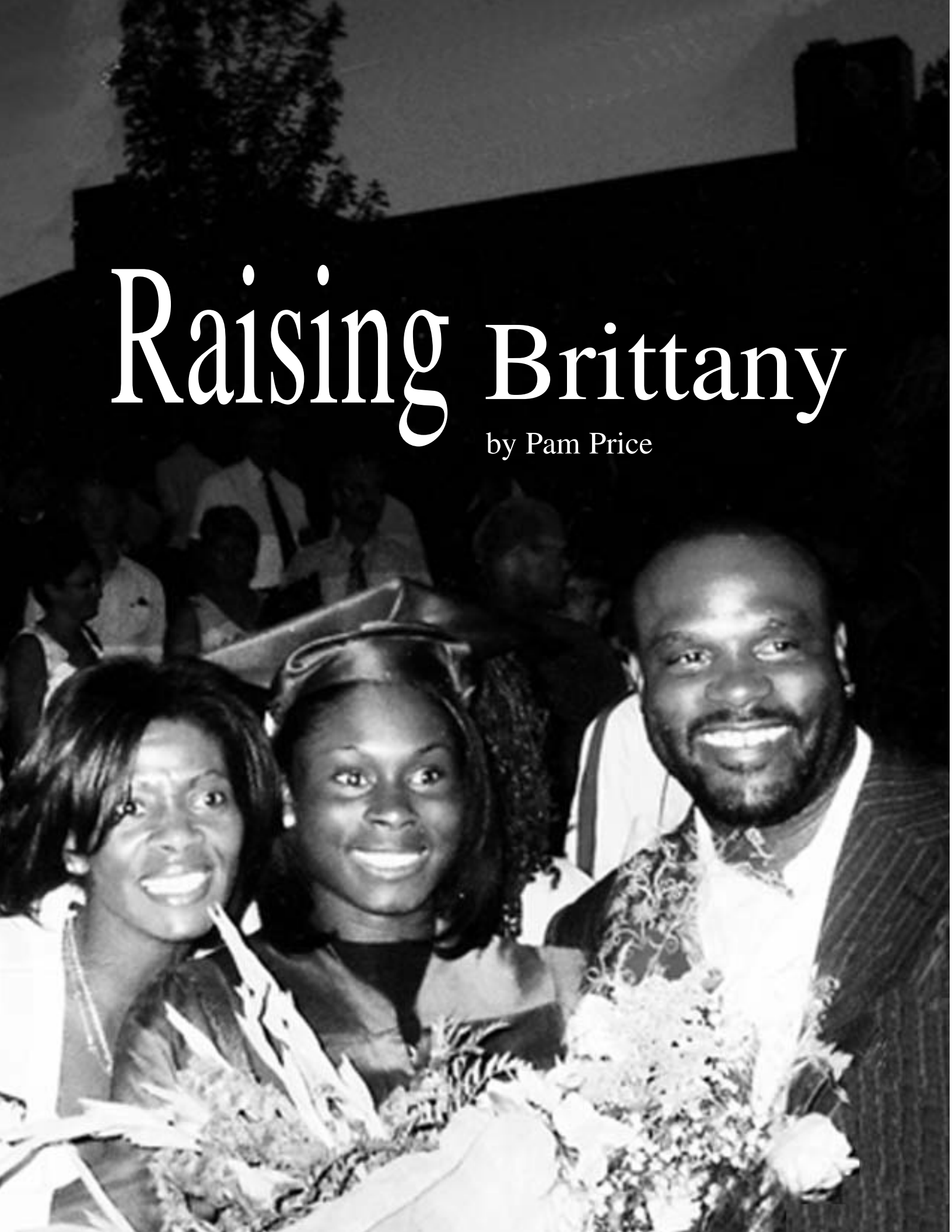


# Raising Brittany

by Pam Price



I was born July 25, 1964, during the height of the feminist movement when the most important question for a woman would suddenly change from the historically organic, "Who will I marry?" to the more conscience provoking, self-empowering variety, "Who am I and what do I want out of life?," "What are my priorities?" and "What gives my life meaning?"

I was raised by a woman who – from my beginning – was a loving housewife and doting mom. Since Mom's main purpose was to raise happy and healthy kids, she never seemed to entertain feminist thoughts.

She seemed thankful and happy to regularly cook clean and do laundry for a handsome husband and three happy, healthy children.

Mom also delighted in the fact that she had successfully raised her oldest child Alice to be the strong dominant type – a polar opposite of the character she now portrayed.

No matter how hard she tried, she no longer could ignore her husband's cheating ways. It soon would be time for them to part, and time for Mom to ponder those questions of self-empowerment she had ignored.

I was only 10 years old when Mom effected her escape, and heartbroken after numerous failed attempts to orchestrate a reconciliation between the two.

I grew resentful toward my mom because I didn't understand why she was ruining our lives this way. Many years would pass before I realized how our uprooting ultimately enriched my life. My attempts to answer these questions would prove eventually to be every bit as complicated as Mom's.

Ironically, a couple years later those questions of the life-shaping variety crept from beneath the carpet and into the light.

My seventh grade English teacher asked our entire class, "What do you want to be when you grow up? Where do you want to work? Do you want to be married? Do you want any children? How many?"

I thought about all the questions of that sunny day in the spring, but until this day, there is only one

question that held my attention and for which my answer has never wavered – I've only ever wanted one baby girl.

Eight years later, I was having the time of my life, madly in love with Burrel, the man of my dreams; Burrel was first man I had ever had a serious, meaningful relationship with. I had made it past my first year at Cole Taylor Bank – which, for me, was a career record – and had been promoted to senior teller.

I liked my job well enough, but my main source of happiness was interacting with the constant flow of customers – the regulars and strangers.

A typical day in my life started at 7:30 a.m. for work and enroute to Burrel by 4:30 p.m. He lived on Chicago's notorious "West Side," but he was well

worth the trip and the danger.

My route was a thirty-minute, stop-light-riddled trek up Cicero Avenue from 76th Street to Chicago Avenue, through what were – undoubtedly ranked – among the most gang and drug-infested slums in the United States.

I looked forward to seeing the hand-

some man with the mocha chocolate complexion and dazzling smile and feeling his strong embrace. I also looked forward to the fun day he had in store.

I knew that my most pressing challenge from that point on was to parallel park Tat-a-lac Boogie because from that point on Burrel would see to my every need.

Tat-a-lac Boogie was the name Burrel's dad had given my brother's 69' convertible Pontiac Bonneville because the sweet rumble of its dual exhaust didn't quite match its grayish-black Bondo primed exterior.

Burrel and I were two creatures of habit. Everyday, I would rush over from work where I'd find his dad sitting, relaxing on the front stoop. "Hi, Mr. Wilks! Watcha doing?" I squealed, happy to be mere seconds from Burrel.

"Heeeyyy, Pam. Jus watching the grass grow," he said in his lazy monotone unmistakably Southern refrain. I never knew if he was actually watching the

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