

# METRO *Life*

The Portland Observer

**SECTION B**

## Community Calendar

### Pond builder featured

Jeffrey Reid, author of *How to Build Ponds and Waterfalls*, will present a lecture and slide show at the Japanese Garden on Sunday, Sept. 14 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The event is free with admission to the garden which is \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for seniors.

### Defense theater

*Witness This*, a dynamic theater performance about domestic violence and self-defense will be performed every Saturday in September at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the corner of North Albina and Ainsworth, across from Peninsula Park. The realistic violence will be portrayed by the Portland group Hip Chicks and Activists.

### March supports youth

A march to celebrate children who are "doing the right thing" will be held Saturday, Sept. 20, beginning at the Urban League of Portland, 10 N. Russell St. at 8:30 a.m. and heading north to Jefferson High School. Call 280-2600 to register and show support for the children of today and the youth of our future.

### Sport safety help

Red Cross will offer sport safety training to help you provide a safe environment for athletes participating in sports will be held Monday and Wednesday, Sept. 15 and 17 at the American Red Cross, 3131 N. Vancouver. Call 280-1440 for more information.

### Cosmetic surgery explained

Autumn Accent, a free seminar focusing on cosmetic and reconstructive surgery will be held in the main auditorium at Woodland Park Hospital, Saturday, Sept. 13 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. You are asked to pre-register by calling 257-5588.

### Student show at IFCC

Traditional African symbols are enlivened with brilliant color in the student artworks of the Black Educational Center on display this month at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate.

### Human side of politics

City council members and Multnomah County commissioners will discuss their jobs and answer questions during a 10 week series sponsored by the Older Adult Services and Information System at the downtown Meier & Frank store. The free lectures begin Friday, Sept. 26 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30. Pre-registration by phone at 241-3059 guarantees seating.

### Writing for veterans

Writing war stories, a beginning creative writing class designed for men and women veterans will, be offered on Tuesdays evenings this fall at Mt. Hood Community College. The course will teach veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Desert Storm, Somalia and Bosnia to capture their experiences for personal or historical purposes. Call 669-6679 for more information.

### Guild shows art

A fine art show and sale, presented by the North Clackamas Arts Guild, will be held Sept. 19-21 at the Milwaukie Center, 5440 S.E. Kellogg Creek Drive. Meet the artists and enjoy refreshments served as over 200 original art works go on display.

### House plant show

An unusual house plant show and sale takes place Saturday, Sept. 13 at the Mall 205 Shopping Center. See begonias of all kinds, African violet relatives and African violets, orchids and other rare and unusual plants.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Community Calendar information will be given priority if received two weeks before the event date.



## New Max train cars pressed into service

A Max train made up of two new low-floor cars pulls into the new Kings Hill/Salmon Street Station at Southwest 18th Avenue and Salmon. Next week, more than a dozen of the new cars will be pressed into service on Max's eastbound Gresham line to carry commuters rerouted by the repair of the I-5 bridge.

## Quality of life grants awarded

Six north/northeast Portland organizations will share a \$29,000 donation from Pacific Power to improve the quality of life in the utility's service area.

Pacific Power general business manager Carl Talton announced the grants on behalf of the company's PacifiCorp Foundation.

The Portland Home Garden Project received \$2,500 to help fund vegetable gardens for the low-income neighborhoods of Portland.

Talton said the goal is to build a minimum of 27 raised bed gardens to provide families with a sustainable source of nutritious food.

Martin Luther King Junior Elementary's Early Education Center received \$1,000 to help fund a summer school for 115 students who need assistance in reading, writing, math, leadership and self-esteem skills.

The YMCA of the Columbia-Willamette received \$1,000 to support the Black Achievers program in north/northeast Portland.

Two grants to the YWCA of Portland:

\$11,000 to help renovate and expand Camp Westwind on the Oregon coast. A second grant of \$2,000 will assist in funding the YWCA's Transitional School transportation program for homeless children, preschool through eighth grade.

Portland Center Stage has received a general grant of \$12,500 which will be used to provide tickets for students from schools in north/northeast Portland to attend performances produced by Center Stage.

## A crossing of cultures

Performers drawing on their own multicultural backgrounds will perform a dazzling drum repertoire, Friday, Sept. 19 at 7:30 p.m. in the Evans Auditorium at Lewis & Clark College.

National Public Radio calls *Crosspulse*, a Berkeley-based percussion quintet, "a crossing of cultures, a blurring of boundaries and at its most sensitive, most humanistic and most magical."

Part international drill team, part polycultural rhythm section, the ensemble brings together synchronized movement, world drumming and innovative body music.



Led by Keith Terry, a percussionist/rhythm dancer, *Crosspulse* is a group of five percussionists who move and sing.

## The Triple Nickles: The Rest Of The Story Oregon's Black Smoke Jumpers

By Prof. McKinley Burt

Sunday, Sept. 10, the Oregonian Newspaper featured a story, "Reunion Honors Black Airborne Unit," (p.C10). The account was of an all-African American parachute battalion based at Pendleton, Oregon, the 555th, or "Triple Nickles" as they were known in World War II.

The hazardous duty of these courageous infantry men was to parachute into burning forests or to find unexploded Japanese balloon bombs and dispose of them. And, of course, their job required them to fight naturally-caused fires as well. A U.S. Forest Service spokesman is quoted, "In 1945, they helped save millions of acres of Northwest forests from fires ignited by lighting and balloon bombs."

I first became aware of this missing saga of black history in 1975 while making presentations for the Northwest Multicultural

Programs contracted by the U.S. Forest Service. After returning to my instructor-base at Portland State University following a session at Smith River California (just over the Oregon border), I got a package from the Forest Ranger at Cave Junction, Oregon.

He said that he had been very impressed with my interesting accounts of hitherto unknown contributions by African Americans - and believed that the enclosed materials would further the appreciation of their role in building and preserving America. Of principal interest was news item and photograph in a faded issue of the Cave Junction Times around August 1945, 30 years earlier.

A full score of black smoke jumpers were depicted in various states of their operations. This was the first time that I or any of my associates had ever heard of this role played by black Americans. We, and everyone else had been made aware of the smoke-jumping exploits of the Zuni Indians from

Arizona - but by African Americans, never!

Some subsequent investigations of mine revealed a recurring pattern in respect to Westward black migration. Just as early on as a youth working on the railroad I found several black wheat farmers in Western Idaho whose grandfathers had been Pullman porters at the turn of the century and became enchanted with the beautiful land along the railroad -- I found that some of the 555th black parachute battalion had returned to the Northwest after the war. Some spreading farmland from Pendleton, Oregon, establishing homes, businesses and farms.

It was quite a coincidence that in 1977 while again making a multicultural presentation at a U.S. Forest Service workshop - Spokane, Washington - I met the son of an original 555th paratrooper who established a Ford repair shop in the city. The son had been a helicopter pilot in the Air Force and

now owned his own helicopter service, contracting with the Forest Service and the Sugar Beet Growers to spray pesticides.

Beginning with one helicopter, put together from several makes bought at a surplus outlet in Los Angeles and hauled back to Spokane on a 'semi', he now owned 3 copters and had 4 employees. He had three children, all very bright and mannerable, but the mother had been lost in a tragic accident when the anesthesia apparatus exploded during a routine operation.

I have not given the name of the family because I cannot locate the particular notes, but I will subsequently. The son, too, was killed in a tragic accident when his helicopter crashed while spraying sugar beets in the early 1980's. In closing, I would remark here that over the years Forest Service personnel provided much new and valuable information about African American pioneers, innovators and inventors of the Northwest.