

Success on the Boulevard



Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber-Beauty Salon Co-founder Paul Knauls said the decision to rename Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard 12 years ago was the deal-making factor for the shop's location.

continued ▲ from B5

the African-American Health Alliance, while Knauls Jr. snips, colors and braids, he is also asks about his clients' diabetes or nutrition, which he says would probably come up anyway.

According to recent studies, African-Americans are twice as likely to die from a stroke and one-and-a-half times as likely to die from a heart attack as Caucasians.

Collaine Faddis, program manager for Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH), said, "It's a prime place where the client would already be listening. There's a rapport of trust between the client and the barber, often more so than with a doctor."

While the salon's location has been very good to the Knauls, Paul Sr. identifies gentrification as a mixed bag.

"This would be good if it was 25 years ago and it was ours," he said, counting less than 15 African-American business owners who also own their store property.

Knauls says ironically that while gentrification has been good for business, the money doesn't stay in the community and the trend for young, white people to move into north and northeast Portland is driving black families to the outskirts of the city.

Mayor Vera Katz— who was sharply criticized for supporting an allegedly over-zealous and racially profiling police force— became what some see as an unlikely champion for blossoming Northeast Portland.

"At one point, she talked so much about north and northeast Portland, I got concerned about her re-election," Knauls said.

Yet the city's investment in northeast has proven to be a sound one, particularly Alberta Street's \$3 million facelift that brought trees, on-street parking and street lamps, as well as art galleries, cafes and hoards of patrons.

When the Portland Development Commission developed a Martin Luther King Advisory Committee, local business owners and community members, including Knauls, joined with the intention of changing the reputation of the area. The first project was to "shed light" on the corner of Northeast Killingsworth Street and MLK Boulevard. Today, where vacant buildings yielded no foot traffic, street lamps now illuminate a heavily patronized retail zone late into the night.

"It's just sparked joy and pride in the community," said a delighted Knauls. "We were able to put a couple new churches on the boulevard and even 100 assisted living units down there— right in our neighborhood."



