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Mr. & Mrs. Robert Woods, members of the Railroad Senior Citizens Association, discuss "the old days" with Bill Hilliard, also a former railroader. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Railroad Senior Citizen group celebrates historic pioneers

by Lanita Duke

Grassroot News, N.W.—On October 1, the Railroad Senior Citizens Association held its annual banquet, and brought together the pioneers of Portland's Black community. The Railroad Senior Citizens Association is comprised of men and their wives who were recruited by Southern and Union Pacific Railroad Companies to lay track and maintain the trains before, during and after WW II.

Currently, the gentlemen in the Association are the subject of a documentary produced by World Arts Foundation's Michael Grice, who shows the resiliency and patience of these men enabling them to build homes, support families and educate their children.

Recruited from all across the country, these men faced a jungle of narrow-mindedness when they arrived in Portland. As late as the 1950s many theaters, stores and restaurants were closed to Blacks. On the railroad they were cooks, laborers, waiters, Pullman porters and redcaps. They were the very backbone of the rail industry, whose services were never appreciated until

they were gone.

Working on the railroad required between 60 to 80 hours a week on the road. Yet, their wives maintained the family and stood in a supportive role until their husbands came home. All will tell you their uppermost concern was the education of their children.

Many of the pillars of the community who have lived in Portland for more than thirty years had some connection with the railroad: C. Donn Vann, Willie Jenkins, E. Shelton Hill and Dr. Walter Reynolds are just a few.

Dr. Reynolds has set up family practice clinic in the Albina community. It is named after his father, Phil Reynolds, who obtained employment and fought for better working conditions for the men. Dr. Reynolds used the money earned while portering, redcapping, and as a waiter, to pay his way through medical school.

On the national track, railroad workers organized the first Black union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Under the direction of

A. Phillip Randolph it was organized to better working conditions and increase wages from the railroad companies.

The guest speaker for the annual banquet was Bill Hilliard, Executive Editor for *The Oregonian*, who started out as a redcap. "When I was a child in S.E. Portland I wasn't even allowed to carry *The Oregonian*. I remember being a reporter by day and putting on my Redcap uniform at night to help make ends meet."

Hilliard said what he learned from the gentlemen in the Association provided him with the insight to rise from copy boy to Executive Editor at the state's largest newspaper. "I learned to be humble and take punishment without fighting back. I maintained a certain amount of dignity. I don't think you have to give up your principles, but you can carry yourself in such a way that the day will come for you to get back at them."

World Arts Foundation, Inc., expects its documentary to be finished by the end of 1983.

Kafoury heads bureau

Former Representative Gretchen Kafoury, a close friend and political supporter of City Commissioner Margaret Strachan, has been appointed Human Services Coordinator for the City. The appointment, which has been rumored since before the demotion of former Director of the Human Resources Bureau, Erma Hepburn, and before the elimination of Ms. Hepburn's position, has caused another controversy over Commissioner Strachan's employee relationships.

After she received control of the Bureau of Human Resources, Commissioner Strachan announced she would require persons holding temporary appointments (including Ms. Hepburn, who had been appointed by Mayor Frank Ivancie) to compete for those positions under Civil Service. This would give them job security they lacked as temporary appointees, Commissioner Strachan told the *Observer* at the time. She said that two of those involved were minorities, as a coincidence, and that she hoped to offer them added protection.

After a nation-wide search, no acceptable candidate (Ms. Hepburn applied) was found for the position, and applications were reopened. However, the position was not filled. Ms. Hepburn was asked to step down to a lower position and Commissioner Strachan announced her intention to eliminate the position "to save money."

During the controversy over the possible termination and the subsequent demotion, the rumor spread

through City Hall and the community that the Commissioner was vacating the position for her friend, Gretchen Kafoury, who was defeated in the May 1982 election. Commissioner Strachan vehemently denied the validity of this rumor.

The 1983-84 City Budget eliminated the Director's position but included a new Coordinator's position. This position will carry out most of the remaining functions of the Director (after program cuts) and report directly to the Commissioner.

The process that led to the appointment of Ms. Kafoury to the \$42,369 position renewed the controversy.

Unconfirmed rumors emanating from the Personnel Bureau are that Commissioner Strachan designed or helped design the job criteria. She suggested the members for the three-member interview panel, an action that is not ordinarily taken by Commissioners. She also indicated, according to an *Oregonian* article by Linda Williams, that she would not follow the usual procedure of interviewing the top three candidates.

Commissioner Strachan also indicated to Ms. Williams on Tuesday, October 12th, that she had not made the appointment yet but planned to appoint the highest-scoring candidate toward the end of the week. Bureau employees said Ms. Kafoury had already been appointed. In a City staff meeting Tuesday, a list of resource persons was circulated that included: Human Resources—Gretchen Kafoury—106/400 (room)—



GRETCHEN KAFOURY

796-5208 (telephone).

Among the applicants for the position was Barbara Patrick, who came in second with a score of 93.25 compared to Ms. Kafoury's 93.50. Ms. Patrick, who is Black, was a Human Resources Bureau employee from 1971 until 1981, when she resigned from the agency staff after Commissioner Strachan was assigned the Bureau.

Ms. Kafoury represented inner Northeast and inner Southeast Port-

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District 18 begins candidate search

by Kathryn Hall Bogle

The autumn leaves are beginning to fall and we are getting hints of another season to come. This year is the year before an election year and the hints of political things to come are crisping as well.

