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Black History Month

See feature stories, inside

World Class

Celebrated dance troupe returns to Portland
See story, Metro section inside



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Week in The Review

IRS bills homeless man \$6 million

If Salem, Ore. resident John Ramer had made enough money to owe the federal tax agency \$6 million, he probably wouldn't be homeless. The Internal Revenue Service mistakenly handed him a big bill, claiming he needed to pay nearly \$6 million. To owe that much, Ramer, who travels the Salem city streets on a mountain bike, would have to have earned about \$15 million in one year.

Budget cuts call for drastic measures

A school administrator in Dollar Bay, Mich. has proposed a job cut - his own - to help the district fight a growing budget deficit. Superintendent Robert Barrette said he plans to recommend eliminating his position. "I cost money," Barrette said. "I've looked at everything else but there's just not a lot to cut in our budget."

'Freedom fries' replace French fries

You can get fries with your burger, but don't ask for French fries. Neal Rowland, the owner of Cubbie's in Beaufort, N.C. only sells his fried potato strips as "freedom fries" - a decision that comes as Americans watch French officials back away from support for possible war in Iraq. "Because of Cubbie's support for our troops, we no longer serve French fries. We now serve freedom fries," says a sign in the restaurant's window.

Frozen Cat Carcasses

More than 100 cats and the frozen carcasses of 82 others were removed from the home of a Mesilla Park, N.M. woman living alone in a four-bedroom house, authorities said. Police went to the home Tuesday after receiving reports of foul odors. Animal Control officers helped to remove about 70 cats Tuesday and returned the next day for the remaining 30 cats. Inside a kitchen freezer, officers found 82 frozen cats - each inside a one-gallon freezer bag bearing a brief description and date.

