

Senator Hassled by Store Security

Fred Meyer denies that stop was race-related

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For African Americans, being hassled by security guards and stopped by police more often than Caucasians seems like a sad fact of life in America. But one grocery store chain is apologizing profusely for profiling the wrong black woman—Sen. Margaret Carter, D-Portland.

Since a store clerk stopped Carter after shopping at a South Salem Fred Meyer last week, the senator said she received many calls, letters and e-mails from people who have had the same experience at Fred Meyer stores.



Sen. Margaret Carter

Fred Meyer has a long tradition of retail service to Oregonians. The calls I have received and my own recent experience suggest to me that the company's security policies and practices are unworthy of this tradition.

—Sen. Margaret Carter

Carter purchased meat at the store for a barbecue hosted by Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem. An alarm apparently triggered the security stop as she was leaving the store.

Carter said she was stopped and produced her receipt for the groceries, while two or three other white customers continued to leave the store.

Rob Boley, spokesperson for

the supermarket chain, disagreed with Carter's account, saying that a store investigation uncovered "conclusive proof" that no other customers were leaving the store at the same time. He would not explain what that proof was.

"In addition to our longstanding anti-discrimination policies," Boley said, "we've had a section on diversity in the workplace in our employee handbook

for many years as well as training for supervisory personnel in the store."

Boley said Fred Meyer has had civil rights and racial discrimination claims filed against them, but none have resulted in judgments against the company.

But recent lawsuits against Macy's, Dillard's and J.C. Penney are shining light on the age-old practice of harassing customers

who were "shopping while black."

Denny's, a restaurant chain accused of making African-Americans prepay for their meals, paid \$54 million to settle a class-action lawsuit in 1994 and Adam's Mark Hotel settled allegations that its Daytona Beach hotel discriminated against African-American guests for \$1.1 million in 2001.

"Fred Meyer has a long tradition of retail service to Oregonians," Carter said. "The calls I have received and my own recent experience suggest to me that the company's security policies and practices are unworthy of this tradition."

Carter is seeking a meeting with the president of Fred Meyer to recommend a review in the company's search and security policies and personnel training.

Incentives Aimed at Smoggy Cars

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has teamed up with TriMet to offer an alternative to drivers whose cars fail the state's emission test.

Through the month of August, area residents can donate their environmentally-unfriendly car for either a free TriMet annual bus pass, valued at \$615, a gift certificate worth \$500 to The Bike Gallery or a \$500 credit to the Flexcar car-sharing program.

Officials said about one-third of the 2,200 vehicles DEQ tests daily, fail the emission test.

For more information about the new "CHOICES" program, visit www.deq.state.or.us.

Oregon Civil Rights Law Celebrated

A special commemoration will celebrate the 50th anniversary of an Oregon law that barred restaurants, hotels, parks and other public amenities from discriminating against racial and ethnic minorities.

Senators Avel Gordly, Margaret Carter and Jackie Winters are sponsoring the noon event at the state capitol in Salem on Friday, June 13.

Former Gov. Mark O. Hatfield, who as a State Representative helped enact the Public Accommodations Law, will be the featured speaker.

On April 28, 1953, following the leadership of Hatfield, Verdell and Otto Rutherford, and distinguished members of the NAACP, the Oregon Legislative Assembly enacted the Public Accommodations Law.

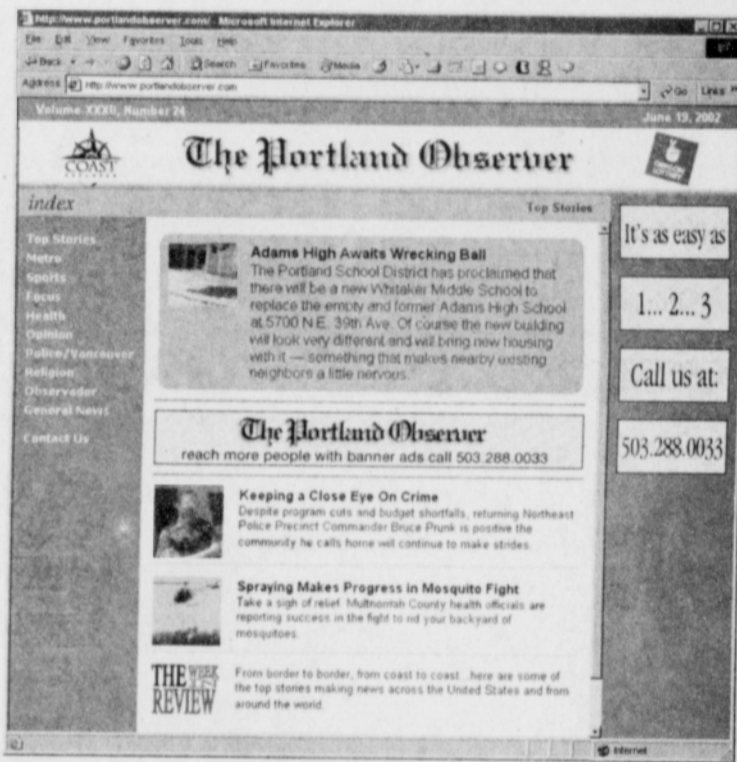
It was at this moment that Oregon declared its intent to embrace and protect the civil rights of all of its people—and particularly African-Americans, who had fought for the law since 1919.

A large photograph taken inside the 1953 House of Representatives at the law's passage, will be displayed at Friday's commemoration.

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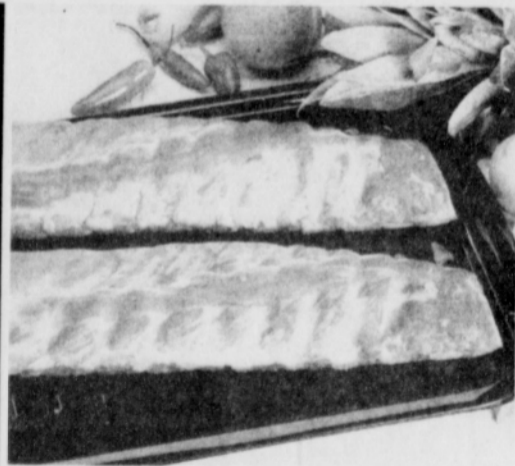
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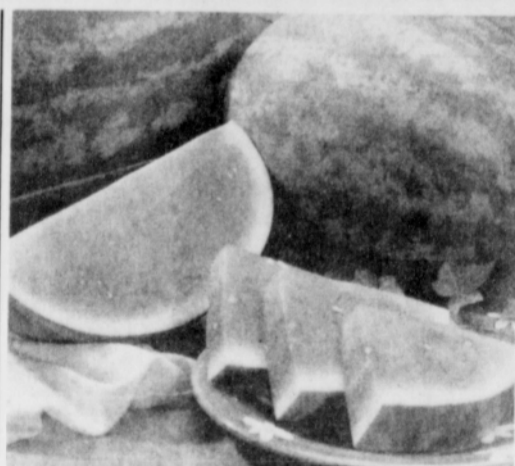
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