As it is universally known that the bravery of the Negro soldier was established through the valor of his deeds performed by the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Regiments of infantry and the Ninth and Tenth Regiments of cavalry, it can be readily seen and understood why so much pride swells in the breast of any member of the race who had the distinction and the honor of wearing the uniform of these noble fighting forces, the valor of which actually saved a man who afterwards became a president of the United States, although later on two acts were committed by him, one as president and the other as promoter of his own destinies which have always left an unsympathetic feeling in the souls of black folk despite some other worthy gestures by him in the interest of Negro manhood. Of this more will be said later.

There is an adhesiveness in the Negro of this country that indelibly stamps him as the leaven which holds together the patriotic loaf of this nation.

Despite the abuse, the limitations upon his aspirations, the unfair practices heaped against and upon him, he still looks his more fortunate countrymen in the eye and maintains an ever ready attitude as the defender of his country's cause hoping some day that his star will rise in the firmament of justice in the hearts of his countrymen, and that the halo of social, economic fairplay and political equality will some day settle upon the vine which shades his lowly fireside.

So attached was private Miller to his military duties that he refused even to permit the idea to gain foothold in his mind that he should leave the
Here is his record which speaks for itself:

Enlisted at Cincinnati, Ohio, August 28, 1888.

First discharge: Fort Apache, Arizona T, Aug. 27, 1893.
Reenlisted: Fort Apache, August 28, 1893.
Second discharge: Fort Bayard, New Mexico, Nov. 27, 1896.
Reenlisted: Fort Bayard, New Mexico, Nov. 28, 1896.
Third discharge: U. S. Gen. Hospital, Santiago de Cuba, January 26, 1900.
Reenlisted: U. S. Gen. Hospital, Santiago de Cuba, Jan. 27, 1900.
Reenlisted: Fort Robinson, January 28, 1903.
Fifth discharge: Fort McKinley, Rizal, P. I. Feb. 6, 1906
Sixth discharge: Camp Wallace, Union, P. I., February, 1909.

This is what is known as an all continuous service. He was retired April 2, 1910, with the rank of sergeant, Hospital Corp. U. S. A.

He is now sergeant Samuel Miller.

If the important events which make up the career of Sergeant Miller's life were given by word of mouth, some doubt might easily be cast upon the accuracy of the same, but the record above set forth is accessible to any one who cares to examine the files of the war department. Of course the above data establish the fact that the sergeant was connected with the United States Army without vouchsafing whether he held out to the end and acquitted himself as a soldier and as a man.
There is a verse which runs as follows:

"I had is a heartache,
I have is the fortune,
You are worth what you saved;
Not the millions you made.

To this it might be added, it is not the great start that one makes
nor the fight that one puts up, but it is the ability to hold out to the end.

Did Sergeant Miller hold out to the end? Let us study his record only in
part as vouchsafed by the files of the war department. The following extract
is taken from a letter written by Col. A. C. Markley, Col. 13th Infantry, late
Major of and command of the 24th Infantry, from headquarters of the 13th
Infantry, Fort McDowell, California, March 28, 1905.

Private Samuel Miller, Hospital Corps, was in the Hospital Corps at
Fort Douglass, Utah, the station of my company (E), 24th Infantry, in April,
1898, and in order to get to go to war, he was transferred to my company and
was with it in the whole campaign in Cuba participating in the capture of San
Juan Hill, with gallantry and fortitude. He then went with the regiment to
Siboney, Cuba, where for forty days and nights it voluntarily did hospital
work, caring for the sick, doing the most loathsome offices cheerfully and
burying the dead, losing many lives by death.

Private Miller, owing to his skill acquired while in the hospital
corps, was most valuable and was a most faithful nurse, remaining on duty
day and night, saving many lives and alleviating the suffering of the dying.
All this I remember.

That he was wounded in battle and remained in duty can easily be
substantiated.

As for certificate of merit, in my opinion, all of the men of this
regiment are entitled to it as it was a dangerous service, out of ordinary,
calling for continued and sustained moral courage of a high order forty days,
and is not paralleled in history. My Report appears in Report of the War
Department, 1898, Vol. 1, Part 2, page 452.

Respectfully submitted,

Sgd. A. C. Markley,
Colonel, 13th Infantry,
Late Major of, and Com­
manding 24th Infantry.

Supplementing this appraisal of private, now Sergeant Miller, is
a letter which follows:

Headquarters 10th U. S. Cavalry,  
Fort William McKinley,  
Rizal, F. I., July 7, 1908.

