

Connie Bennett Cameron's Mini-Novel Series

Nate Long: What More Could The Real World Ask For?

By CONNIE BENNETT CAMERON

Strong, courageous and ambitious only mildly describe one of Seattle's best — Nate Long.

Nate Long has been in and out of the Seattle area for well over 20 years. He made his milestone here, and has come back to claim it.

"I have had a lot of choices which have improved my chances for success," says Long. "Seattle has been good for me and so have a lot of people."

Imagine being a person of so many distinguishing characteristics that not only Seattle, but the entire country appreciates.

Part of that success, Long says, came from his involvement with the local ABC TV-affiliate, KOMO, where he trained several communications hopefuls to become some of the city's best journalists. Steve Poole, Karen Denard, Ann Branch, Lee Carter, Eddie Rye Jr., Audrey Wright and many others have prospered from his training.

Long is also known locally for putting the Northwest on the map through his award-winning TV mini-series, "South By Northwest," which explains the history of Blacks in this area, and "The Second Time Around," which is Part II of that series.

Not only that, Nate Long was responsible for and helped direct and produce several children's educational TV programs, including "Infinity Factory," and "TvAC."

An innate knack for dealing with people explains another part of Long's success — an ability to handle the entertainment capitol of the world — Hollywood. He holds many prestigious and inspiring positions as a result of that talent, and has dealt with many of the best actors and actresses around. Denise Nicholas, Rosalind Cash, Jackie Gleason, Jim Brown, John Amos, and Bernie Casey have witnessed Long's talents.

Nate Long was born in the 1930s on April 6 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the age of 3, his mother died, leaving him to the care of relatives. "For some reason or other the courts would not let my father have custody of me," said Long. Eventually, his relatives could no longer keep him, and at 6, he was put up for adoption.

But being an orphan hasn't made Long, who has two black belts in karate and judo, bitter or vengeful, though he probably had good reason to be. In fact, the entire situation has instilled in him a desire to help people and has reinforced his determination to succeed.

Recalling some of his bitter moments during the adoption process, however, Long remembers being rejected by adoption families at least six times a day for about six straight months when he was 7 years old. "Nobody wanted me . . . That's a terrible way to feel. It left an empty feeling inside me that I will never forget."

Each child up for adoption, Long said, would come out individually so the families could look them over. "If they didn't want us they would tell why while we stood and listened. Some told me I was too skinny or too young. Some of those families were very cruel."

The mere thought of being told you're not wanted that many times should give you an idea of the emptiness and loneliness Nate Long must have felt.

"I was very hurt, but I tried not to let it show. Some of the nurses and others in charge would rub me on the head and say, 'That's OK, we like you.'"

Perhaps it was at that tender age and moment, though, that Long became determined not to let anything or anybody cluster his road to success. He was bright, obedient and kept to himself, mainly because there was no one to trust.

He experienced several foster families, and he "always felt unaccepted, like a house boy." There was only one foster parent he felt comfortable with. She became ill and Long was up for adoption again.

Through it all, Long somehow managed not to let the situation get the best of him. "It was a situation I knew would some day come to an end. I had to swallow my pride in many many cases, but I knew it would end some day. It had to."

And an end it did. Today, Nate Long is one of the most powerful people in the television and motion picture industry. He has written, produced, directed, and acted in several well-known movies and TV shows. "Truck Turner," "Mr. Billion," "Over The Edge," "Slams" and "White Line Fever" are among his screen credits.

Long came to the Seattle area in 1963 by way of the air force, and has had a long and distinguished involvement here ever since.

In 1967, he established the Rainier Heights Dojo, teaching judo, karate and self-defense to children and residents of the area. He also taught at several recreation centers. "I've always had a special love for kids," says Long, "probably because of my background. I want to see them get ahead and succeed. There wasn't anybody to help me or answer the questions I had as a kid, and I had many. I was very curious. But I didn't get many answers."

Kids today have more questions, but fewer real answers, Long says. "Many get answers, but they're not good answers. They're just not in tune with the times."

Long was affiliated with a program called Soul Academy, which stressed drop-out prevention, and responsible for the city's Red Barn Ranch for disadvantaged youth.

He taught police training in Seattle, Everett and Edmonds, was an administrative assistant at Model Cities, and was a member of the design committee for Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center.



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