

# OBSERVATIONS

FROM THE SIDELINES  
BY Kathryn Hall Bogle



**F**LORA DAWSON PARRISH had a birthday last week. It was her 90th. The Rev. E.J. Edwards and members of Allen Temple C.M.E. Church opened the church halls to the family and friends of Mrs. Parrish to celebrate the occasion.

A program of songs and loving tributes to their mother, arranged by Carmen Parrish Walker, her husband Wilson C. Walker, and her brother, Lehman E. Parrish, started the festivities. Lehman Parrish had come from Chicago to be at his mother's side. From Mississippi came Dr. Walter Washington and his wife, Dr. Carolyn Washington, relatives of Mrs. Parrish from Alcorn College. Judge H.J. Belton Hamilton, Alzenc DeDeleveaux and the Rev. Ira Mumford, baritone, paid birthday tributes to the lady they all hailed with affection and respect. Tape recorded messages came from grandchildren, Florice Walker and Lodice Tonkins of Washington, D.C., and Maryland, and from Wilson P. Walker of Honolulu.

Her long life of church work and the years devoted to teaching home economic studies to home makers in the rural south and in Portland, were reviewed and shared among the assembled guests. Her highly valued teaching of life standards by her own life was acclaimed again and again by the scores of friends who attended the informal reception following the program. "Here's another daughter," said Mrs. Parrish as she received an embrace from a guest. "Here's another son," someone else said as another pair of arms were held out to her.

The years have been kind to Mrs. Parrish. She is upbeat and up-to-

date in her conversation. Her walk is firm and steady. "I just don't walk as far," she said. She stood for a great portion of the reception, sitting only at intervals. Becomingly gowned, her hair freshly coiffed by her hairdresser, her shoulders graced with a lei sent to her by her grandson, Wilson P. Walker, Mrs. Parrish literally held court after she cut her huge iced birthday cake.

As guest of honor, Mrs. Parrish is often invited to dinner with friends, but good cook that she still is, she also likes to cook for an occasional guest. Using her tried and true recipes, she proves that her home-economic teaching skills are retained. People are still asking for, and receiving, her recipe for her legendary pound cake.

Following her birthday party, the popular nonagenarian and her daughter flew to Washington, D.C., to visit a brand new great grand daughter, born in January. The infant, name La Shante, is the daughter of Lodice Walker Tonkins and David Tonkins.

**OMEGA PSI PHI** fraternity, Zeta Nu Chapter, is conducting a public talent hunt, according to Larry Gant, chair for the Omegas.

"Chapter auditions, open to high school juniors, seniors, and college students not over age 20, will be held on March 8th at the Matt Dishman Community Center. Time is set for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., according to the announcement. Expert judges will review participants in the performing arts of instrumental music, dance or dramatic speech. There's travel and a cash award of \$1,000 at the end of the rainbow for the best performer who excels in the national competition.



FLORA DAWSON PARRISH

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

## New education standards punish victims

Jonathan Kozol, former Boston public schools elementary teacher and author of *Death at an Early Age* and *Children of the Revolution*, compared the Reagan Administration's recent report on the state of public school education in the United States with the Administration's emphasis on militarism.

The report said the state of the schools is so bad that an "unfriendly foreign power might have wished it upon us" and, if this condition had been caused by an enemy power, "We might have considered it an act of war." The report goes on to say that the enemy is "a secret enemy within our midst."

The enemy projected by the administration's report is "the high school students who were cheated in the first four years of school by inadequate and racist schools, whose parents were cheated, and who have failed to meet expected levels of performance."

The response to the problem—which is real—is higher graduation standards, "back to basics", stiffer discipline—a combination devised to lock out thousands of young Americans.

Twenty percent of the nation's 17-year old students are illiterate; absenteeism is high and social promotion accepted; curriculum is



JONATHAN KOZOL

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

diluted with 40 percent totaling non-academic courses; less than 1/3 take beginning algebra; less than 2 percent take two years of a foreign language. Twenty-five million adult Americans read at a 5th-grade level, 35 million at a 9th-grade level. About one third of the adult population is functionally illiterate.

As the Reagan Administration complains about poor educational standards, it has cut Title I funds by 25 percent and has requested a 50 percent cut in adult literacy funds.

The response of the school districts and local governments across the country has been to raise college entry requirements and stiffen requirements for high school graduation.

Who will be most likely to suffer from higher standards? Kozol asked. Who will be excluded from higher education? Why toughen standards for the terminal requirements without improving education in the early grades? What do they plan to do with those who are excluded?

New graduation standards in Florida deprived 3,000 students of their diploma; the rate of Black students excluded was seven times that of whites.

"It is suggestive of something harsh and narrow when they fail to use this opportunity to address educational needs" and to refuse financial aid, he said. All the education community and government is doing is offering more to those who are already assured they will get the best. It is "evidence of demarcated minds. They want a quick fix—The best for the best and purgatory or welfare for the rest."

Nearly every school superintendent has buckled under the severe demands for more quality with less funding. "It is a choice for punishment and terror. If the teaching force stays the same, new demands will have one result. There can't be qualitative differences for more than a few. They will pacify the rich by teaching the rich and there will be custodial service for the others."

Public colleges will no longer face the burden of underqualified students; millions will be left out or relegated to two-year colleges that resemble high schools. There will be two nations and an explosive future. Whose interest does it serve,

Kozol asked, when one-third of the population is locked out of the political system by illiteracy? They are left out of all political decision making—even the debate now raging over the education system that has already deprived them.

The answers lie in a grass roots literacy campaign to teach the millions of illiterate and allow them to participate.

Can people transcend what is a class advantage to be human? Narrow class interest precludes a vision of a broader, long-range vision, Kozol said. The alternative to government help is a national literacy mobilization that will force government to respond.

"Cuba and Nicaragua taught their people to read and write in a year," he said. "Can we teach our people to read and write in five years?"

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## Front sponsors Gospel concert

The Portland Black United Front is sponsoring "Let Freedom Ring": A gospel concert on February 25, 1984 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, located at 116 N.E. Schuyler. **Admission Free.** A number of choirs and individuals will be involved in this fundraiser and your appearance will add to a successful evening. For further information call Halim Rahsaan, 244-6111.

## Tax free breakfast

The No Sales Tax League is inviting everyone to breakfast, Saturday, March 3rd, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., for the latest on the Sales Tax.

Pancakes, sausage, coffee and tea will greet visitors to the Oregon Grange Building, S.E. 12th and Madison in Portland. It's only \$4 each for adults and \$2 each for children under 10. Bring a friend!



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