

METROPOLITAN

Rain or shine, he's all washed up

by Robert Lothian

For a year now, Otis Thornton has been washing up to 20 cars a day on the lot behind the Mobil Station at Union and Killingsworth.

The 38-year-old Louisiana native worked as a carpenter in Portland until the economic situation made that kind of work hard to get.

"There's just no jobs," he said.

He was unemployed for over three years until he came up with the idea of starting the car wash business. Now, after reimbursing the station for the water he uses, and for electricity for his vacuum cleaner, he says he makes a "halfway decent" living.

On some days, when he's really busy, like on a sunny day after it's been raining, he's even able to provide work for his cousin and nephew.

Cars are lined up three and four deep on a good day. Their drivers talk with each other or fuss around polishing chrome as they wait.

The \$5 price includes a complete wash, vacuuming and cleaning the inside, scrubbing white walls and washing windows. Thornton's equipment consists of several plastic five-gallon buckets, wash mitts, a box of rags, an industrial vacuum cleaner and a couple of ladders to hang his washcloths on. He occasionally uses a ladder for reaching the tops of vans.

Thornton is there from 8 to 5, rain or shine. "When it's real bad, then I'm



Otis Thornton

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

not here," and when it's slow he often retreats to the station office to watch TV, he said.

The location couldn't be better. "It's right around a lot of businesses: the bank, the restaurant, everything is here."

Sometimes he sees some tough characters on the corner, but "those thieves and robbers, I don't have nothin' to do with them," he said. If there's something he's learned while working on the corner and at different jobs in the past, and in travelling from Portland to Louisiana, Chicago and Detroit, said Thornton, it's "don't trust nobody."

Thornton can't say from his perspective on the corner whether his customers think their lives are better now than four years ago. "You hear it both ways," he says. "Sometimes people say it's going good, sometimes slow, sometimes they say 'I'll pay you later'."

Other would-be small businessmen have followed Thornton's example. "When they see me busy, everybody wants to get into it." That's OK, he says. "They're going to work and don't want to steal."

Thornton would like some day to have a place of his own where he can expand. As long as the car washing stays "halfway decent," he says he'll stick with it. "I just want to do a good job," he said. "I try and send everybody out happy."

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"Master Harold" (Dan Hays) center, and "The Boys" (A. Lee Wilson, Jr. and Rick Jones) expose the emotional toll of apartheid.
 (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Experts to debate role of CIA

A free public lecture, "Intelligence Operations: How Undercover Diplomacy Works," by former CIA official John Stephenson and Political Science Professor Gordon Schlomig will be presented on Tuesday, March 5, 1985, 12 noon, at the Willamette Center Auditorium, 121 S.W. Salmon Street, Portland.

Intelligence operations have played a role in U.S. foreign policy for nearly 50 years. But as Americans read and watch news reports of CIA activities in Nicaragua, Asia, and the Middle East, serious questions are being raised over the proper role of the intelligence community.

Are covert operations vital to our

nation's security? Should intelligence organizations be held accountable? Are CIA attempts to withhold information from the Congress and the public justifiable?

John Stephenson and University of Portland Associate Professor Gordon Schlomig will examine their contrasting points of view in the final lecture of "Great Decisions '85," sponsored by The World Affairs Council of Oregon.

Self-defense

The Portland Police Bureau's sexual assault prevention program will offer its monthly nine-hour "Woman-strength" self-defense class at the Portland Adventist Academy, 1500 SE 96th on Wednesdays, March 6, 13, and 20, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Registration begins Tuesday, February 19 and continues until the class is full. Registration is done by calling 796-3139.

A class specifically for women and girls who are legally blind will be held at Volunteer Braille Services, 4001 NE Halsey on Tuesdays, March 5, 12 and 19 from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Registration for these classes begins Tuesday, February 19. Call Volunteer Braille Services at 284-3339. Enrollment for this class is limited to 15.

Both classes are free and are available to women and girls age 13 and up. Those registering must be able to attend all three sessions of the class.

Black history

Black History Month will be celebrated with an entertainment and information program 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 24, at the Clark County Public Utility District office, 1200 Fort Vancouver Way.

Three organizations representing Blacks in Clark County are joining forces to present the program.

Admission is \$5 per family or \$2.50 per adult and \$1.50 for those 12 and younger. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

Native culture

ANPO Native American Culture Center is sponsoring a community event on Sunday, February 24, noon to 6 p.m. at the Northwest Service Center. Titled, "Native American Cultural Expressions," including an art exhibit, craft and food sales, singing, drumming, dancing, and three women speakers. Topics include personal growth, family and community, spiritual and traditional values. Donation \$2.00. Event funded by Metropolitan Arts Commission.

