

## Family Matters: The Way It Was IV, Conclusion

By Prof. McKinley Burt

"I'm in the mood for love, simply because I'm near you. Funny, but when you're near me, I'm in the mood..."

Whenever Robert McFerrin Sr., the lead tenor in our high school choir sang those or similar, soulful lyrics during auditorium period, girls were known to leap on stage from the lower balcony.

A mischievous student and later a famed comedian, "Red Fox", also could be found on that balcony, but the girls were energized for different reasons. "Red" as he already was known was headed for the nation's night club circuit and television successes, while Robert McFerrin Sr. became a star of the New York Metropolitan opera. More talent from St. Louis.

And who isn't familiar with the vocal magic of Robert's son, Bobby McFerrin - the acappella wizard whose voice is an "instrument" which has no bounds. At will, he is a woodwind, a brass fanfare or percussion, classic, pop, country, blues, or conducts a symphony.

And that is "The Way It Was", for the later life of some of the black children I've described; following the lamplighter from block to block, fighting for extra books to read in grades 5 and 6, kid-sponsored and financed inter-neighborhood bicycle races and soft ball (funded by collecting rags, bottles and scrap metal).

Another societal imperative was a sort of "technology transfer" between succeeding generations of youths. Skills, wills and attitudes were handed down to (inherited by) the next age group; from how to repair the "New Departure Brakes" on coaster bicycles, to setting up a science club in a basement or fantastic jump rope routines.

Or if a new baseball diamond was needed in the neighborhood, you were

taught the protocol for locating and then securing the permission of an absentee property owner to grade his vacant lot. And you learned the techniques for scavenging parts to build racers for the Soap Box Derby. Negotiate!

A cooperative proprietor of a corner service station often provided groups of neighborhood youths (if well behaved) with space and some tools for their automotive projects. Others were known to develop rather sophisticated shops in a home garage. Like local mechanical genius Thomas (Don) M Rutherford who at age 15 was converting gasoline-powered automobiles to diesel.

The very same Don Rutherford I featured here on February 25 of Black History Month; The Benson High School and University of Oregon graduate, Professional Engineer (P.E.) and designer of the critical engine controls for Howard Hughes' famous giant flying boat, the "Spruce Goose" (locally on display at Evergreen Aviation Educational Center, McMinnville, Oregon). Will his schools ever honor him?

This, indeed, has been "The Way It Was" and I believe it has been demonstrated that the remarkable socialization of the "Village", that extended family of home, school and neighborhood, structured the spiritual strength and humanity which sustained black people through all the parallel horrors of racism - from lynchings to employment and housing discrimination.

Well, let us see if that ubiquitous "Supper Table Input" can prevail in a not-uncommon case. When my grandfather died, circa 1930, that classic middle class family of ours disintegrated-my mother and I becoming a "stand-alone unit", an eight-year old child and an emotionally distraught divorcee, not coping very well. There followed a gradual descent into

increasingly impoverished neighborhoods and lifestyles-the full spectrum of African American existence as it remains today effective solutions for today's problems could be derived from experience. For me and youths in similar situations, a whole new world opened up before amazed eyes-not virtual but real. There were new kinds of people, attitudes, places, sounds, challenges - and ambitions.

And grandpa, E. Collins Scott, the strong moral compass and scholar of the clan 'still was beside me' (to this day) - through a thousand dangers, while learning a score of crafts after dropping out of high school in the eleventh grade - never to return! We had been prepared to mind the rich lode of public and university libraries in America, elementary school is foundation.

As it was with my peers of similar situations across this country, I found no difficulty passing the entrance exam to Northwestern Law School (now Lewis & Clark), or to Los Angeles City College nor to gaining certification to practice in Federal Tax Court.

In the late 1940's and 1950's it was difficult to convince Portland that you were a high school dropout and a southern ghetto "village" had so prepared you-at a higher level than many of the teachers (even today). Harder to convince after I set up the "Union Avenue Finance Company" for white car dealers on "MLK" who were my accounting clients - 1948-1951.

My 1972 appointment to the faculty of PSU simply affirmed 'our' perception of the disaster overtaking American education. In industry we knew something was terribly wrong for we often got illiterates at the personnel door-college grads. See my "Perspectives" column p.4; Teacher testing debacle.

