

Williams: Woman of the year

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ment in the act. Through a background series on police/community relations and actions of narcotics division detectives, Ms. Williams, Alan Ota and a team of *Oregonian* reporters attempted to lay out the facts for readers. The police department and the mayor were not too appreciative, and charges of bias flew.

"I wrote mostly about City Hall effects of the 'possum incident,'" Ms. Williams recalls. "I was not surprised by the reaction. I understand the reaction. It [the story] had been aired by the Black community and the Black press, and *Willamette Week*, but because it was the *Oregonian* that did the story, it gave legitimacy. They know if the *Oregonian* is paying attention, then the people downtown and in the West Hills are paying attention."

Ivancie criticized the media and Ms. Williams publicly and the police bureau's newsletter printed negative comments about her. Williams doesn't credit Ivancie's remarks to racism but thinks perhaps others in City Hall or the police bureau may have been reacting to her as a Black woman.

Her employers were supportive in the midst of this barrage. "They feel the same way I do. It speaks for itself and we don't need to defend ourselves. People can read and make up their own minds."

Ms. Williams, 29, didn't start out to be a newspaper reporter. Originally from Fayetteville, N.C., she studied sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before deciding "it was a lot of bull." Having since become more charitable toward her first field, she still finds her natural strengths in the humanities.

After graduating from UNC with degrees in journalism and history, she worked as an intern for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and later as a general assignment and education reporter for several daily papers in the South before coming to the *Oregonian* as Salem statehouse reporter in 1979.

On the City Hall beat since the spring of 1980, Ms. Williams covers the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Portland Development Commission, city government advisory committees and others, from her office on the third floor. She has made friends here and is

"getting more familiar" with the city's Black community. "It suffers from being vastly outnumbered and such a minority," she says. "There's more pressure to assimilate and to be low-key about things. It's difficult to gain a foothold in the city's political and economic life."

But things are improving, Ms. Williams senses. "Portland is gaining a very activist Black community. Those who weren't so vocal before are finding more support. Outside of the churches, Portland's Black community hasn't had any institutions to find leaders."

Although Ms. Williams has been on the receiving end of criticism from those she writes about, she won't worry about anticipated reaction to a story as long as the facts are straight.

"I expect there's going to be a reaction and that it's not going to be positive," she admits. "Knowing people are going to be scrutinizing the work, you have to keep to the facts... If the facts are there and I can justify [a story] all the way down the line, it'll get printed. It might take time, but they'll print it."

Haefner: Long Service Award

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economics graduate from the University of Iowa who had "no intention of staying in a small town."

Joining her brother in Grants Pass (her parents later retired there) she then landed in Portland and promptly joined the NAACP, becoming a board member at a time when few whites were involved. Civil rights battles of the period included a bi-yearly effort by the group to force a civil rights bill through the Oregon Legislature. Finally, with the help of then-Gov. Sprague, a Sen. Hickok and a young representative named Hatfield, they were successful in getting such legislation passed in 1952.

After years of championing the under dog's cause, Ms. Haefner found enough like-minded seniors and put together the Gray Panthers in Oregon, with co-founder Ron Wyden, now the state's second district congressman. They worked for nursing home patients' rights and sponsored

the initiative allowing denturists to treat patients and fit dentures without the involvement of a licensed dentist (and usually expensive dental bills).

Ms. Haefner was not surprised when senior advocate Wyden was elected. "There was nobody that could defeat him. Ron had the people with him." They still work closely together.

In recent years, she has kept tabs on police activities through police/community task forces and speaking up whenever injustice occurs. One such event to her mind was the so-called "possum incident" last year in N.E. Portland.

"Some say it's settled, but it's never going to be settled as long as Ivancie is mayor," Ms. Haefner says. "Wh put those policemen back on the force when they should have been fired."

"There's a lot of rumbling in the Black community and it's going to fester until it's settled or it breaks

out in some other form. They didn't get justice."

In 1978, she attended the University of Iowa's 60-year reunion and was awarded a distinguished alumni achievement award for her activities.

But the high point of recent years was traveling to Washington, D.C., for the national Gray Panthers convention and protesting the White House Conference on Aging.

"The official delegates stayed at the Hilton for \$100 a night and got their air-fare paid—all by the taxpayers. We paid our own expenses and stayed at 4-H facilities because we were poor," she says.

With all her involvement in social issues, it's not too surprising to learn there wasn't time for a husband and family. But Ms. Haefner has no regrets.

"I don't regret that I didn't marry. I'm a lot better off than my friends who married. I was too ambitious!"

Herndon: Man of the Year

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Herndon and two other students began plans to establish the Black Education Center, which began with summer school in 1970. "That is why I stayed in Portland, because of the response of the people. We had seventy or eighty children that summer. The people really wanted change, wanted the benefit of Black History and a good education." They worked to build the school and in 1974 it opened full-time.

In 1971 the Black Education Center Bookstore, later called the Talking Drum Book Store, was founded out of the necessity to develop institutions to meet the needs of Black people. "For twelve years it has been a source of Black history, culture, and literature—a source that many cities of similar size do not have."

