

METROPOLITAN

Guardian Angels form Portland chapter

by Nathaniel Scott

Curtis Sliwa, founder/president of the Guardian Angels, blitzed Portland Thursday and Friday of last week as he laid the groundwork for his return in two weeks to celebrate the newest addition to the Guardian Angels, Portland's chapter.

During the two-day interval, Sliwa had private interviews with the mayor, the police chief, the sheriff, the district attorney and the police union. In addition, he had interviews with the City Council and spoke to City Club officials, Lincoln and Benson High schools students, as well as neighborhood groups.

Speaking at Baloney Joe's Friday night after the chapter announcement had been made, Sliwa said he and a team of eight Angels will return to Portland for two days the first of next month to demonstrate their crime deterrent capabilities.

Staging mock robberies, rapes, muggings and emphasizing their crime-fighting techniques, the team, led by Sliwa, will lay their credibility and capabilities on the line. Union Avenue, the Burnside area, the Transit Mall, some shopping centers and suburban areas will get a glimpse of Portland's latest weapon in its war on crime.

Sliwa claims that Portland's governing officials, mayor and City Council, as well as the police chief, sheriff and other groups, were most receptive to the idea of forming a chapter of the angels in the city. He attributes this in part to the Burnside Community Council, chaired by Michael Stoops, for the diligent work they put forward to make the latest Angels chapter possible. He added that the "Burnside Community Council opened up many doors."

Stressing and emphasizing the need for "neighborhood acceptance," he said eight-member teams of Angels in any given neighborhood, with the exception of the downtown area, will be comprised of "at least 80 per cent" of people from that neighborhood. Blacks are not going to accept white Angels telling them what to do, he said.

When he spoke at Martin Luther King Facility, there were elements of that community who said, "Who are you, John Wayne?"

While speaking to the 40 or 50 gathered at Baloney Joe's, Hollywood continued to play a role... the word "vigilante" surfaced.

Describing himself as a student at the University of Portland, one aspiring Angel candidate asked Sliwa, "How do you answer when people say the Angels are a bunch of vigilantes?" Sliwa maintained that negative connotations to the word "vigilante" were perpetrated by Hollywood. And he cited a dictionary definition to support his argument.

"The criminals have to understand that we are not going to back down... we are not going to put our tails between our legs and back off," Sliwa said. "When the hoopla is over and all the TV cameras go away, we will have to be at our best, even when the chill factor reaches zero and below."

Portland, continued Sliwa, will not be overrun by "subway angels," nor will it be invaded by a bunch of hooligans flexing their muscles. In addition, he said, "Each Angel graduate, those authorized to wear berets, T-shirts and carry Angel identification," will be trained in the art of self-defense, CPR, and have a working knowledge of the legal ramifications for making citizen arrests. The patrols, to be done in groups of eight, will consist of foot, bicycle and car patrols.

Numbering some 40 chapters throughout the country and with at least one chapter in Canada, the Angels are solely dependent on donations—money, office and training space, supportive equipment and personnel for their continued survival.

Sliwa maintained that all of the above are needed, including "community support," and he vowed that Portland trained Angels will be patrolling the streets by the first of the year. Giving no preferential treatment, he did mention the Burnside area as one likely place they will begin.

Mayor Frank Ivancie at last Thursday's City Council meeting

commented that Sliwa "says the same thing in public that he says in private... He is consistent."

Friday night, Sliwa hammered at what could be described as the Angels' code of ethics. "A cross section of the people, blacks, whites, orientals and hispanics, men and women. One strike and you're out as an Angel member. No use of drugs or alcohol. No carrying weapons." Among the first 50 to graduate and become Portland's milestone Angels, "none will have criminal records."

Charles Banks, from the Angels chapter in Sacramento, California, will supervise the first group of trainees.