## Social Services Sting Policies Sought

In an effort to improve communication around the siting of a range of social services. Commissioner Gretchen Miller Kafoury has charged an interbureau work group with defining a scope of work for a community involvement process that will result in a proposed social service siting policy. The group will define the issues and desired outcomes for a process that balances service needs, legal requirements, and neighborhood interests and concerns in locating community services. A steering community or task force will likely be assembled in the fall to implement

the scope of work identified by the work group.

Among the issues the group will consider for the community involvement process are concerns for improving communications, trends and needs for social services, outreach and education, voluntary funding restrictions in impacted areas, options for fair share siting policies, broadening the use of Good Neighbor agreements, and the effectiveness of existing policies and programs designed to address siting related problems. The work group's recommendations for the scope of work to be addressed will be pre-

sented to City Council in the fall.

In addition, two new positions are being created to assist with siting issues. Multnomah County's Public Affairs Office will develop a central information center for County facilities and programs siting. A facilitator at the Office of Neighborhood Involvement's Neighborhood Mediation Center will work with community members, social service and housing providers, and consumers of services to address community concerns, develop Good Neighbor plans, and provide basic information on siting issues.

## Funding for Portland Light Rail Projects approved in Senate committee

U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith have won \$26.7 million in funding for the expansion of Portland's light rail system. The money is contained in the Transportation Appropriations bill for next year, which won committee approval today, and which gives Metro flexibility to use the funding either for completion of the Westside project or final design and right-of-way acquisition for the South-North project. Winning support for light rail expansion and improving Oregon's transportation funding were two of the seven bipartisan priorities that Oregon's two senators laid out at the beginning of the 105th Congress.

"As the metropolitan area continues to grow, a vital mass transit system will be an important part of maintaining the Portland area's special

character," said Wyden. "This new investment in light rail will help ease traffic congestion and improve air quality throughout the region."

"This new funding will provide much needed upgrades to both traditional and alternative modes of transportation," said Smith. "These improvements will help preserve the high quality of life for Oregonians, provide commuters with more options, and keep us at the forefront of innovation."

In addition to the light rail appropriation, the bill also helps Oregon with funding formula increases that will have a tremendous effect statewide on highway, air, and mass transit. The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding formula, which provides grants for critical safety and infrastructure improvements at air-

ports, assigns \$7.2 million for Oregon next year, up from \$5.9 million for this year. Oregon will receive \$260 million for road and bridge construction through the Federal highway Administration (FHWA), an increase from the \$228 million appropriated last year. Funding for mass transit programs, such as bus systems and light rail, will be boosted from \$23.3 million in Oregon to \$25.9 million next year through the reworked Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding formula.

Last year and earlier this year, Wyden and Smith worked together on the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which authorizes the transportation work described above; yesterday's bill actually allocates the money to states to carry out that work.

eral prosecutors the tools they need to investigate, prosecute, and, hopefully, prevent hate crimes."

Under current law, federal prosecutors must prove not only that the crimes were racially motivated, but that the victims were harmed because they were engaged in specific, federally protected activity such as voting. This restriction may make federal prosecution in cases such as the racially motivated murder of James Byrd, Jr. last month extremely difficult, if not impossible. The "Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998" eliminates this restriction.

"This bill will allow federal

prosecutors to work with state authorities and is not intended to undermine their authority in any way. Many hate groups have interstate networks which make it harder for state officials to deal with them. This bill recognizes the federal role in prosecuting and preventing hate crimes and strengthens the hands of federal authorities," said Governor Roy Romer, General Chair of the DNC.

"Federal officials need increased authority to stop the spread of hate crimes. Congress can give them the tools they need by passing the 'Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998' and we strongly urge them to do so," Romer said.

## CONGRESS SHOULD PASS THE "HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT OF 1998"

The Democratic National Committee today called upon Congress to pass the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998" (S.1529, Kennedy). The bipartisan bill will provide additional federal authority to prosecute hate crimes based on the victim's race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

"The recent events in Jasper, Texas have shown us that there are still people willing to turn their hatred into violence," said Steve Grossman, DNC National Chair. "But according to current law, their deplorable actions may not be considered a federal crime. This legislature will provide fed-

Jack & Jill went up the hill & played near poles and wires. A line was down & Jack soon found if touched he would EXPIRE.

