

Hobo Parade draws attention to plight of homeless

by Nathaniel Scott

Last Saturday's Fifth Annual Hobo Parade drew cheers and applause as it wound through the heart of the Burnside district enroute to a rally at Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

The bands played, short skirted girls marched, approximately 25 limousines dazzled the crowd, and floats, a dancing bear and many of the people who live in the Burnside community celebrated the annual event.

According to Michael A. Stoops, founder-director of Baloney Joe's, 313 E. Burnside Street, and organizer of the annual parade, "Each year the parade gets better and better."

"This is the only time we [the people living in the Burnside district] can have any fun," Stoops said, adding, "there is no reason why there should be any homeless people in this state."

Stoops' remarks were a sad commentary for the many people who huddle in doorways, sleep in cars or unroll sleeping bags or pieces of cardboard wherever they can find a resting place when the sun sets on the less fortunate.

However last Saturday's parade was a day of celebration.

It was a time for the king and queen to strut their royal stuff.

Eric "Blackie" Von Richter, this year's king, has been a hobo for 35 years. He has ridden the rails and "tramped" many a mile. And while friends greeted him with good natured cat calls, he said, "This is the first time I've been anything except a tramp." Von Richter added, "I want



ROYALTY — Queen Pat Reynolds and King Eric "Blackie" Von Richter view their subjects in Saturday's Fifth Annual Hobo Parade.

(Photo: Kris Altucher)

to thank everyone for being here."

An estimated 300 people attended the rally and another 200 or so lined the parade route.

Queen Pat Reynolds was a bit more gracious when it came time for her to address the crowd. Her voice was barely audible. However in an earlier interview she said, "This is scary because I am very shy."

During the three years Reynolds has volunteered at the Women West

Hotel, 127 N.W. 6th Avenue, she has gained the title "Grandma Pat" because of her love for people. And during her reign, she said, "I'd like to help [the Burnside community] by making a better relationship between the people who live here and the ones who don't."

And that kind of action, "A better relationship," was one of the things that gave a chilling effect to the gala affair. Stoops said his goal is to ask

for a "temporary postponement" on the banning of the sale of "fortified wine" in the Burnside community.

Darcelle XV, the popular night spot at 208 NW 3rd Avenue, has participated in the annual parade since 1982. Darcelle said, "This is my neighborhood. I live in Burnside more than I do at home [and] I am against anything that restricts people's rights to do as long as they are not breaking the law."

Darcelle asked: "Once it starts [selecting areas to ban the sale of 'fortified wine' — posting certain parks off limits for 'alcoholic beverages,' etc.] where does it stop?"

A number of people, particularly merchants who have business bordering the Burnside community, are asking similar questions. They are not only concerned about the "migration," but equally so, "the constitutionality of the situation."

However, Saturday's parade did have its bright moments; at times it glowed with acts of love.

City Commissioner Dick Bogle drew a rousing round of applause when he said, "We need to support programs that allow people to exchange food stamps for meals."

The commissioner added, "Our goal should be to never again see a door closed on someone wanting to come in out of the cold." Commissioner Bogle also said the City is starting a program that will employ people from the Burnside community.

The celebration continued, and in addition to the music and fun, there was the volunteer of the year award.



Man expresses sentiments from atop garbage truck.

(Photo: Kris Altucher)

The 1985 award went to senior citizens Walter and Lillian Kaleelage, who have volunteered on a weekly basis at Baloney Joe's for the past year. The Kaleelages were given a beautiful bouquet of red roses.

Howard study finds lack of information about homeless

The problem of America's homeless in recent years has drawn extensive media attention as well as increased community sensitivity and assistance. Yet, according to two Howard University researchers, national and local policymakers today still have little information from which they can make "rational program development decisions."

In an in-depth review of all of the research that has been done on the homeless, Dr. Norweeta G. Milburn and Dr. Roderick J. Watts, research associates at the Housing and Community Development Studies Center of the Howard University Institute for Urban Affairs and Research, cite several flaws in the research that has been done, and they indicate that these flaws contribute to inadequate and misdirected care being provided for the homeless.

