

# OBSERVATIONS

FROM THE SIDELINES

By Kathryn Hall Bogle

Have you ever seen a box of "Gold Dust" washing powder? I mean the one with the "twins" on the box. Have you ever seen a can of "Nigger Hair" tobacco? Or a plate and cup and saucer that Coon Chicken Inn used right here in Portland?

Well, you may see them or buy some of them when these items go on sale this week. This collection of nearly 2,000 items of similar description will be offered to the public through "Buck" Foreman, proprietor of Buck's Stove Palace in S.E. Portland.

This sale is a rare one. Rare because many of the items qualify as antiques, though many are those that fit more into the category of collectibles. The "Nigger Hair" tobacco was sold in 1878 by the American Tobacco Company.

The sale is rare also because how often is it that you find a real collection of articles that were made to put down a race? These items were once on the shelves, in the show-cases, in the store windows and family homes of America.

Some of the items were made to please the American public by foreign countries wanting to cater to American trade. Like the cheap little ceramic outhouse occupied by a rough looking person painted shoe polish Black, "made in Japan," or the thick lipped ring-in-the-nose "gallaway" made in France, or the firecracker labeled "nigger" made in China to be shipped to American fireworks shops. Germany made some "harmonizing" ceramic items for kitchen use. They are all mixed in together with the watermelon eating, alligator racing, bandana kerchief melange made in America and available for purchase at the Stove Palace.

A fascinating exhibit. It's authentic American. It is a part of the history of oppression of Black people. Who would buy it? Is there a Black History project that could afford it?

An "Old Black Joe" shoe polish can. Empty. A smooth head of a blackened male used as a target in a carnival amusement game. A carved



"Buck" Foreman poses with collections demonstrating America's attitude toward its Black citizens over the years.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

head of a Black man on a stick used as a slave prod ("move along there"), or a pointer for a huckster, leans against a gum-ball machine. This is another Black head with a grotesque red tongue protruding from his mouth.

For a change there is a sterling silver tea spoon with the outlines of three Black male faces in the design of the bowl. Now that is a real rarity! And here are some Lucky Light beer postures of long ago with attractive pictures of the first Black jockey who won the Kentucky Derby back in 1884, again in 1890 and again in 1891. Did you know about him?

In a cabinet is a pin-up poster issued by the Carnation Milk Company showing the likeness of the Tigner quadruplets when they were

beribboned and bonnetted babies right here in Portland. Their birth was a renowned event.

A set of "Mammy" dolls got Foreman started collecting what he calls "Black memorabilia" about seven years ago, has built his extensive collection with the help of friends who combed through the offerings of casual collectors and flea markets from coast to coast to locate these items.

"Now," Foreman said, "It is the time to let go of my collection. I could travel with this collection, write a book about it, or sell it off. I've had a number of persons who are interested as buyer who have contacted me since I placed ads in the "Trade" magazines.

"Ideally," Foreman thought aloud, "the whole thing should be

young people how the Black circumstances was used to the white advantage. Most of the things here link Blacks with alcohol, tobacco, games, amusement or menial service of some kind. That was the prevailing attitude of the times.

"Even now I sense a stereotype reaction sometimes from a prospective customer who feels I must be a bigot to have collected these things.

"On the other hand," Foreman said with a short laugh, "I have never met anyone, Black or white, who could not identify with at least one of the items - possibly something from their childhood memories stirs."

Childhood memories do flood the mind and Black children remember the calculated humiliation meted out to them through slanted and derogatory advertising on household items of yesteryear.

Aunt Jemima looks different nowadays, so does the man on the Cream of Wheat box, and Coon Chicken Inn is now called the Prime Rib. The put-down of the Black race has had to seek out other ways to perpetuate itself.

The box of licorice candies called "Nigroids" has long ago been emptied but the tin and its label are in good condition.

The collection of these memorabilia has its value as a reminder of things past. Gone but not forgotten. Like the Jews who suffered under Hitler in the horrors of the concentration camps in Germany, we cannot afford to forget our own Black experience. Nor can we let our young forget how it was with us in America.

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TRADEWELL

## Louise Asher: Legal investigator

By Nathaniel Scott

Louise Asher has been an investigator for the Public Defenders Office in Multnomah County for 13 months, and while performing her duties, finds time to reflect on parenthood and parental involvement.