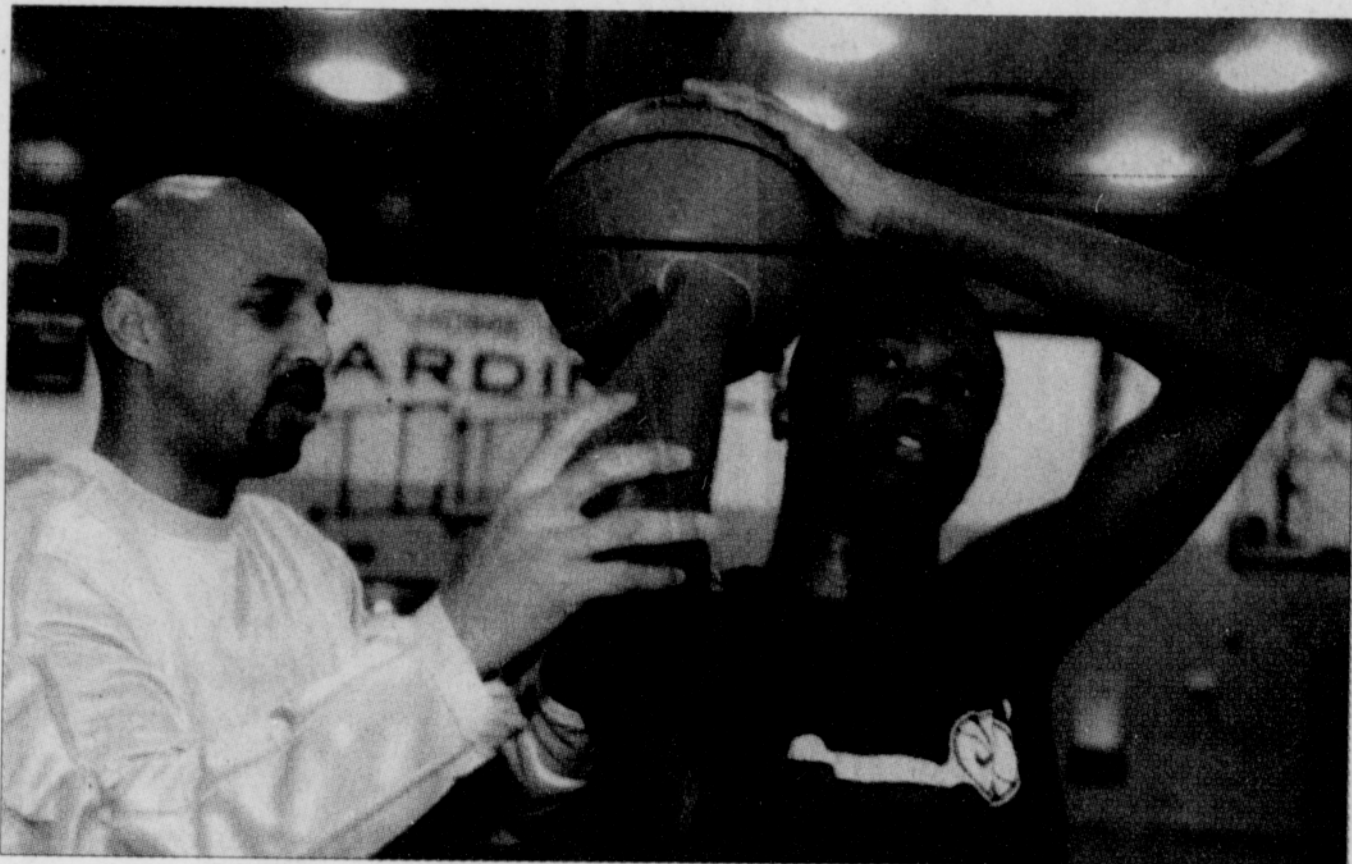
One car wasn't enough

A 24-year-old man fleeing police apparently wasn't satisfied with just one stolen car. Police in Hannibal, Mo. said Mark D. O'Brien broke into a half-dozen cars and crashed or abandoned them before finally being taken into custody Friday. He was charged with violating his probation from a previous auto-theft offense.

Free Nike's float to shore

Thousands of pairs of Nike basketball shoes are washing up on beaches from Washington to Alaska after spilling from a container ship in Northern California. There's just one hitch to finding a free pair. "Nike forgot to tie the laces, so you have to find mates," said Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer, an oceanographer who tracks sneakers, toys and other flotsam across the sea.

Lincoln Dream Team



Lincoln High Basketball Coach Troy Berry (left) gives Sophomore Latravis Turner some pointers on good shooting form. Turner said Berry has been a good role model for him in a school where he rarely sees other black faces.

Coach Berry inspires excellence

BY WYNDE DYER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The southwest hills of Portland are a far cry from the small town of Galesburg, Ill. where Troy Berry grew up or even the inner eastside of Portland where he played ball for Benson High School. But as the head boys varsity basketball coach at Lincoln High, Berry knows how to put himself in his element.

"I'm a black coach up here in a school without a lot of black students - but I've got a job to do and I take my job very seriously," Berry said. "I want to teach these kids the direct relationship between life and basketball. I want to prepare them to be successful young men on and off the court."

Lincoln athletes might learn from Berry's example.

He grew up playing various sports in Galesburg - a town of about 35,000 where sports were so ingrained in the fabric of life that residents had to buy season tickets a year in advance order to get a seat at a high school basketball game.

"It was a great time," Berry said. "The whole community got involved in sports - and not just high school sports. They came out for little league, junior high school basketball, you name it."

After his family moved to northeast Portland, it wasn't long before Berry led the Benson varsity basketball team to the state title in 1981. They won the game on his birthday, Berry remembers.

If things keep heading in the same direction as they are for Lincoln, a team that was 1-17 in league and 2-21 overall when Berry

PHOTO BY WYNDE DYER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Coach Harris Leads By Example

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Velaida Harris arrived at Lincoln High School to coach girls varsity basketball she was sure the move would be temporary.

"I'm only going to be here one year," she told the staff.

Harris had her mind set on the same position at Jefferson High School.

"But Milt never retired," she said of long-time Jefferson coach Milt Adams. "And after I was there a year I thought, maybe I should be here."