According to Herb Cawthorne, he, Ron Herndon, Edna Robertson, Marian Scott and the Rev. John Garlington comprise a committee that has already held a meeting last Friday morning to discuss politics at the New Hope Baptist Church. Their invited guests included other persons representing other organizations and churches from the community interested in obtaining political clout for Black people in District 18.

In the last election, no Black candidate was successful because so many ran and split the vote.

This committee wants to change all that. "We want to establish a process," said Cawthorne. "We want a steering committee made up from 30 sororities, fraternities, churches and clubs to invite every candidate to participate. We want every candidate to speak."

"There will be a day in early November when the District 18 public can come to listen and vote on the candidate most appealing. Then we will all have chosen the candidate we can support and that candidate can truly represent the wishes of District 18," Cawthorne said.

On the other hand, from the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

comes an agenda reaching from October 22, 1983, through November 6, 1984.

"Beginning October 22, 1982, the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs will be hosting monthly forums in Portland," announced Calvin O.L. Henry, OABA President, last week.

1984 is an election year and these Saturday Morning Forums will run through toe 1984 general election, he stated.

According to Henry, the purposes of these forums are to develop greater political awareness within the Oregon Black community and to encourage Blacks to become more involved in political campaigns. They will be educational and informative about the political process.

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Police Chief Still explains Pier Park racial incident

by Ron Still
Chief of Police

Due to the many rumors in the community about what occurred at Pier Park on the evening of Sept. 25th, I feel that the police position in such a situation should be made clear to the public.

At 7:15 p.m., on Sept. 25th, Portland Police were called to Pier Park on a large disturbance. Subsequent (and I emphasize subsequent) investigation indicated that the incident started with an argument between teenage girls, white and Black, and resulted in these girls going into the park and fighting.

Apparently, during the fight between the girls, there were other people in the park that were attracted to the fight and who interceded on behalf of the white girls. These people had been drinking. The people were, for the most part, white.

Some of the young black children who were also in the park witnessing this, ran to the nearby Pier Park apartment complex and requested aid from their parents and other people in the apartments. Several Black adults responded and went into the park to assist the children. At this point, many on both sides, Black and white adults, were apparently armed with sticks and clubs. There were constant rumors that somebody had a gun and there were several fights and assaults between the various factions involved.

Black adults, prior to going into the park, caused a call to be made to the police dispatch center concerning the incident and several cars were sent. There have been many conflicting stories and rumors about what happened at the park following the police arrival and what the police did and did not do.

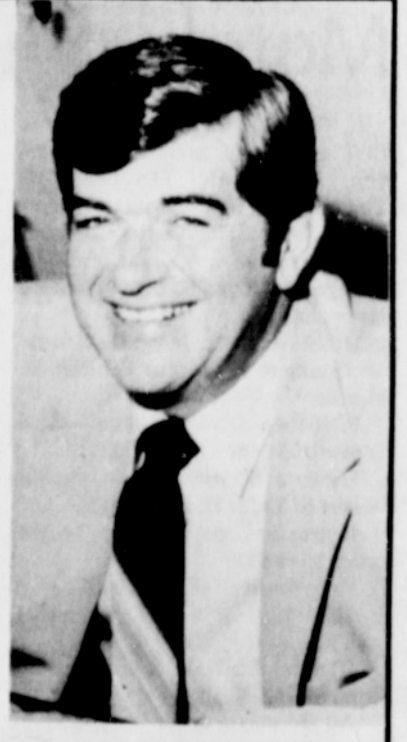
The police goals, due to the limited number of officers, were to separate individuals that were fighting, take weapons away from those that had them, separate groups, with the ultimate goals being to prevent further injury and then identify those that might have committed criminal acts. According to police reports, the incident lasted approximately 20-25 minutes, during which time the officers were successful in preventing further injury and keeping the groups separate until they left the area. There were some rumors that only Black people were arrested. This is not true. The facts are that at the time no one was arrested; however, some people were placed in police cars temporarily for their own protection.

A number of reports were taken at the time giving various accounts from the various points of view as to

what had happened and who was responsible; some of the people involved were identified. Some three hours later on that same evening, a second incident occurred at the Pier Park Apartment complex. Police received calls from area residents that shots had been fired and we responded again with several officers and searched the area with negative results. During the search of the park, officers also heard the shooting; however, a suspect was not located, but information was obtained concerning his potential identity. Following the first incident, patrols in the area were increased and have been maintained at an increased level since that time. Subsequent investigation into the entire incident has been on-going and on the evening of Sept. 26th, a search warrant was served at a residence in North Portland in an attempt to lo-

cate the weapon that was involved in the shooting incident.

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, Sept. 27th, uniformed officers from North Precinct arrested Robert Henry Najera, a 17-year-old male, who is not employed and does not attend school. He was charged with one count of attempted assault in the first degree (a felony), two counts of menacing, four counts of recklessly endangering, and one count of criminal mischief in the second degree (all misdemeanors). The Police Bureau is continuing the investigation into this entire incident and working closely with the District Attorney's Office on the follow-up investigation. Detectives have been assigned to the case and are working with North Precinct officers to further identify other individuals involved and provide this evidence to the District Attorney.



CHIEF RON STILL