

# METROPOLITAN

## American State Bank: The Bank That Integration Built

*Grassroot News, N. W.* — While most banking institutions are reacting to the unfavorable economic climate, Venerable F. Booker, President of American State Bank, has not felt the pinch. "Not yet," said Booker in an interview last Friday.

In the late '60s Booker put the bank together under the banner of Freedom Finance. "First National came to me wanting me to buy their building on Union Ave. It was cheaper to buy this one than to build. The reason they got rid of it is that they were having a lot of trouble. The day that I signed the deed transferring the building over to me they said to me that now it was my problem. But I never had the same problems because I set it up differently. We didn't get a guard until we got robbed."

Booker came upon his career from the real estate business. "I have no degree in banking or economics. When I first opened the bank the Black community said that this bank would not last six months. We're going on our 15th year. We're one of the most responsible and viable Black institutions in the State of Oregon."

"I would have been a success in any business that I would have been in. It takes one thing. That is the willingness to work hard and work twice as hard as the white fellow. And you must not get mad about doing it. As long as you work hard and use good old common sense."

Over the years Booker's banking tactic has come under fire from residents in the community as being harsh. He responds, "During the last recession we had to make some changes. We did a complete turnaround. We reconstructed the way we made loans and prices on our services. People think that you are sup-

posed to give your services away. If you do, I would go broke. We have to make the profit ourselves. In a capitalist world it's a different ballgame. We've been charging for our services for a long time. It cost us money to cash a check. Now all the banks are charging for cashing a check. We just came into it earlier."

Booker is also Chairman of the Board at American State. "We have five board members, four Blacks and one white. I used to hear rumors about First National still controlling the bank. But that's not true. When I first came into the banking business I had to prove to the rest of the world that I could measure up to what the rest of the world said that they couldn't. We want to put money back into community because that creates new accounts. We loan to everybody. You must diversify. In Portland you have such a small percentage of potential customers. We went out into the total city."

As a minority businessman Booker has received criticism about hiring so few Blacks. "Over the years we had a lot of minorities work here. I hire people who are willing to work. I don't care who you are. I had Black people who told me during their training that they didn't feel right working for me because I was Black. I also taught them and trained them and they go right to those big white institutions. You know it costs money to train people and the employees I have now have been with me over the years."

What are some of their gut level reactions from banker V.F. Booker? "If you are doing well no one says a thing about it. But as soon as something goes wrong the whole city knows about it. The *Oregonian* has presently not printed anything



American State Bank, Main Branch, on Union and Graham.



Eastmoreland Branch, 4451 SE 28th



Second and Yamhill Branch

on the American State Bank. In these trying times we have expanded to two locations. But if we were hav-

ing problems it would be on the front page." Booker concedes that this is just part of human nature.



CLARK DEAN, JR.

### Masons elect Dean

Mr. Clark Dean, Jr., was elected President of the Commanders of the Rite of Oregon, an organization composed of 33rd Degree Prince Hall Masons. "While other people and organizations are talking about Faith and Brotherhood, the Commanders are making a serious effort to make it a reality."

President Dean was ordained a Baptist Deacon in Oklahoma and came to Portland in the mid-Forties. He joined Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church where he has carried out his obligations to the church.

He has served the Masons of California and Oregon as a Past Master and Deputy, as Commander-in-Chief of the Willamette Consistory No. 23 of Oregon, and as High Priest and Prophet and Chairman of the Church Committee of the Prince Hall Shriners.

The President's program this year is to prepare the members for greater usefulness by promoting projects and activities which will enhance the image of Prince Hall Masonry.

Deputy William B. Odom, Jr., oversees the activities of all 32nd and 33rd Degree Prince Hall Masons of the State of Oregon.

Other officers elected were: L.C. Ellison, Secretary; Joe. R. Person, Treasurer; Thomas J. Brown, Chaplain; Thomas R. Vickers, Public Relations.

### Remember Your Sweetheart

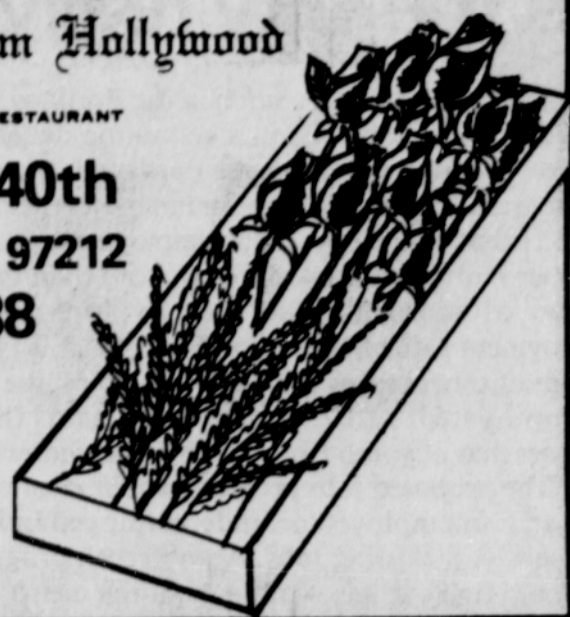
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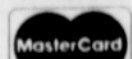
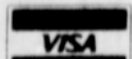
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