Harris felt like she could assume a unique role in the lives of the girls she coached at this mostly white high school in southwest Portland.

"How many of these kids have an African

American in their lives?" she said. "Why not stay here and be an example?"

And that is precisely how Harris leads and coaches - by example.

"If they see me working hard to make them better they're going to respond to that," she said of her promising team of young women.

Harris has set the bar pretty high.

The Lincoln girls finished as league champs in 1999 and 2001. This year, her team ended up third in league and is heading into the 2nd round of playoffs Thursday with a match against Thurston.

Harris herself was a fanatical hoopster in high school and college and said coaching is something she has always wanted to do.

"Just trying to impress skills of the game

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Girls Varsity Basketball Coach Velaida Harris directs a winning program at Lincoln High.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

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Budget Ax May Chop Commissions on Women, Minorities

Groups that ensure laws don't adversely affect constituents could lose funding

(AP) — This could be the year that Oregon's state commissions on the rights of women and minorities finally fall prey to the budget ax.

The leaders of the state's Commission for Women, and the commissions for Asian,

Black and Hispanic affairs, say they've been eyed for elimination many times before.

But this year, the state is reeling from one of its largest revenue shortfalls ever. On top of that, the Hispanic commission is only now recovering from a series of financial blunders and management problems. And the Commission for Women was singled out by an influential business-lobbying group as a government body that could be trimmed as one of "54 ways Oregon can save its own economic bacon."

The four commissions actually would receive a combined 17.7 percent funding

increase under Gov. Ted Kulongoski's proposed budget for 2003-05.

Mary Ellen Glynn, Kulongoski's spokeswoman, said the governor approved the increase because he believes in the commissions' work. She said the looming shortfall is so massive that the \$645,292 allocation for the groups would make only a small difference.

Each group acts as a liaison between the public, the Legislature and government agencies. Common concerns include reducing gender and race discrimination in housing, employment and education. They also do

community outreach and lobby to ensure new laws won't adversely affect minorities and women.

Rep. Randy Miller, R-West Linn, said most of those efforts could be accomplished without state money. He said the work is valuable, but if the public believes in it they can provide support through private donations.

"I think an awful lot of observers think that if something has to be put on hold that might be a good place to start," said Miller,

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Northeast Displacement Stirs Passion

Town Hall addresses neighborhoods strained by housing issues

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Television monitors were glowing dimly. Preparations were made as cameras were put into position. A town hall meeting on gentrification in north and northeast Portland was about to begin.

Local filmmaker Bruce Broussard, moderator of the live studio audience at Cable Access on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard last Tuesday, introduced the screening of the film by Darrell Millner and the town hall that followed was designed to

spur debate on the changing plight of local communities in the face of redevelopment and rising housing costs.

"Northeast Passage" follows the stories of local residents by taking a close look at changing perspectives on low-income housing and the role of individuals in the community.

The opening scenes of the film clearly show that change in a montage of real estate properties in various stages of repair and disrepair.

Over the clips of footage community members discuss their dreams of home ownership and self-destiny.

Darrell Millner, a black studies professor for Portland State University, then introduces viewers to Oregon's early black exclusion laws and retraces the history of the northeast Portland community.

"Oregon was not a place where blacks were going to be welcome," Millner said.

He added that the Albina district would eventually be determined as the "black area of residence."

"The only black residential area in Oregon," he added.

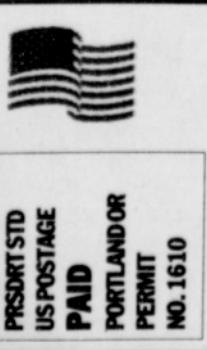
The influx of African Americans to Portland during World War II made white investors wary at a time when the effects of segregation were still strong.

In the 80s, a gang scare worsened the trend and blacks found it difficult to even be considered for home ownership in an era of widespread redlining - the practice of rental and buyer discrimination.

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Alex Dorsey (center) attends a town hall meeting on gentrification in north and northeast Portland with her son (left) and other community members.



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