Sliwa emphasized that those with certain past criminal involvements, such as rapers, robbers and other dangerous felons, need not apply, adding that as time goes by, minor scurrillages with the law will not automatically disqualify a person from becoming a member of the Guardian Angels. Sign up sheets for potential Angels, soon to be located at strategic locations, hopefully at City Sliwa said, will gather enough signatures to graduate 28 to 36 angels by the first of the year.

The rigors of training—physical, legal, and CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation)—he said, will weed out the glamour seekers and provide Portland with a home-grown contingency that will not infringe upon the rights of anyone.

Working in groups of eight and putting in at least eight hours a week, the Angels, Sliwa said, "will not be involved in drugs, prostitution, and so forth." But, he added, they will not back down while the commission of a crime is in progress, even if it means disarming a knife wielder and restraining the person until the proper law enforcement agency arrives on the scene.

In response to Sliwa's black community concerns, Reverend John Jackson, co-chairman of the Black United Front, said, "The Angels are fairly integrated in almost every city they have established in." He added that if they maintain the same concepts that they have in New York City and other places, the position

of the Front will be "wait and see."

The approximately 40 people who gathered at Baloney Joe's Friday night, none black, were academicians. High school and college students, college teachers and college graduates, they had one central theme: crime.

Greg Sterling, a 27-year-old cook from Southeast Portland, said, "I am interested in becoming an Angel because of the number of innocent people who can't take care of themselves, especially the older people." He added that "it makes me feel better to get involved."

David Beassas, a 34-year-old resident of Northwest Portland and teacher of self-defense at Portland Community College, said, "I feel the Angels will help to keep the streets safe."

Paula Smith, a 33-year-old BA-holder who resides in North Portland, said "I like the concept. In the neighborhood where I live, crime is starting to escalate."

According to Michael Stoops, co-founder of Baloney Joe's "The reception of the overall community in the metropolitan area was positive and enthusiastic." He added that when Sliwa returns to Portland "he wants to meet with the leaders and people in the black community to deal with any concerns they may have."

Stoops, appointed liaison officer for Portland's Guardian Angels chapter, said more than 200 signatures have already been gathered from people who either want to become angel members or serve in some other capacity, i.e., instruction, clerical work and so forth.

"Everybody talks a good show, and in the time it takes to recruit, train and start patrolling," Sliwa said, "we better be ready. During his two-day visit, he said his wife Lisa, national director of the Angels, will demonstrate and hold self-defense classes for women in the Portland area. And he added a bit humorously, "she will be beating the daylight out of me."

Anyone interested in working with the Angels should contact Stoops at 238-0605 or 231-7158 for additional information.



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More than 250 local residents held a "march against prostitution" to notify City and County officials that they want prostitution removed from their neighborhoods and business areas. (Photo: Richard Brown)

St. Johns attracts new business

According to the North Portland Citizen Committee, in the past nineteen months 22 new businesses have relocated to the St. Johns Business District. The neighborhood has lost only three. Sixty-seven new jobs have been created. \$7,400 in business license fees have gone to the City of Portland, \$550 in new business license fees collected and \$4.5 million in public improvements. This, says the committee, does not include the \$1.8 million in reinvestment either as the result of rehabilitation or new business development. A recent merchant survey shows that 39% of the merchants increased sales while 35% had sales remaining the same.

The neighborhood's successes have been noted in the June issue of "Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Newsletter," printed in Washington, D.C.

One businessperson stated to the committee when asked the secret of their success, "One of the reasons was maybe the 90 volunteers (more than 20 working at least twice) on the River Jazz '82 in the St. Johns Business District and Cathedral Park over the ten days of the events. The events were designed to make exciting things happen in our community, bring new people into St. Johns when exciting things are happening and, through advertisements and news accounts, make the rest of the city aware that St. Johns is 'Where It's At!' The fact that everything was free and the events were scheduled at different times for different interests and the fact that the business people worked so happily together with their friends, seniors and other community members only reflects well on St. Johns for all of us. Reflecting well causes the successes that Washington, D.C. noted."

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