

Blacks and the Police in Portland

Part V

By Joyce Boles

(Editor's Note: With the mounting crisis in the cities, what role will the police play? Will the Portland Police Bureau recruit Black officers? Will racism cause them to leave? What does the future hold for Blacks and the Police in Portland.)

It is difficult to get present Black officers to talk about their experiences on the bureau. Former officers Bogle and Johnson are more explicit, and others talk about names sprayed on lockers, offensive phrases. But there is a different quality to it today than the experience Bogle had to endure of hearing his people called apes through an entire shift.

Robert Janisse reports that he has become more aware in his eight years with the bureau of a kind of "covert racism" -- though he no longer concerns himself with attitudes, just behaviors. For one thing, there is the story, confirmed by Commissioner Jordan, about the Black man who waited two years at the top of the sergeant's list because, he was told variously, Portland wasn't ready for a Black sergeant, and he himself wasn't ready to be a Portland sergeant.

Janisse recalls with some cynicism the time a bigshot came to town for the dedication of Emanuel Hospital. He was pulled out of plain clothes work and told to put on a uniform and go stand on top of the hospital -- presumably so the visitor could see that the bureau had Blacks in it.

And during the evaluation process, Blacks are rated, sometimes in writing, about how they treat their own people. Whites are not rated on how they treat whites, and probably not on how they treat Blacks, says Janisse.

And there are subtle things, he says: "Every day we are reminded that we are Black. Subjected to racial jokes. There are cross pressures as far as Blacks are concerned, in addition to all the other pressures that you have as police officer in uniform. You're a minority within a minority...When they're around you, they have to say something about your color."

Donald Warren won't talk about it much. Things happened when he was on probation, racial things, but that's in the past. Warren, a committed Christian, both lives and works in the Black community, having grown up here, giving lie to the old rumor that it is impossible for Blacks to live among and police their own people.

Dwight Ford believes he has experienced even less racial stuff. He has heard from a fellow female officer remarks that can only be construed as bigoted, but he lets them slide.

Commissioner Jordan believes union officials simply do not understand what kind of pressure the Blacks are under. "They (the Blacks) are probably doing things



DET. ROBERT JANISSE

they normally wouldn't do if they could be a little more relaxed. There's a lot of pressure to perform and they know they are being watched. Otherwise, the union would not always mention the one or two Blacks who were involved in some illegal activities. Look at the number of white officers who have been involved in activities that we've had to terminate. Somehow, when it comes to Blacks you get stereotyped. When it comes to whites, it's an exception. That's the rule. (The union) has never been Black, they have never been discriminated against. Been through that with Stan over and over again that he just doesn't understand what it means to be so few among so many. That's a hell of a lot of pressure."

Peters, of course, disagrees. He says that if a Black officer experienced racism on the bureau, he would go to bat for him the same as any other unfair treatment, and states that he has in the past gone to bat for Black officers when the occasion demanded.

What lies ahead for Blacks in the Bureau and in the community?

Ronnie Herndon points a finger: "Most officers aren't bad, that's what most people say. But they are all aware of the ones that are, and what makes them guilty is the fact that they haven't done anything about it." Rev. Jackson also reports that Herndon visited the offices of LEAA on a trip to Washington to talk about getting Portland funds cut off, but that nothing has come of this so far. Improper treatment of Blacks in the community and the bureau's hiring policies are cited as reasons for this.

Present Black police officers are boldly firm: "Only time will tell," says Ford. "I kind of think things are going to change pretty quick. I think you're going to be looking at

the turbulent 60s again in the Black communities. Things are going downhill real quick." While his experiences in the bureau have not been that bad ("I must emphasize to you they have not. I have been well received.") and he hasn't seen anything untoward in his fellow white officers' treatment of Black citizens, "I'm not saying that it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen around me. And it better not happen around me. And I think officers who know me know I'm not kidding when I say that. If they get out of line...then I want it known that you can forget it...and I sure as hell am going to report them. That's the way I am."

Janisse is more ominous: "(If the present two list system) fails, then they're going to be looking at a class action lawsuit. And one way or another it's going to happen. Because they're overdue. They're way overdue. We'll use every tool available to us. We're not going to sit back and wait. We're not going to take any more of that gradualism. Why should we have to wait? We're United States citizens. Supposedly we're equal. We should have all the rights and privileges...I look back to the 60s, and the progress made a lot of Blacks become very content and were kind of lulled to sleep. And I think you can probably see it, and I know I can. I can see it and I can feel it, that we're being born again. What happened back in the 60s is maybe happening again, but maybe we're not going to be met with violence because I think the Blacks, the young Blacks today are a part of this movement learned a lot from people like Martin Luther King that you can beat the system without resorting to violence, and we can, and I think it's hard for whites to deal with, for the what white man to deal with the intelligent Black. And that's where the fear comes in. They (the police union) see us as a threat...Whenever the change is



COMMISSIONER JORDAN

mentioned, they never say anything about white females. It's just Blacks. They don't say anything about the Chinese...it's just Blacks. So there is a fear there."

Leon Johnson, from his spot in the trenches of affirmative action, tells what he hears when he visits taverns, and he hears ominous rumblings, threats of violence from persons who don't ordinarily talk that way. Tension is rising, he thinks. "If he does that again, I'm going to blow his head off," -- that type of thing. The degree of frustration is larger, the anger greater now than before thinks.