She said "fifty percent of my cases are Blacks and minorities--indigent people, at or below the poverty level. Most are females, including prostitution, and the crime rate for females is climbing. Why? I cannot say. Perhaps a combination of things: education, economic and cultural deprivation."

Asher, who was born in Portland's old Vanport section, obtained her Associate of Science Degree in Law from Portland Community College, and the mother of four teenage children and one eleven year old said, "If the parents would make an extra effort, come down on the kids, especially minorities; let them know that we don't appreciate their disrespectful acts like unnecessary noise and destruction on Tri-Met buses; discourtesy on the streets, etc., it

would help. We Blacks don't attend meetings, watch special educational programs on TV as a family unit, which also will help."

As an investigator for the defender, Asher looks for flaws; find people who are pertinent to the case; take photographs and diagrams the crime scene, and if the crime happens at night, "very often I have to go to the scene at night in order to see it for myself," she said.

"Females are reluctant to talk to me especially because they find it hard to see me as an investigator. Or either because I am a woman; a Black woman."

What are her feeling about education? "Ten years ago I never dreamed that I would have a position like this," she explained. "Schooling is very important. If a person wants to do something, he/she can."

Asher's working day is not filled with glitter and glamour as some may think. Her overall duties of field investigation, meeting with attorneys, trial assistance and making court room appearances, gives her ample background knowledge for her comment of, "overall, from the



LOUISE ASHER  
(Photo by: Thomas Golden)

people I observe - field investigation, courtrooms, etc., it's a sense of hopelessness; The uneducated and poor trying to maintain in the system," she explained.

"Prostitution figures into my area of work, predominantly the Union Avenue strip. I don't particularly like to investigate those cases. There isn't much work to do, and usually the girls are guilty."

Her observation of prostitution is the realistic one. The reason why is varied and many -- all stemming from lack. And she maintains that the punishment should be equal justice; "prostitute, customer (John) and pimp."

Asher's outlook for the immediate future is to continue doing what she is doing, but she does not rule out the possibility of "private practice in four to five years; four or five years that promises to push people into the criminal justice system because of lack."

## Black Studies

(Continued from Page 1 Col 6)

"Our international ranking will be jeopardized and international programs - we have a Fullbright Scholar this year - might be discontinued." Little explained that the program is now considered one of the top ten in the nation.

## From the Front Door

By Tom Boothe

From the front door, I wish to thank all of those who came forward over the past month to help us clean our community; and also those who cleaned independent of our help or encouragement. The Exodus Clean Team is fast becoming a valuable positive Human Resource for the City of Portland and Multnomah County. We know that our leadership is important, but we don't forget that it is our youth that makes our service effective.

I was recently asked by a gentleman why did I get involved with something like the Exodus Clean Team, when I could be doing something that is more important than wasting my time trying to work with a bunch of kids on Saturday morning, or holding meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. This gentleman is a highly religious person. However, I felt his statement was motivated more from jealousy than religious conviction.

I answered and asked, "What else do you think would be more important?"

He answered and said, "Why you could help me to organize a larger youth membership for my church." I answered and said, "You know children must have a foundation of knowledge and understanding of reality before they can become productive and responsible citizens in regards to any kind of membership. I think my effort in trying to teach knowledge and understanding of productivity and responsibility is far more important than trying to help you fill your church with potentially non-responsible, irresponsible members."

I concluded by saying that consistency, purpose and action is the inspiration and driving Spirit of the Exodus Clean Team, and if he had a commitment with that same spirit, then his church would have a solid youth membership. I then gave him a copy of my "Final Wisdom" publication, and asked him to read it and then come back and talk to me. He hasn't come back yet.

My point in mentioning this conversation is to restate and have it understood that I am only interested in doing what I can to help produce a cleaner and safer community. I welcome those who wish to join me, and I don't understand those who like to live in dirt, and complain about it, yet, won't do anything to remove the dirt. Any one may be poor, but no one has to be dirty or discourteous.

I must say at this point we will do what we can to clean our community, and maintain a cleaner and safer neighborhood for all. Our strength is growing each week.

Remember, the Exodus Clean Team is a non-sectarian community based organization who will always appreciate your support, whether it be **MAN-POWER, WOMAN-POWER, CHILD-POWER** or **MONETARY DONATIONS.....**

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