Portlanders get last chance to see powerful play

by Robert Lothian

There's another weekend left in which to see the tense drama about the personal side of apartheid, "Master Harold and the Boys." It plays again Friday and Saturday night at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m., at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate.

"Master Harold" sneaks up on the audience, starting out slow and building to an intensity of emotion that leaves hearts thumping and minds wondering. Just three characters interacting in a small cafe superbly convey a feeling for the dreams of South African Blacks, the crippled humanity of South African whites, and for the threat of violence that could break out at any moment.

Written in 1982 by white South African playwright-in-exile Athol Fugard, "Master Harold" is set in 1950. It opens on a slow day in the St. George's park Tea Room, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. "Menu — pea soup, meat pie and gravy." Sam, the headwaiter (played by Rick Jones, also director), and Willie, his helper (A. Lee Wilson, Jr.) — "the boys" — are taking advantage of the lull to practice their life's passion — ballroom dancing.

They are soon joined by Master Harold (Dan Hays), 17-year-old son of the couple that owns the cafe, who comes to do his schoolwork and for companionship. We learn that "Hally" has a crippled drunk for a father, a situation that greatly disturbs the boy.

Sam has worked for the family for a long time and has been a companion, even a substitute father for Hally. Hally teaches Sam what he learns in school and Sam teaches Hally how to be a man, and a human being. Once Sam taught the "little white boy in shorts" how to fly a kite, "to give you something to look up to," says Sam. It's clear that the older Black man has not lost his humanity to apartheid.

"Things are so complicated now," says Hally, and they get more complicated when he learns that his father might come home from the hospital. He's reminded of the white he's supposed to be. His mother's comments about getting "too familiar" with Sam and Willie, and his father's admonition to "teach the boys a little respect, my son," come back to him. Caught between racist conditioning and his conscience, he rages at Sam and Willie.

They try and calm him with a description of a joyous night at the ballroom. "To be one of those finalists out there on the dance floor is like being in a world without accidents. It's beautiful, it's the kind of life we want," Sam tells the enthralled boy.

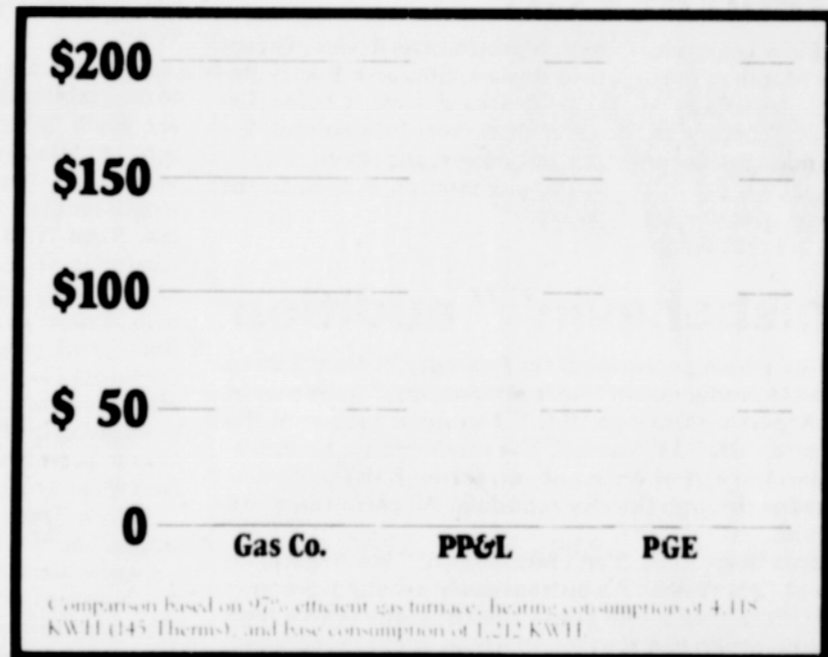
But Hally goes over the brink when Sam tries to convince him to calm down, and to love his father. "Be careful, Sam, you're treading on dangerous ground. . . . you're just a servant here and don't forget it," he says, drawing the line. Irrational, Hally then tells a racist joke his father taught him and spits in Sam's face.

Willie is ready to trounce the boy, but holds back at Sam's insistence. Hally, the young white boy in short pants, is now Master Harold, the racist white South African. "You have hurt yourself, Master Harold," Sam tries once again to make the boy see what he's becoming. "The face you should be spitting on is your father's." The worst part for Sam is his feeling of having failed to teach Hally to be a human being.

There's a troubled reconciliation, friendship seems to win out. But the play leaves us with a big question as to whether Hally will join humanity or the other side, and about the future of this troubled land.

Harold leaves to go home and face his father. Sam and Willie put a coin in the juke box and dance to September Song" as the lights go down.

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