In most of the studies that have been done, they say, "the definition of homelessness and its conceptualization was not sophisticated." Their extensive review showed that researchers "tended to assume that the homeless population was basically homogeneous," and the researchers "apparently relied on the Depression-era image of the homeless person as a 'skid-row derelict,' an older, white male with alcoholism."

Their study, entitled "An Analysis of Current Research Methods for Studying the Homeless," concludes that "there is no clear framework that guides the research; consequently, it is difficult to make generalizations about the homeless."

The Howard study says that "conceptual ambiguities and the consequent lack of clear operational criteria have contributed flaws in the methods of homeless studies. . . . The research design of many studies tended to be rather unsophisticated, with the majority of the studies sampling simply on the basis of convenience."

Milburn and Watts say that more attention needs to be focused on defining homelessness by including additional factors such as the lack of social resources and social support, the duration and patterns of homelessness, and the nature of individuals' relationships with skid row and other institutions.

Further, they say, researchers should provide descriptive information on the facilities under study since "there is good reason to believe that certain facilities and services attract certain homeless clientele."

Looking to the future policy-making concerning the homeless, Milburn and Watts indicate that policy "could be greatly aided by a research literature base that clearly establishes linkages between the type of homeless people studied and the types of services that they need and use."

There is also a major gap in program evaluation, they say, since no systematic evaluations of the programs for the homeless have been undertaken.

When Milburn and Watts began their study, they had four objectives: 1) To determine how homelessness has been defined and operationalized, and the sub-groups of the homeless population that have been studied during the last 20 years, from approximately 1964 to the present time; 2) To review and critique the type of data collected and the research methods used by investigators to study the homeless; 3) To make recommendations on the types of data that should be reported in most studies on the homeless to aid in their comparability and interpretation; and 4) To clarify gaps in the content and methods of past research that apply to policy questions.

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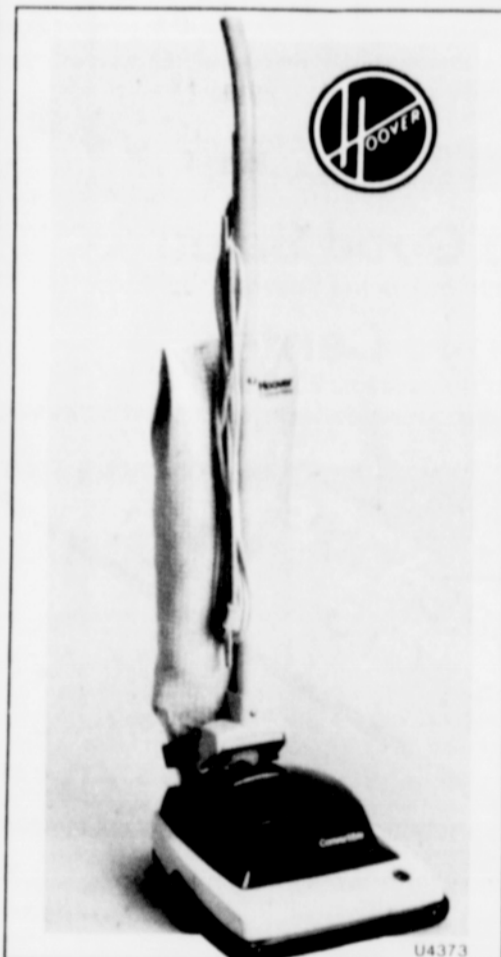
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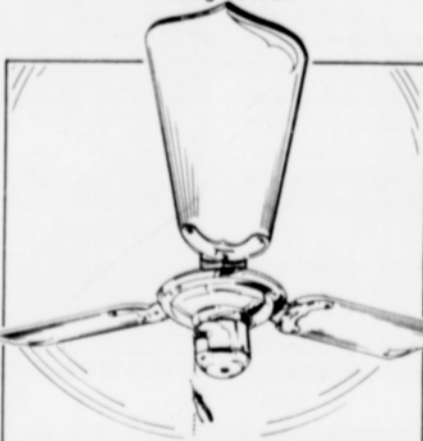
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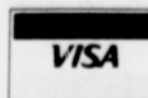
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