But Commissioner Jordan is excited about the future and about the potential in two programs now in the talking stages: new cultural awareness training, and a new study possibly to be undertaken.

The first, not to be confused with sensitivity training which is in disfavor, would be part of the academy training, says Baker.

The second would be a specialized unit that would examine if specialized training in family violence, crisis intervention, and community relations for certain officers would help. The problem with such a study is maintaining the control group long enough to measure results, says Baker, something that has not really been achieved in the past.

Jordan is also about to unveil a public information package. Not a public relations package, he is quick to point out.

And he is talking about setting up a citizen task force to look things over.

Jordan is also extremely positive about recent personnel changes in internal affairs.

All Blacks, public and private citizens, agree that having more minority officers on the Bureau will help tension in the community to abate. Some, like Ford and Janisse, think Blacks bring special abilities to the situation that whites don't have, in particular in dealing with Black citizens. Others, like Donald Warren, think having Black officers there for Black youngsters to look up to will help dissuade some of them from choosing crime as a way of life, since so many other avenues of achievement are either denied Blacks or afford them only limited entry and limited opportunity for progress.

Stan Peters does not agree that having more minorities on the bureau will help. "No, why should it?" If finding minorities has to be achieved at what he is certain is a lowering of standards, then it won't be worth it," he says. "The people of this city, they're out here at 50th and Hawthorne, \$1,000 a year in taxes, they want that money to buy the very best they can...streets, water, lights, police and fire, and they deserve that."

Occupational diseases major problem for workers

WASHINGTON -- Almost 2 million American motor workers are severely or partially disabled as a result of occupationally related diseases, and only 5 percent of those severely disabled received worker's compensation benefits, according to a U.S. Labor Department study report.

The study of job-related diseases was mandated by the Black Lung Benefits Reform Act of 1977.

Major issues addressed in the study report include the magnitude and severity of the occupational disease problem, with particular emphasis on pulmonary and respiratory diseases; the status and adequacy of existing compensation programs; alternatives for improving the delivery of compensation benefits, and the adequacy of occupational disease prevention programs.

In 1978, lost incomes for workers with disabling occupational diseases totaled \$11.4 billion, the report says.

Among the problems facing disease victims who are successful in obtaining worker's compensation benefits are: a 60-percent denial rate for initial claims, one-year delays before receiving compensation benefits, and the frequent use of compromise and release agreements which involve small lump-sum settlements and free insurance carriers from further liability, the report says.

Only 60 percent of the workers' compensation premium dollar is paid out in cash or medical benefits. Forty cents out of every dollar pay for such expenses as insurance company reserves, dividends, litigation or overhead, the study found.

Because litigation is more prevalent in occupational disease cases than in other types of claims, legal - administrative costs of these cases are probably higher than those in the average workers' compensation case, the report says.

Two major sources of income for people disabled from occupational diseases are social security and welfare programs. Fifty-three percent receive social security benefits, and 16 percent are welfare recipients. Occupational diseases cost the social security and welfare systems about \$2.2 billion annually, the report says.

Three options for improving occupational disease compensation are outlined in the report: supplementing social security disability payments from industry-financed

trust funds where specific occupational disease criteria are met, altering state workers' compensation to ease the burden of proof that now rests on claimants, and responding individually to recognized occupational diseases such as those caused by asbestos and cotton dust.

Additional research will be required to establish compensable diseases, develop standards, analyze financing mechanism, and estimate the potential costs of improving compensation benefits.

The report cites evidence that oc-

Tax relief still available

Homeowners who missed the deadline for filing property tax relief claims have another chance. County assessors have been authorized to accept late applications for tax relief on owner-occupied homes.

Claims must be filed on or before September 2 to receive relief this fall under Oregon's Tax Relief Plan. The state pays part of the property taxes on qualifying homes. Assessors show the state payment as a credit on the homeowner's property tax statement.

To qualify, the home must have been occupied by the owner on June 30, 1980, and must be the person's principal living quarters. A temporary absence, such as vacation or illness, does not disqualify the

owner. Applications on mobile homes must be made in the county where the mobile home was located on January 1, 1980.

Claim forms are available from assessors. They should be filed as soon as possible but no later than September 2. The filing deadline was April 1 but because of taxpayer confusion over the filing dates for various programs, Oregon Department of Revenue Director Robyn L. Godwin authorized assessors to accept late applications this year.

Homeowners who have previously filed and have not moved or changed the use of their property should not file again. Their tax relief will be continued automatically.

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Citizen of the Week



The Reverend Ira D. Mumford is pastor of Smith Chapel Church and is currently a O.S.U. 4-H Extension Agent. Rev. Mumford has served as director of the Urban 4-H program since 1975.

Besides his involvements with the community and its youth, Rev. Mumford is best noted for his 16 years of loyal service as a broadcaster on the weekly KGAR "Gospel Train". Rev. Mumford began his service with the Gospel Train in 1964 and in his words has "watched the program grow in bringing the word of God to the sick and enlightening other people in the Community." Rev. Mumford's contributions include: Counseling for young and old, the Urban 4-H program, the annual 4-H Olympics and service on various church boards and activities.

Rev. Mumford is a past member of the famous Ink Spots and has performed in Europe and the US. He is a frequent participant in the KGW Neighborfair and directs the Urban 4-H Choral Ensemble and the Portland Aires.

Rev. Mumford is married to Lydia Timms Mumford. They reside in Portland with their daughter Iretta, a student at Grant High School.

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