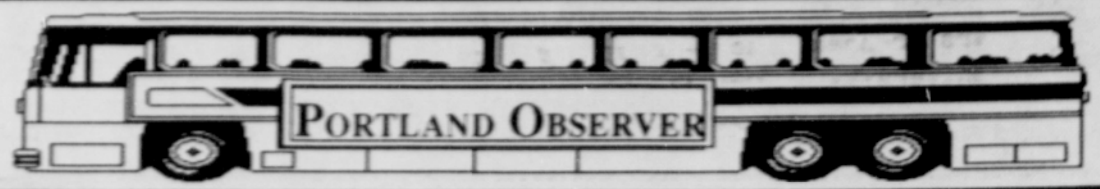


# NEWS AROUND TOWN



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## County Audit of Performance Releases Tax Audit

Portland—Multnomah County auditor Dan Ivancic today released a performance audit of the Assessment and Taxation Division. The report deals with the accuracy and fairness of the county's residential and commercial tax assessments.

Ivancic said the majority of homes were being assessed at values within 10 percent of what they were worth on the open market. But, there was a tendency for assessments to decrease as the value of the home increased. Many lower valued homes were over assessed; their owners were paying more tax than they should. Higher priced homes on the other hand tended to be under assessed; their owners tended to pay less tax than they should.

Ivancic said, 61 of 89 residential neighborhoods sampled had average assessments within 10 percent of what the properties were worth. Forty percent of homes in these areas had assessments that differed by more than 10 percent from what the property sold for. State law says assessments should be within 10 percent of what the property is worth.

For commercial properties, the average

difference between what the property sold for, and the assessed value, was about 17.5 percent.

For residential properties, the average difference between what the property sold for and the assessed value was about 14 percent.

Under assessments occurred primarily in Southwest and Northwest Portland. Over assessments were found in North, Northeast and Southeast Portland.

Ivancic said the Board of County Commissioners and the public should be kept better informed about the accuracy and fairness of county assessments. "The Assessment and Taxation Division has an obligation to render a complete and understandable account of the accuracy and fairness of its assessments directly to the public. Changes in the way the county estimates property values, and reports on its performance in doing so are needed," Ivancic said.

Ivancic asks the county to consider the recommendations in this report in order to improve property assessments throughout Multnomah County.

*Imagination is as good as  
many voyages -- and how  
much cheaper.*

The  
**Portland Observer**  
Newspaper  
4747 N.E. Martin Luther  
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(Formerly Union Avenue)

## A Letter to the Community

by J.C. Cowan  
Manager, Single Family Housing  
Portland Development Commission



J.C. Cowan

Mr. Jones was blind and living in North Portland in a home with major roof leaks and decaying front steps. A call to the Red Cross Housing Hotline connected him with the Portland Development Commission, the City's urban renewal agency. After talking with a PDC finance advisor, Mr. Jones qualified for a low-interest loan to fund his home repairs. Mr. Jones benefits from a new roof and stairs; the neighborhood benefits by keeping a good neighbor and preserving good, safe housing.

The PDC's Single Family Housing loan program has been operating since 1968 with a strong commitment to preserving neighborhoods. That early commitment is still in place along with a national track record the program has earned for innovation and performance. The program is aimed at low- to moderate-income households—households earning less than 80% of the median family income. It offers those who could not continue to maintain their homes, low-interest loans for repairs of health and safety concern. The loan program is one of many PDC housing programs which, together with other city programs, make a difference in the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Since 1985 PDC's Single Family Housing program has loaned \$8.7 million to repair 1,670 houses. Homeowners qualifying for the program can receive interest rates of 0%, 3%, or 6%. Portland's Bureau of Community Development determines eligible neighborhoods, and the federal government estab-

lishes income and family size guidelines that determine who's eligible for the loans.

One unique aspect of our loan program is the opportunity for borrowers to work with a PDC housing specialist. Once approved for a loan, the specialist works with the homeowner to identify housing maintenance problems, help prepare construction budgets, prioritize work, obtain bids and make certain all the work is completed properly. The housing specialist works on each step of the repair project to provide a personal service tailored to the homeowner.

The 90's will bring special challenges and change for PDC's home loan program. We will be looking for new ways to improve the program and make it more responsive to the communities it serves. Cities across the nation have traditionally looked to the federal government for money to help finance housing programs. As these dollars diminish and competition for them increases, PDC will look for new and innovative ways to obtain money for its housing programs. The PDC has entered a successful partnership with Security Pacific Bank Oregon to help fund these programs and we will continue to seek such public/private partnerships. As money for our housing programs becomes more difficult to get, it will also become increasingly important to target existing housing dollars where they are not needed.

PDC's Single Family Housing program is only one of the tools employed in the fight to keep neighborhoods vital for the citizens of our community. Revitalization is one piece of a broader city plan that includes programs to reduce crime, unemployment, and drug and alcohol addiction—problems contributing to decline in our neighborhoods.

There is much satisfaction to be gained from a program that sees real results: an older couple on fixed income is able to install a home security system; a single mother is able to lower her monthly bills by weatherizing her home and fixing her broken furnace. In addition to providing loans, PDC encourages the use of minority contractors for repair projects. My staff and I remain committed to the preservation of single family housing as healthy neighborhoods are the backbone of a great city. For more information about our housing programs visit PDC's Eastside Office, 1425 N.E. Irving, or call 230-9550.