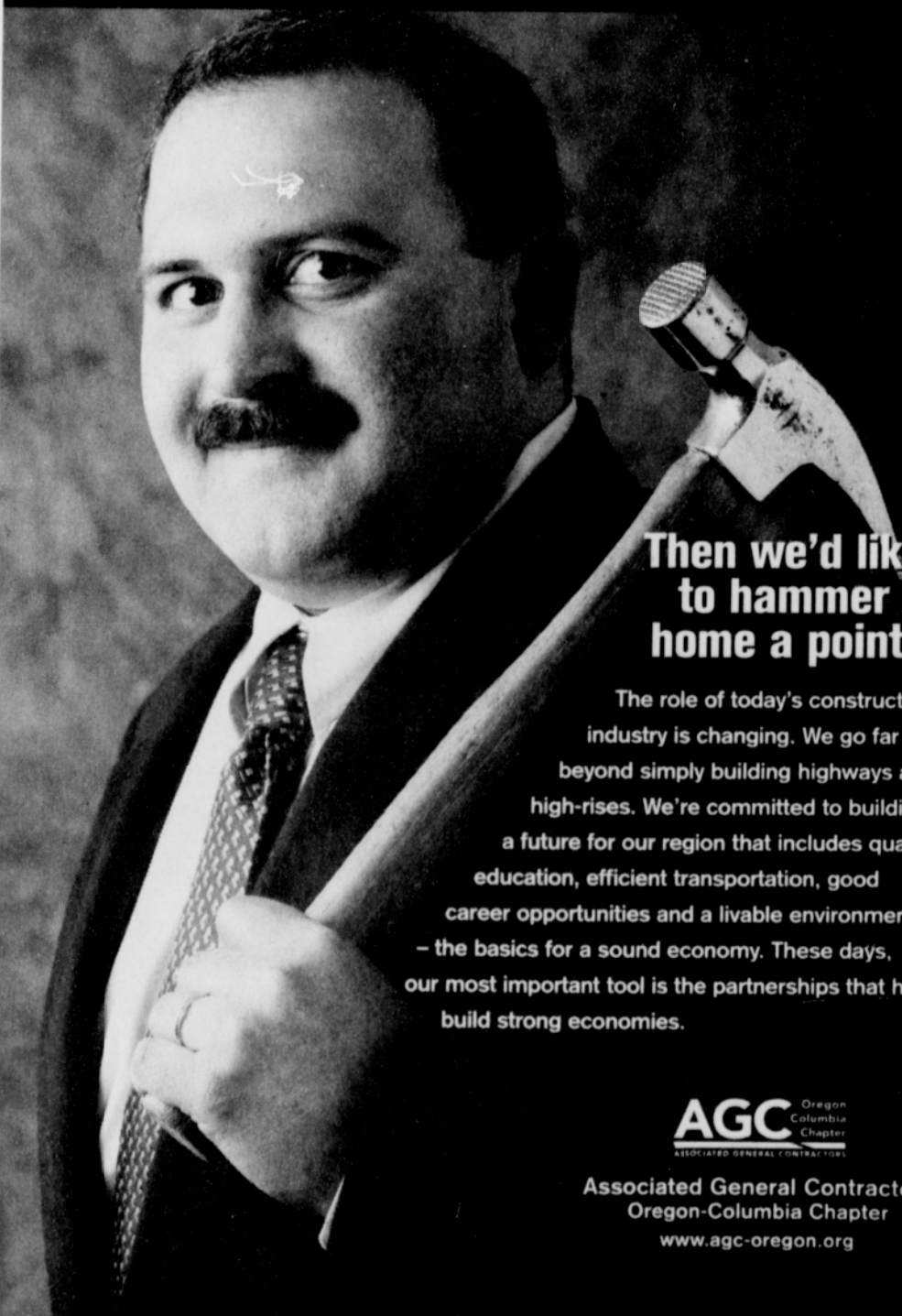
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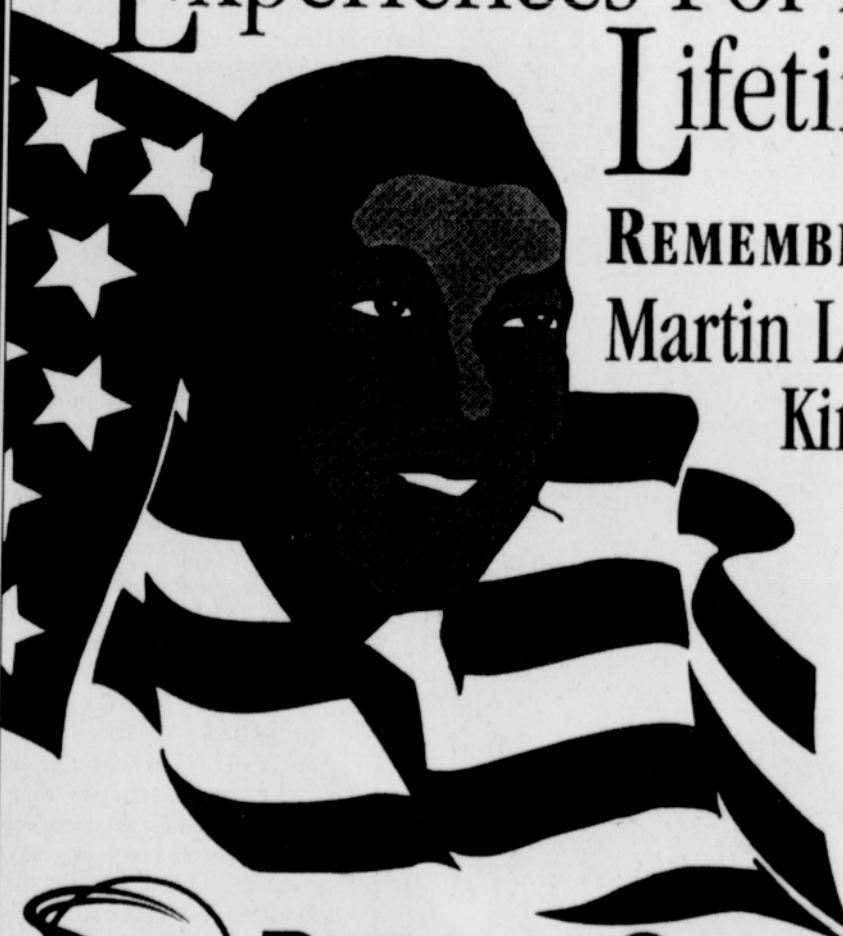
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