

# OBSERVATIONS

FROM THE SIDELINES  
By Kathryn Hall Bogie

A banquet, held recently at the Mallory Hotel, marked a milestone in the working career of Osly James Gates.

The genial Mr. Gates, a few weeks before, had announced his intended resignation from his long-time position as Director of the City-County Commission on Aging. Nearly a hundred community leaders and friends gathered at the hotel to reminisce a little with the man they so openly admired for his accomplishments in behalf of the elderly segment of Portland's population.

Banquet arrangements were made by Sam Lessitz, a gerontologist appointed to Governor Victor Atiyeh's Commission on Aging. Lessitz is also a former director of Robison Jewish Home for the aged.

Acting as master of ceremonies was Alfred Sugarman, a professor of Speech Communications at PSU. He was a former chairman of the City-County Council on Aging.

Among the well-wishers present were Dr. Paul Wright, minister Emeritus of First Presbyterian Church who had also served as a chairman of the Council; Phil Mayer, another former Council chairman and William Gordon, the Council's present chairman.

Oregon's first and only Black state Senator, William McCoy, seated at the speaker's table, spoke briefly as did his wife, Multnomah County Commissioner Gladys McCoy. At other tables were noted many representatives of other social agencies, public and private, among these: Eugene Nudelman, Marie Record Smith and Maude Banks Young.

Gates resolutely set his termination date as of July 1, 1981, completing 16 years of helping to establish the agency and fostering its growth and strength in the community.

"We started in the community," said Gates in a subsequent interview, "back in 1965, as a committee on aging. Essie McGuire had recently retired as the executive of the YWCA and she was persuaded to lend her time and expertise to head this new committee of nine persons. Ours was the first group in the nation to attempt to achieve the goals we had in mind and to do it with a compatible working relationship between City and County. We started the first Loaves and Fishes program in the country."

"Essie McGuire knew how to get things done. She had the assistance and cooperation of Gerson Goldschmidt and the rest of that first committee. Even though other groups patterned programs after ours in other cities in the nation to improve nutrition for older, the Portland Loaves and Fishes program was the largest."

"The original City-County Committee on Aging started at the same time that Medicare was signed into the laws of the land by Congress. The committee appointed me to be the first director and when we opened our offices many persons in the public had the two agencies blended in their minds. It was true that a great deal of the committee's work involved interpretation and implementation of the medicare law. Many were the times when telephone calls were routed to the 'Medicare man.' They meant me. Well, I have tried my utmost to be



"Jim" Gates enjoys his regular six-mile run through Southeast Portland. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

of real assistance to the elderly by working to hold down costs for their basic needs.

"In 1968," Gates continued, "Our committee changed its designation to that of 'Council' to denote its advisory and authoritative status in the community. Later, in 1972, we became a commission - reflecting our evolving status and the achievement of a higher level of governmental responsibility on behalf of older people."

"We have achieved an ideal - a working relationship on a two-way basis between government and older people: people in government helping people in the public who, after all, are the government in America."

Gates paused for a moment to remember and savor the beauty of witnessing democracy working and meshing well in this he had experienced.

"Portland churches," Gates went on, "were helpful in the Loaves and Fishes programs. The response from them was gratifying. In fact, they made us so overwhelmed successful that the program eventually outgrew us. It became too big for us

to operate it. Loaves and Fishes was taken over by a private non-profit organization. The transfer freed the commission to turn its attention to other needs of the elderly."

"We tackled transportation next," Gates said. "We had already done a lot of preliminary work to find low-cost transportation for the elderly, but we had failed to persuade the transit company to offer lower fares."

"Finally we resorted to our own state legislature to provide us with a law to protect the elderly against constantly rising bus fares that would take too big a bite out of their funds."

"Out of the struggles of staff and volunteer workers of the City-County Council on Aging and the Oregon State Legislature, a law came out of it all. The law states that no transit company in the state may charge the elderly over ten cents during non-rush hours. The elderly may ride free on July 4 and other holidays or on week ends to shop, to visit, and to enjoy themselves."

"Once the law was achieved, we had to educate the elderly to use their privileged rides."

"We organized a project, 'End of the Line.' The elderly, in groups of six persons traveled together to the end of the bus line during free-ride-times. At the end of the line they could lunch in a park, spend time

together, get back on the bus and ride home. All for free.

"Now as I look out of my office windows downtown, I can tell, by the pedestrians I see passing along the city streets, when it is ten o'clock in the morning. I smile contentedly to myself and think: Grey hair comes to town at ten o'clock."

"But," Gates quickly warned, "The elderly (and the Commission) will have to be vigilant. They must constantly examine and challenge any law having to do with transportation. They must be alert to be sure that no other law, no matter how it masquerades, will appear on the books that might negate or deprive the elderly of the privileges that are now theirs by law."

Gates, retiring at 61, seems fit after recovering from a heart attack during last year. A graduate of West Virginia State College, he took a master's degree in Public Health from Columbia University in 1950.

A former marathoner, Gates has returned to an athletic program he designed for himself. Three times a week he runs a comfortable six-mile course along a golf course and flower gardens near his southeast home.

Osley J. Gates is married to the former Jeanette McPherson. They have one daughter, Sylvia Carlisle, who is completing her medical training at Brown University.

Plans after retirement are "Beginning to take shape" says Mr. Gates. "I'm tired of bureaucracies and spending eighty percent of my time with them rather than with the real job of serving the people."

Now he will do "something different from what I have done before," but first, "There will be a time to depressurize a contemplative period to sort through a lot of ideas."

A little fishing in the mountain streams is probably a part of the contemplative forecast, says Gate's friends.

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## From the Front Door

By Tom Boothe

From The Front Door, I see those who follow along the course of: Cleanliness, Caring, Courtesy and Completeness. Even as in Nature the same courses are followed.

We might equate Winter with an act of Cleanliness; Spring an act of Caring; Summer an act of Courtesy; Autumn an act of Completeness.

But, then I see those who do not follow this course. They are those who are not clean and they practice Dirtiness; there are those who do not care, and they practice carelessness; there are those who are not courteous, they practice rudeness and arrogance and are merciless; and there are those who do not complete what they start, and they practice incompleteness.

These individuals will always Criticize, Complain, and find "Blame Factor" excuses; but most will change given enough time and encouragement.

I find that there is a great advantage in following the course of Cleanliness, Caring, Courtesy and Completeness. Even, as in Nature this is the course of Power, Production and Performance, the position of giving. Those who follow this course are in charge and hold great power over those who are less clean, and those who do not care as much, and those who are not as courteous, and those who do not complete much of what they start; their position is one of consuming. It is better to give, than to consume, or be consumed.

When and if you feel oppressed and victimized, it may be that you are on the wrong course. The way to change courses in the Right direction, is to practice and demonstrate more Cleanliness, more Caring, more Courtesy and more Completeness.

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