## Black United Fund Sponsors Forum

The Black United Fund of Oregon is sponsoring a four part series of fundraising forums. The purpose of the forums will be to give community-based organizations basic information about developing diversified fundraising strategies. The first forum in the series is on ALTERNATIVE FUNDS, March 1, 1990 from 9-11 a.m. at the King Neighborhood Facility. Deb Ross Co-Director of McKenzie River Gathering and Eunice Letzing, Executive Director of A Territory Resource will present information on the application process for their perspective funds. In addition, they will discuss the similarities in funding priorities of national and west coast alternative funds. The subsequent forums will be as follows: March 28 Private Foundations; April 25 Corporate Giving Funds; and May 30 Special Events Fundraising. The series will end with two half-day workshops tentatively scheduled for June 13 and 27 to review fundraising strategies of agencies that have participated in the series. For additional information, call Elizabeth Waters at 282-7973.



The Boys Choir of Harlem

## On National Tour

The world-renowned Boys Choir of Harlem is scheduled to visit more than 40 cities and towns in the U.S. between February and July, 1990, in a tour sponsored by the second straight year by the Pepsi-Cola Company. With a repertoire of spirituals, gospel, the classics and modern music, the choir members attend the Boys Choir of Harlem's school and they must maintain a "B" average in order to remain in the group. More than 200 youngsters currently belong to the choir and are divided into a performing group, a training group and a girls' choir.

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The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

## Outstanding Corporate Business Award



George L. Knox, Staff Vice President, Public Affairs, Philip Morris Companies Inc., right, accepts an "Outstanding Corporate Business Award" for Philip Morris from the National Minority Business Council, Inc. (NMBC). With Knox is John F. Robinson, President of the NMBC who presided at the Council's 10th Anniversary Business Awards Luncheon recently at the Grand

Hyatt Hotel in New York City. One of the five national corporations honored by the NMBC, Philip Morris was identified by the Council to have increased its minority suppliers from 1,500 to more than 2,500 during the past two years, "accounting for more than \$238-million spent with minority businesses in 1988."

## Perspectives

### "Glasnost" For American Educators And Publishers

—Our front page article of February 7 (History As A Weapon Of Racists) has provoked so many inquiries from readers wanting more information on 'Alexander Pushkin' the great African poet who raised Russian literature to world class status, that we reprint the following by McKinley Burt.

by Professor McKinley Burt

The new Russian policy of "glasnost" is defined as openness. May we take this opportunity to demand a forthright expedition of this process at home as well as abroad?

For instance, we need to most immediately develop reading programs and supporting materials that high-light the great Black contributions to the world's finest literature. There is, of course the vaunted works of Byron, Yeats, Tennyson, Longfellow and Poe, but what about the magnificent works of the authors of African descent—whose works (with notations of ancestry) would provide motivation and self-imagery for African-American students: Pushkin, Dumas (es), Samuel Coleridge Taylor, Robert Browning, and many others.

Alexander Pushkin (1779-1837): Today's article is about this African-Russian literary giant who changed the history of Russia (and the world) for all time to come with the passionate humanity of his prose and poetry. In direct relevance is "The Captain's Daughter", a historical novel of epic proportions, a story of the peasant's revolt. In this country and as late as 1940, two of Pushkin's shorter works appeared in many primary school readers; his most popular poem, "The Fisherman and the Fish" and "The Golden Cockerel", a fairy tale of great beauty and fancy.

Two of his novels were converted into famous operas; "Boris Godunov" (Musorgski), and "Eugene Onegin" (Tchaikovsky). At the library you will find a most informative article in the "Negro History Bulletin, March 1948; The Negro's Literacy Influence on Masterpieces of Music (pp. 134-137)". Also, if you can find it, there is "Pushkin, the Shakespeare of Russian" by Boris Lee Brasol, N.Y., 1931. More recent and of special interest to English teachers developing lesson plans (we hope) is "Pushkin: A Biography", David Magarshack, N.Y.,

Grove Press, 1967, 1969.

As with many of Europe's geniuses of African Descent who influenced the destiny of that continent's affairs, there was in Pushkin a very early maturation of talent. At the age of 12 he entered the Imperial Lycee at St. Petersburg where, incredibly, his passionate outpourings led to his becoming Russia's leading poet at the age of 15. His first poem "Reminiscences of Tarskoye Selo" was not written in the conventional French of the Russian intellectual circles, but in Russian. Russia had at last a great poet using her own language; "With one cut of the sword Pushkin had freed Russian literature from the ties that were keeping it enslaved."

The passage below from the "International Library of Negro Life and History" (p.111) indicates that Pushkin's powerful pen was a powerful force in the overthrow of the Czars of tyranny, and was crucial to the development of that mind-set which blossomed into the Russian Revolution. "Placing the language of his people among the world's most important, Pushkin cried out for freedom and protested bondage and serfdom... became spokesman for the poor and oppressed."

Marx, Lenin, and Kerensky have their due in Russian history, but most of us know that it is first the soul of man which must be reached. Alexander Pushkin did just this in shaping the psyche of the Russian masses without sword or cannon—this great grandson of General Hannibal, the freed African slave who became chief military engineer for Czar, Peter the Great.

Several lines from Pushkin's poem, "Ode to Liberty", say it all:

"Oh shake and shiver, tyrants of the World,  
But lend and ear ye fallen slave  
Gain courage and rise."

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