

Woman Changes Abandoned House To Home

Betty Carter was living comfortably in Berkeley, California, earning \$19,000 a year working 30 hours a week as a housekeeper. While visiting her uncle in Portland last March, she met a man. They developed a relationship and planned to be married in April.

So Carter quit her job and moved to Portland to get married. "Once I relocated here, this man decided that he wanted to remain a bachelor and told me to leave his house. I decided not to leave his house until Sept. 4th. This was dangerous, because he had taken everything away from me and hidden them," Carter recalls.

Eventually, Carter moved out of the man's house and rented the basement of a lady's home for \$150.00 a month. She felt depressed, being a stranger in town with no place to live. It was then that Carter realized she was one of the 9000 homeless people in Portland.

While walking down Northeast 16th, Carter noticed this abandoned house and decided that she wanted to make it her home. That same day she called the city to locate the owner of the house. She found that the owner hadn't paid taxes on the property for the past 2 1/2 years, and the house couldn't be sold until 1988. Carter said she contacted the owner of the house and told her that she wanted the house but didn't have any money to purchase it.

"I told her that I wanted to repair the house and get it financed so I could buy it. The owner told me she didn't want to make a lot of money on the house, that she had \$10,000 invested in it. After talking with the owner, I went to the house, crawled through the front window, and noticed that someone had a fire going in the fireplace. However, nobody was in view. I stood in the living room and said, 'I realize that anybody without a home would stay in an abandoned house. But as of now this house is no longer vacant. Whoever is in here must leave before I return.' When I returned, they had left," said Carter.

Once Carter moved into the house, she realized she had plenty of work to do on the house. Her new home had been vacant for six years and had become a haven for drunks, drug addicts, and the homeless. "The walls were painted black, the yard was covered with raspberry bushes, and the house was filled with trash. I had to get two large dumpsters to remove all of the trash from the house. I've worked on the house everyday since Sept. 26th. Once I cleaned the raspberry bushes from the yard, I discovered a patio and three fruit trees."

Although much work still must be done on the house, Carter has done enough repairs on it to make it livable. Her main concern at the present time is finding financing to buy the house and for repairs.

She has been talking to the Portland Development Council (PDC) trying to get help repairing the house. Carter said the PDC has been helpful but she isn't satisfied with the service she has received from PDC. "There're a lot of strings attached before you can receive assistance from them. First, you must have money. I've spent over \$5000 on the house on plumbing, supplies and having the furnace rebuilt, new wiring, and new lights. I don't have the money," Carter said.

Carter feels that the city isn't addressing the homeless problem adequately.

An Afro-American Interracial Celebration

The Interracial Family Network invites you to An Afro-American Interracial Celebration with a speech by Herb Cawthorne and featured performances by Rolea Powers and The Woodlawn African Dance Troupe.

On display will be books, african clothing and other items from The Talking Drum Bookstore, which will be available for purchase; black dolls from Constance Hamilton's collection; and Black memorabilia and racial artifacts from Darrell Milner's renowned collection.

The Afro-American Interracial Celebration will be held Sunday, February 15 at 4:00 p.m. at The Mallory Avenue Christian Church, 126 N.E. Alberta. A potluck dinner follows at 6:00 p.m.

Films will be available for children's viewing during Herb Cawthorne's presentation (1/2 hour).



Photo by Richard J. Brown

Betty Carter and her Readers Digest Do-It-Yourself manual are turning a once-vacant house into a home.

ly. "There are plenty of abandoned houses in Portland that are rotting away, that could be used for the homeless. After realizing that I was homeless, I signed up for the City Homestead Program. I wasn't eligible for it

because in order to qualify, one must pay \$1000 down, pay three months rent in advance, and have a certain income. These requirements disqualify most of the homeless. I think this is a backward policy."

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