Kites and balloons should be flown in open areas away from lines



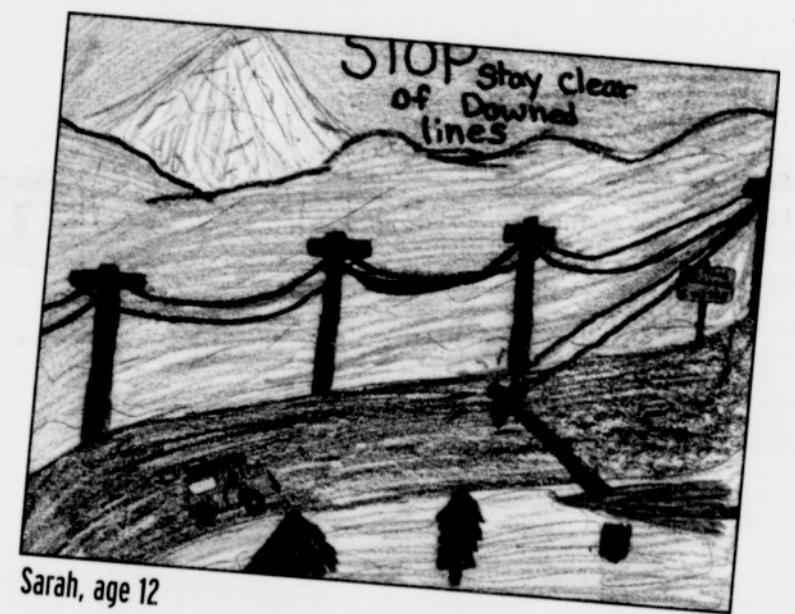
Melissa, age 11

Keep clear of trees or structures close to power lines



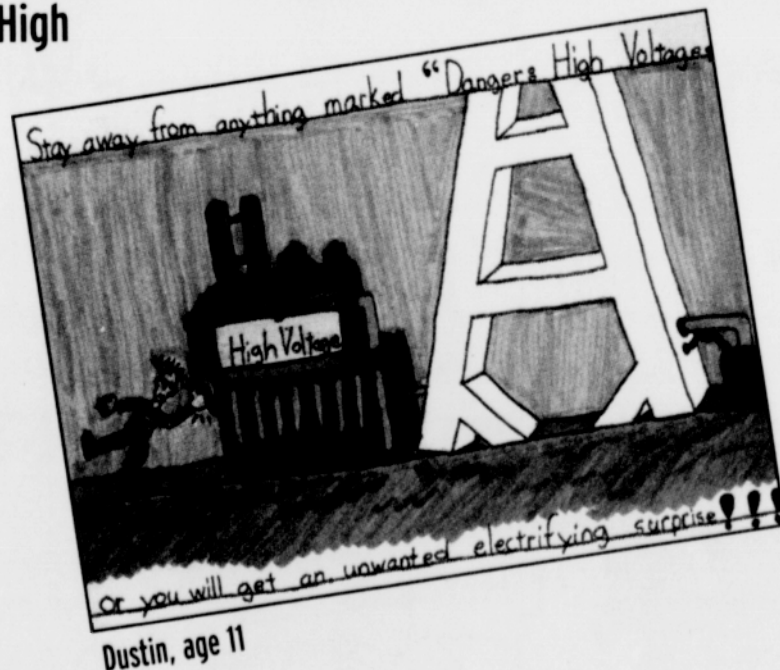
Mahala, age 7

Treat all lines on the ground or overhead as energized



Sarah, age 12

Stay away from substations or anything marked Danger: High Voltage



Dustin, age 11

Outdoor electric safety is important to all of us — especially this time of year when we're outside more. With the help of some of last year's winners in Pacific Power's Electric Safety Contest, we want to make you aware of some of the potentially hazardous situations you and your kids can get into while working or playing outdoors.



For a free color-your-own fun poster & glow-in-the-dark magnet for kids, call 1-888-221-7070.

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