

METROPOLITAN

Clinical psychologist earns doctorate at UO

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N. W. — The cap and gown of spring graduation has produced the first Afro-American female to receive a doctorate from the University of Oregon in Clinical Psychology.

Dr. Leslie Westfield Gunn, a psychologist at the North/Northeast Mental Health Center, has spent 16 years working towards this dream.

"When I was growing up, I had compassion for students in special education. I was interested in why some children were that way."

With cultural insight from her own experience as a Black woman in white America, Dr. Gunn improvised an innovative method to help those under mental duress.

She explained, "Minorities have not benefited from traditional psychotherapy because the basic needs (financial, food, shelter and clothing) have not been taken care of. I utilize brief, short-term therapy where you get to the issue, deal with those needs and let that person get on with their life."

To receive a Ph.D., Dr. Gunn wrote a dissertation on community crisis care. Those who are experiencing mental conflicts are placed in private homes rather than in a hospital.

"We followed them there, medicated them and used it as an alternative to being hospitalized," Dr. Gunn elaborated.

She stated the results were a decrease in the number of involuntary commitments. "It prevented those who were experiencing their crisis from getting hooked into the mental hospital dependency."

Dr. Gunn said she had observed that the force that is disarming the community mentally is drugs. "Alcohol is the most detrimental of all drugs and it is not even viewed traditionally as a drug. It is physiologically and psychologically addictive. It comes to a point where you have got to have that drink. It is like a heroin addiction. I've seen more families destroyed, more job loss and spouse loss related to alcohol abuse."

Another drug which wreaks mental havoc is cocaine. Dr. Gunn indicated her concern for those "free-basing" or smoking cocaine. "It affects the central nervous system directly and destroys brain cells which are not reproduced." She added that she was surprised at the number of professional people involved with cocaine. "Besides the physical and mental problems cocaine is also detrimental to one's financial resources."

Library restores five-day schedule

The Albina Branch Library will return to a five-day schedule on Tuesday, July 3rd. Albina and four other branch libraries have been operating on half-time schedules. Funds will be provided from the County's general fund and also from the nine million dollar special levy for a three-year period which was decisively approved by the voters on May 15th.

Responding to a large number of telephone calls asking when the Central Library will again be open on Mondays and when Sunday hours will be instituted, the Library Board has authorized a survey of library users to help select the best schedules. Survey responses will be reported at a public hearing where there will be further opportunity for input from library users.

The Library Board has also endorsed a book budget totaling \$875,000, an increase of 40%. This will allow the Central Library and branches to purchase more books in all fields, to add new periodical and serial titles, new films, and it is hoped, to introduce video cassettes.

In light of the active drive to legalize the home consumption of marijuana, Dr. Gunn said even smoking pot has its drawbacks. "It affects memory and motivation levels. In the long run, it can bring on depression from being inactive and not as productive as one could have been."

To be an effective psychologist, Dr. Gunn stated listening skills are a must. "But I'm a talker so I talk after hours."

Does she ever take the problems of her patients home? "We all say we are not going to take our work home but we do. I do not see anything wrong with professional people seeking out treatment themselves. If a professional has a problem, then deal with it."

Her advice to others with a dream that may take 16 years to accomplish: "If you have the drive and will you can do it. I had two children and worked full time. No matter what the barriers are, there are ways to overcome."



DR. LESLIE WESTFIELD GUNN

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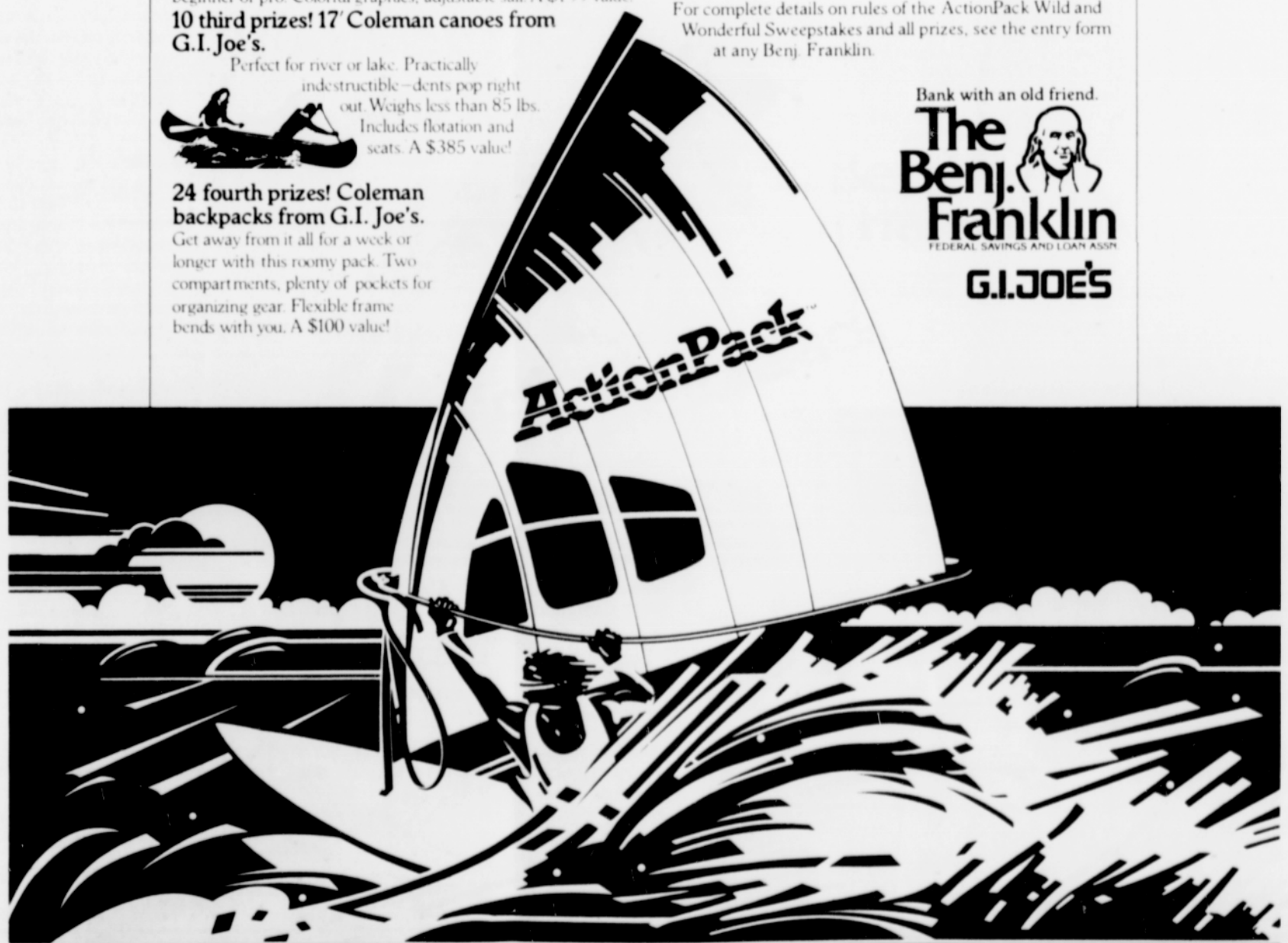
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