From 1971 to 1975 Herndon worked for the Albina Youth Opportunity School. When the directorship of the PMSC Head Start program (now AMA Headstart) was available, he applied and was appointed. "I had never taken an education course. But I saw the need for a Black institution in the city that could teach children Black history, Black culture and the Three Rs." Herndon credits his appointment to people on the PMSC Board who fought for him—mainly Lilly Walker and Betty Overton.

Three years ago the Black United Front was organized, with Herndon as co-chairman. "We wanted to create an organization to work for the interests of the Black Community more effectively than we could as individuals. Most Black people in Portland wanted change and were willing to work very hard to overcome the despicable and depressing conditions that confront us every day."

"At each point we deeply believed that Black people in Portland—contrary to what had always been said—were willing to work hard and make sacrifices to fight all of the various forms of racism in the city."

Well known are the struggles

against racism in the school district and police brutality and harassment, efforts to aid economic development in the area, protest against a porno theater in the community, and support of a citizens committee to plan use of federal HCD funds.

Herndon credits all of his successes to those who have assisted him. "If it were not for the care and protection and love my grandparents gave when I was very young—the lessons they taught—whatever I've done would not have been possible. I will be eternally grateful."

"I have to give credit to my teachers and their lessons about excellence—our second grade teacher was always talking about college."

"My political development is due to the people who took the time and had the patience to teach me—to tell me what books to read. In New Jersey I was shown a book—J.A. Rogers' *Africa's Gift To America*—the first Black book someone said to read."

"I'm very lucky to have known a lot of good people who have been kind and have tried to teach me. In New York I learned from the pimps, prostitutes and drug addicts. They let me know first hand about police brutality and the viciousness of police, planting drugs, bribes. I got to see that this country doesn't give a damn about Black people."

"I saw the limousines from Wall Street go to the slums of Harlem—the people who make a profit from Black people being cooped up like animals in the slums. The money sifts right down to Wall Street. And all I had learned in high school civics was washed out."

"I learned that the people who run this country know exactly what they are doing—that Black people are dying from indescribable circumstances. It was a powerful lesson to learn at 19."

Herndon was fortunate to spend a few weeks in Trinidad. "It was the most free I ever felt in my life, not to be under the yoke of racism day in and day out."

Another experience made possible by others was an opportunity to

study in Africa. A class in African dance at Portland State University taught by Percival Borde, one of the leading authorities, had an opportunity to choose a class member to go on the study tour in Africa. Instead, they chose Herndon.

He studied at the University of Liberia and at the University of Ife in Nigeria. "There I found the kind of intellectual stimulation and academic depth that I had hoped to find at Reed. The professors were intellectuals—true scholars." Borde opened the way for Herndon to meet many of the traditional leaders of Africa and to take part in traditional ceremonies.

"Everything I have done I owe to those who have helped me. The people of Portland—parents, people in the Black United Front—these are the people who deserve this award."

"Bill McClendon and McKinley Burt were very important to my political development; they are giants in the field of Black History. They have given themselves to me and to other Blacks to teach us the lessons they have learned. Vesia Loving and Edna Robertson have been such a help."

"I deeply appreciate what the *Observer* has done over the years—talking about the problems that assault Black children, single handedly keeping the school issue alive when it wasn't popular. Police brutality—years ago you began to publicize police brutality."

"It is rewarding and fulfilling that Black people, in the face of so many hurdles put before them so many times, try at all. Yet they have never given up faith in their ability to bring about change. Welfare mothers, the poor, high school dropouts have been the movement here."

"Whenever there has been significant change in our history it has been when large numbers of people work together. There are always some smart Black people who challenge the system—but when you look at real change it is because large numbers are active in the struggle."

Street Beat

Our Street Beat question this week is, "Do you think Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday should be declared a national holiday?"



Aretia Rogers, schoolteacher—"I know without even thinking about it that it should be a national holiday. King did as much as any of the other people whose birthdays are national holidays. He fought for human rights, not just for Black people, but for everybody. With this Congress it probably won't be declared."



Martha Perkins, clothes sorter—"It should be a holiday. There's a lot of unsung heroes and if they all had holidays on their birthdays it would stop meaning so much."



Edward Berts, retired—"Yes, I've always been in favor of making his birthday a national holiday. He was one of the greatest men in the world. That's my idea about it and I'm not going to change."



Reginald DeLaney, student—"He did a lot for people. Not only Black people but whites as well. I think the reason why they haven't made it a national holiday is because he was a Black man."

Connie Emerson, handicapped-helper—"I think it should be because he's a great person and someone who is well-liked by the public. Some people may not think that it's



Inez Leary, housewife—"I think it should be a national holiday. He was a good guy. People just don't look up to good guys anymore."

Lenell Means, employee, Pacific NW Bell—"It should have been declared a long time ago. Don't you think he was one of the greatest men who ever lived? I don't think that white society really respects the man."



by Lanita Duke and Richard Brown

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