The Surgeon General,  
U. S. Army,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I certify that I have known private Samuel Miller, Hospital Corps for six years. He served at Fort Robinson under me for four years until he applied for service in the Philippine Islands.

He has a good record, and his services in the Santiago campaign, as shown by the letter of Colonel Markley and his own statement, are such, that certainly he should be given some recognition, by suitable promotion to enable him to retire with increased rank. I trust something can be done, because it will be a reward for long and faithful service which deserves recognition.

Very respectfully,
Sgd., J. Augur,  
Colonel 10th Cavalry, Commanding.

These two references are typical of others of like character which private Miller received from his superior officers and attest more fully the true worth of the man as they are testimonies of those whose duties were to observe and report on soldiers under their command.

Everybody who has recollections of the late Spanish-American war remembers those momentous days in the hot July of 1898 when the Negro Regiments stationed in Cuba on the firing line made history for themselves and brought glory, honor and majesty to the stars and stripes of their country. On the first day of July, in what was called the bloody angle, near a river, an unknown officer, Corp. Parker, and a private of Company (E) 24th Infantry were shot and all had been ordered to cover. Private Miller was ordered out and dressed the wounded men under fire. When going up San Juan Hill he came across Capt. Harry C. Keene and the first sergeant trying to dress a wounded
soldier. The soldier was turned over to private Miller who dressed him and carried him to the dressing station.

On July 2, 1898, he was the only man in Company (E) 24th Infantry to volunteer to go for water. He went and brought back as many canteens as he could carry. In the general hospital at Siboney, having been left there, he attended Captain Henry C. Keene, and many other officers, alone day and night for ten days, after which he was transferred to the Hospital Corps and remained in Cuba until 1902.

Even in the United States Army it is possible that full details of a soldier's life may be overlooked. This appears to have been the case with private Miller after his gallant action at Santiago, Cuba. In order that his full record might be endorsed upon the records of the War Department, his commanding officer at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, wrote the War Department to amend private Miller's record to show that he was actually wounded in battle. The reply to the request reads as follows:

Record and Pension Office
War Department,
Washington City,
March 23, 1904.

The Commanding Officer,
Fort Robinson,
Nebraska.

Sir:

Referring to the request of Private Samuel Miller, Hospital Corps, of your command, forwarded by you January 9, 1904, in which the soldier desires that his military record be amended to show that he was wounded in action before Santiago, Cuba, July 1, 1898, while serving as a Private in Company (E) 24th Infantry at San Juan Hill, Cuba, shows that Private Samuel Miller, Company (E) 24th Infantry.
"24th Infantry, was wounded in the right hand July 1, 1898.

Very respectfully
Sgd. John Tweedale,
Assistant Chief,
Record and Pension Office.

Despite the bravery of this man and others who made up the Tenth
Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantries which actually saved the lives of
the Rough Riders commanded by Col. Theodore Roosevelt, and made it possible
for him to achieve lasting fame as a military hero, he, Mr. Roosevelt, after
the smoke of battle had blown away, withdraws himself to some secluded spot and
dashes a lot self-serving statements in his book entitled "The Rough Riders",
which is pregnant with defamatory aspersions affecting the valor of the men
who saved him.

In this book as appeared in Scribner's Magazine, April, 1899, pp.
435-436, he states in part:

None of the white regulars or Rough Riders showed the slightest
sign of weakening, but under the strain the colored infantry (who had none of
their officers) began to get a little uneasy and to drift to the rear, either
helping wounded men, or saying that they wished to find their own regiments.
This I could not allow as it was depleting my line, so I jumped up and walking
a few yards to the rear, drew my revolver, halted the retreating soldiers, and
called out to them that I appreciated the gallantry with which they had fought and
would be sorry to hurt them, but that I would shoot the first man who, on any
pretense whatever, went to the rear. x x x I ended my statement to the colored
soldiers by saying: 'Now, I shall be very sorry to hurt you, and you don't know
whether or not I will keep my word, but my men can tell you I always do';
whereupon my cow punchers, hunters, and miners solemnly nodded their heads and
commented in chorus, exactly as if in a comic opera, 'He always does; he always
does'.

This was the end of the trouble, for the smoked Yankees as the
Spaniards called the colored soldiers, flashed their white teeth at one another
as they broke into broad grins, and I had no more trouble with them, they
seeming to accept me as one of their own officers. The colored cavelrymen
had already so accepted me.

