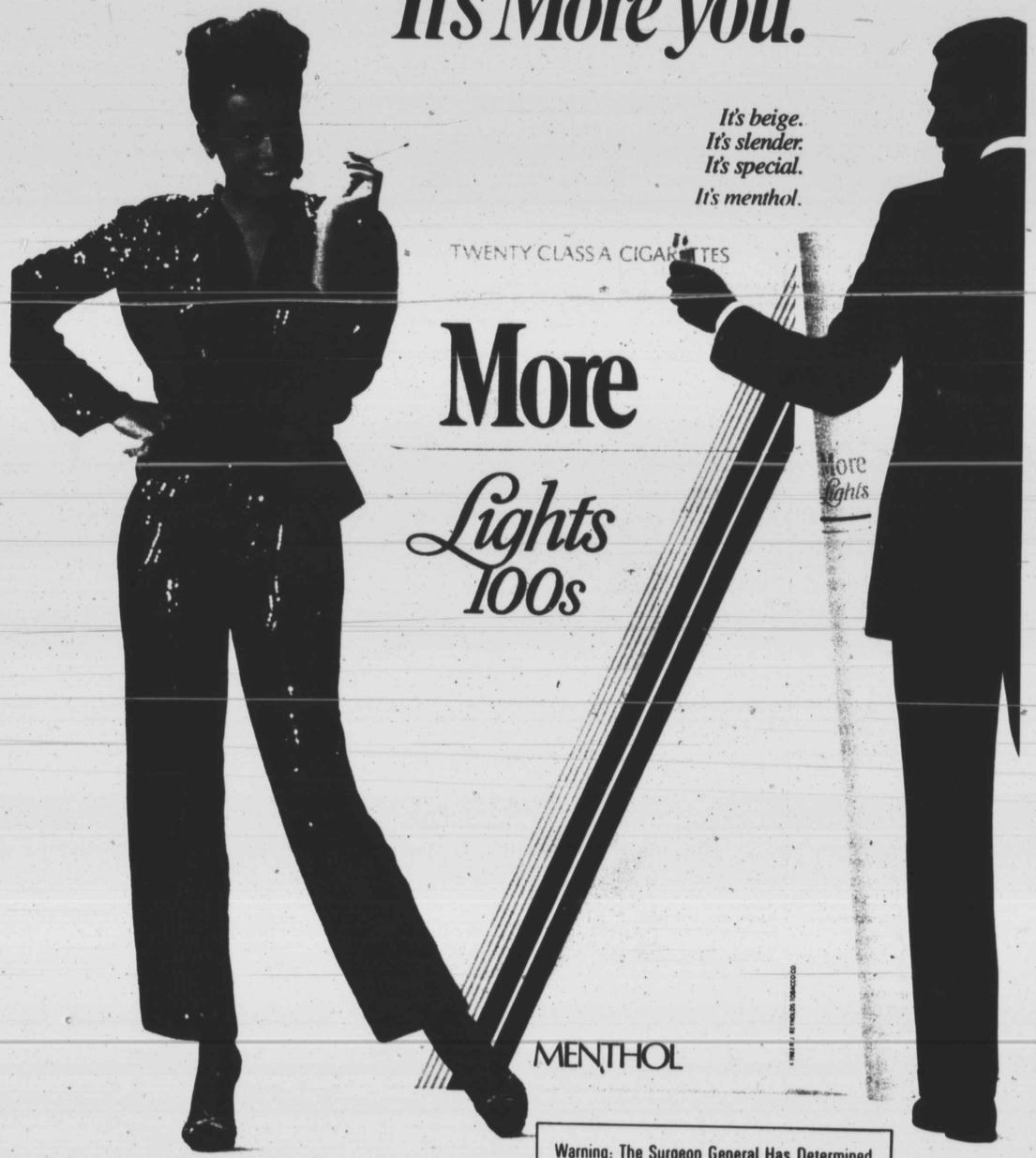

Samuel R. Pierce of HUD

By P. Ann Tatum

As a boy Samuel Riley Pierce said he received a strong foundation from his family, especially his father.

With that foundation, Pierce has been able to overcome obstacles and succeed in just about every area in which he applied himself and now serves as the first and only black cabinet member of the Reagan government.

Samuel Pierce is a man of many firsts.

He was the first son born to Samuel R. Pierce Sr. and Hettie Armstrong Pierce of well-to-do Glen Cove, Long Island in New York.

During the early 1940's, Pierce was the first black college football player to see action against a Southern, all-white college. The year was 1941 and it was the Cornell-Navy game at Memorial stadium in Baltimore, Md.

Pierce was the highest ranking black in the Eisenhower administration--Under Secretary of Labor and the first black partner of a major New York law firm.

He also served in the Nixon Administration and is a former judge. Then New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, appointed Pierce to two interim judgeships in 1959 and 1960. A life-long Republican, Pierce lost twice when running for election to the full 14-year judicial terms.

But it all began for Pierce in Glen Cove where he and his two younger brothers, Chester, now a Harvard professor, and Burt, now Vice President of the Battery City Park Authority in New York City, were born and raised.

Pierce called his mother a "homemaker - she died in 1961. He said his father was "the philosopher . . .the thinker," who died in 1943.

It was Pierce Sr. who told his sons to go for the best, to be the best and to obtain the best education possible.

Samuel R. Pierce

"I had a very good family," Pierce said, adding his parents were devoted to their children.

"My father spent a good deal of his time talking to us three boys about the future. . . what he'd like us to do or be. My direction came from him."

That direction did not say for his sons to follow in his footsteps, even though Pierce Sr. was a successful businessman--he owned a cleaning firm and valet service and later entered the real estate world and invested in the stock market- he apparently did not want that life for his sons.

That direction also seems to have kept Pierce Jr. on track through college at Cornell University. He was awarded a Phi Beta Kappa key during his junior year and through the war years after college and beyond.

Even with all that is known about Samuel Pierce, in some instances, it is difficult to get a fix on him. He appears to be a man who answers questions willingly, but when pressed for details, anecdotes, feelings they are not forthcoming.

Dawn Magazine visited Pierce at his 10th floor suite at the HUD offices in Washington, D.C. recently. Armed with facts of his public life, Dawn's intention was to capture Samuel Pierce, the man. . .his private self.

Pierce was most lively and expansive when discussing his war days in the Army's Criminal Investigation Division (CID), when he was stationed in Naples, Italy.

Pierce remembered Naples as a lovely city to see, but it was not as clean as Rome.

The city of Oran in the North Africa nations of Algeria was one of Pierce's favorite cities, but he said he also visited England, France, Germany and Palestine in the Middle East.

"In all those places (things were) very much different," he said. The languages, the dress, the culture and the people all changed from place to place. Pierce said he noticed distinct differences between Europe and Africa.

He described those times, for the civillian populations of those war torn nations, as "tough."

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