

# METROPOLITAN

## Teacher builds deaf community spirit

Silent Night doesn't always mean Christmas.

For a growing number of Portland area residents, the phrase refers to a talent show done completely in sign language.

And, through the auspices of Rogers Cablesystems, a growing number of the residents of the area learn about the skills of those in the deaf community.

Mark Azure moved to the Portland area from Seattle in 1979 to see if he couldn't bring back to his home state some of the good leadership and sense of community he had discovered in working with the deaf in Seattle.

Azure attended the Oregon State School for the Deaf in Salem and left the state to study commercial arts in Seattle. He continues as a free lance commercial artist while trying to establish an artist association of the deaf for Oregon.

A part-time instructor for Portland Community College, Azure teaches American Sign Language and was specifically hired to work with an advanced class to give input from the deaf.

"One of my first questions to Becky Long, PCC instructor, was, 'Where are the deaf contacts?'" Azure related. In order to build those contacts for the college students in the interpreter program, he volunteered to set up Silent Night, structured after a model from his Seattle experience.



Mark Azure tells his story to interpreter Jim McKnight at Portland Community College. Both work to improve education and social opportunities for the deaf community.

"There are 25 people who showed up," Azure remembers. "They sat in a circle, but didn't participate," he continued.

The program was billed as an opportunity to watch or perform. There was only one rule: no voice during the program; only sign language or notes could be used.

At first, Azure told a story to the group and still couldn't get any participation. "They still didn't move from their chairs," Azure reported. He had no idea how many deaf people lived in Oregon and almost

returned to the comfort of the Seattle area.

But after three years of trying, Azure feels he's making some progress. At a January Silent Night, more than 300 people showed up. Since those early beginnings, Azure has determined there are more than 180,000 people in the state with hearing problems.

Silent Night is designed so that deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people of any age can share artistic feelings of photography, painting, dance, mime, story telling, comedy

skit or rhyming verse.

The performing arts goal is only one of those for the Deaf Arts Council of Oregon (DACO). They are attracting members statewide, according to Azure, and now number 250. They have established a goal of 5,000 members to make the organization viable.

Azure finds the deaf community contacts especially valuable for students in the interpreter program. "They see different deaf people and get ideas about the future ...look toward what they could become," Azure said.

So far, only a few people graduated from the second year of the program, especially those people who are really dedicated to get involved in working side by side with the deaf Azure said, although 25 beginning students have been enrolling in sign language classes each year. "Now there is an opportunity for everybody to get together at Silent Night for an open, friendly atmosphere," Azure explains.

Azure encourages the PCC graduates to stay in contact with the deafies and attend Silent Night.

"Silent Night" continued with another taping at the PCC Rock Creek Campus on March 31st and plans for two theatrical nights, April 28th and May 12th at the Bonneville Power Administration auditorium. Taping by Rogers Cablesystems will be later aired over their deaf channel.

## Book explores Black leadership

by Nathaniel Scott

Question: "Who are the Black leaders in Portland and how do they perceive themselves? What are their styles, their forms, and how do Blacks and whites look at leadership?"

Dr. William "Bill" Little, professor of Black Studies at Portland State University (PSU), in a book slated for publication in 1985, looks at *Black Leadership in Portland*.

The book, in part, Dr. Little said, will examine the difference between a Black being in a leadership position and whether that person is actually a leader in the Black community.

His contention is: perception is crucial.

"Most white people do not understand who the Black leaders in Portland are," he said. In most cases when they refer to a Black leader, "they are referring to a media figure."

To illustrate his point, Dr. Little drew attention to two personalities. One, Matthew Prophet, Superintendent of Portland Public Schools, and two, Paul Williams, Vice President of Portland Community College.

His point is: Does "their leadership position ...make them Black leaders in the community?"

Dr. Little does not think so; he advances the idea that leadership is a complicated role that has to be defined in several ways.

"It's a question of how people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by the community. The question is," he said, "how you identify the leaders and are they responsive to the Black community."

Perception and identity are always valid points, but in an election year, they take on added significance. They take on the significance of leadership gained through elective office.

A year ago this spring, Dr. Little resigned as department head of PSU's Black Studies Department. He took a year's sabbatical leave and began directing his energy

towards writing. In addition to *Black Leadership in Portland*, he is co-authoring a text book, *A Paradigm for Black Studies*, with Dr. Adolphus Turkson, a Black Studies professor at PSU, and Dr. Wayne Williams, Director of Afro-American Studies at the University of Washington. It too is slated for publication in 1985 and another in-

dependent work, *Urbanization in Africa*, is being developed. *A Paradigm for Black Studies* is funded through the National Endowment of Humanities.

Before resuming his teaching duties in the fall, Dr. Little plans to visit Atlanta, Georgia and several African countries on a data gathering mission.

## Demos hear BUF teen care plan

The Black United Front's "Teenage Care Project" will be presented by a representative of the BUF at the monthly meeting of District 18 Democrats on Monday, April 30th, at Neil Kelly Designers, 804 N. Alberta at Albina. (Enter by rear door off lighted parking lot.) Business will begin at 7:00, program at 8:00.

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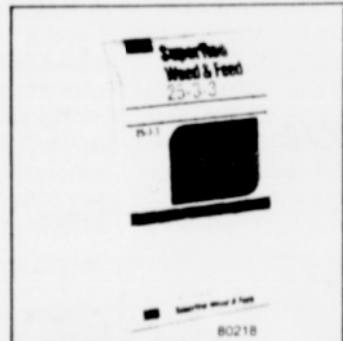
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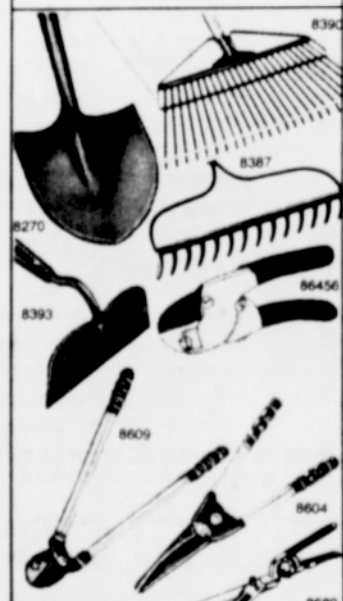
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## NAACP party

The Vancouver Branch is sponsoring a special NAACP Homecoming on Sunday, April 29th, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., at Pacific First Federal Savings' community room, 915 Broadway, Vancouver, Washington. All NAACPs past and present, charter members and life members are invited to share this momentous occasion.