Upon the publication of this vainglorious, self-serving figment of
and exalted imagination, this comic opera, the fighting Colonel was given
a much deserved jolt in the nature of a strongly worded refutation by Lieut. R. J. Fleming, writing to Sergeant Presley Holiday, July 7, 1899, from Holguin, Cuba; and published in the New York Age, in May, 1900. He states:

When I arrived there Colonel Roosevelt was walking up and down with a revolver in his hand, saying: 'I have been ordered to hold this hill, and I will shoot the first man who starts to leave. I would shoot my own brother if he made a move to the rear.' Then he turned to some of his own men standing near by and said: 'I would not have to shoot a Rough Rider either.'

Before I could say anything, some of his own men spoke up and said: 'Colonel, you ought not to talk like that to these colored men; we have seen them fight.' Then I said: 'No, sir, you have no right to talk like that to my men. They will stay exactly where I put them.' I then ordered my men to lie down in line, and the Colonel shook hands with me and the incident was closed. The only colored men going to the rear at that time were two men carrying the wounded first sergeant of troop C, Tenth Cavalry, and they were so ordered by Lieutenant Anderson.

Rough Riders and Tenth Cavalrymen were continually going to the rear after this time for water and other purposes. The Rough Riders, except those men in the trenches left the hill at 9 A.M., July 2, but the Tenth Cavalry remained there exposed to a constant fire until 3:30 P.M., when I was ordered down. Permission was readily obtained for the men to go to the rear during this time, and I can truthfully say that they not only returned themselves but others voluntarily came with them to a most dangerous position, and when I left the hill at 3:30 on the afternoon of July 2, I had about twice the number of men I had at first. Neither did these men all belong to my own troop, but came from several in the regiment. As far as my observation went, I saw none of the supposed lack of initiative. The colored soldiers displayed great faculty of getting to the front singly, or in groups, under their officers and that is initiative enough for me.

When the writer called to the attention of Sergeant Miller the quotation of Colonel Roosevelt as above set forth, he ridiculed the brazen audacity of such a charge as being too devoid of the actual truth to be entertained for decent discussion.

Later on as President of the United States, the same fighting Colonel, acting on the advice of his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, without trial or thorough investigation, dishonorably discharged the entire regiment of colored soldiers of the 25th Infantry from service in the U. S. Army for what has become famous as the Brownsville riot.
Before private Miller was retired he had the good fortune of traveling throughout China, Japan, the Philippines and other parts of the Orient. One would ordinarily conclude that the average private in the army would pay no attention to the esthetic things of life such as the acquisition of mementoes of travels, but not so with the sergeant. In his beautiful den of his cozy residence can be seen a large collection of articles of rare and intrinsic value secured by him among the head hunters of the Philippines, the artists of China and Japan, the dreamers of the Hawaiian Islands and from the petrified forests of his own Arizona. These have been tastefully arranged in cases and frames, and it is his proud pleasure to exhibit them to the visitor and relate his experiences in collecting and preserving them.

To show the finer tastes of the sergeant, he so values these souvenirs that he is desirous of having them placed into the hands of those who will preserve them for all time to come, and at the suggestion of the writer, he has arranged with the trustees of Howard University to present the same to the school to be placed on exhibition in its library or some special place in public view to be known as the "Sergeant Samuel Miller Travel Collection".

It follows that a man does not have to be a prince or president to establish himself in the hearts of his fellow men and so Sergeant Miller radiates sunshine and happiness when he tells you of his spotless career in the service of his own and native land and how proud he is to be a retired officer of the greatest fighting organization upon the face of the earth.

The Sergeant is as light on his feet and as agile as a man thirty years his junior. He attributes his health and mental vigor to the simple life he has lived despite the many temptations that beset the lives of men associated with the army. He is married and happily so to...
Mrs. Roxie Burrell Miller, who was formerly the head of the Household of Ruth, the female branch of the Grand Order of Odd Fellows in the District of Columbia. Both are ardent church attendants of the Baptist persuasion and therefore it can readily be seen how their thoughts and activities are very much in common.

Mrs. Miller is deeply interested in the happiness of the Sergeant and her daughters, both of whom are prominently identified with the educational and fraternal life of Washington, and all of whom spare no pains to make the union one of terrestrial bliss.

Such an indelible impression does the thorough training of Uncle Sam's Army impress upon those who enter and learn of its ways, that quite often when the sweet strains of some martial score are heard over the radio, the Sergeant comes to attention displaying all of the imbedded traits impressed upon him as a veteran of the days past and gone.

Such in brief is a mild tribute to the life and career of a man who has left his impression upon one who has had the pleasant opportunity of visiting him and of learning of his ways.

(May 11, 1935)