

Week in
The Review

Mob Beats Motorist

At least 15 young people dragged a Milwaukee, Wis. motorist out of his car and kicked and punched him after he honked his horn to get them to move out of a street, police said. The 50-year-old man was in critical condition with head injuries Tuesday, and it was unclear whether he would survive.



Surfer Slugged Shark

A Portland surfer who fended off a great white shark south of Seaside by punching it in the nose said he learned the tactic by watching television shows such as the Discovery Channel's "Shark Week." Brian Anderson, 36, remained hospitalized Monday but was expected to make a full recovery from lacerations on his ankle and calf.

New Orleans Shooting

Police officers shot and killed a man brandishing a knife in a confrontation in New Orleans that was partially videotaped by a bystander, setting off another internal investigation of the embattled department.

Rocks Force Evacuation

A series of rock slides in Montpelier, Vt., dumped boulders the size of cars across a downtown street Monday, forcing about 50 people to evacuate as debris spilled up to their doorsteps.

Rape Suspect Captured

A serial rape suspect accused of terrorizing two neighborhoods in Miami, Fla. smiled as police officers escorted him back to jail Tuesday, a week after he escaped by climbing through a vent and rappelling down the jail using sheets.

Ex-Pitcher Charged

Ex-pitcher Jeff Reardon, one of the top relief pitchers in baseball history, blamed medication for depression after his arrest for a jewelry store robbery on Tuesday, police said.

Oprah's Jet Grounded

Oprah Winfrey's private jet was forced to return to the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport Monday after its windshield was cracked in a collision with a bird. Winfrey and her boyfriend, Stedman Graham, were not hurt in the incident.

Portland's United Nations

Helping arrivals
from around
the world

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In a corner of the large reception hall on Northeast 103rd and Glisan Street, an elderly Asian couple examines a legal document. A few paces away a tall person of color gives a warm greeting to a woman in Somali dress. A conversation erupts in one of the languages of Africa. A few paces away the conversation is English and Russian.

The multicultural scene could be called Portland's version of the United Nations. It's the headquarters of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), whose mission is to help new arrivals from all over the world adjust and blend into the Portland area.

According to IRCO's Jeff McDonald, Oregon receives 1,700 refugees a year, with most settling in the Portland or Bend area. The state is the 11th busiest as a refugee destination, behind No. 1 California and No. 3 Washington.

About 40 percent of the new arrivals come from the former Soviet Union, especially the Ukraine, and are escaping religious persecution. Another 20 percent come from Africa, especially Ethiopia or Somalia, countries wrecked by civil wars. The third

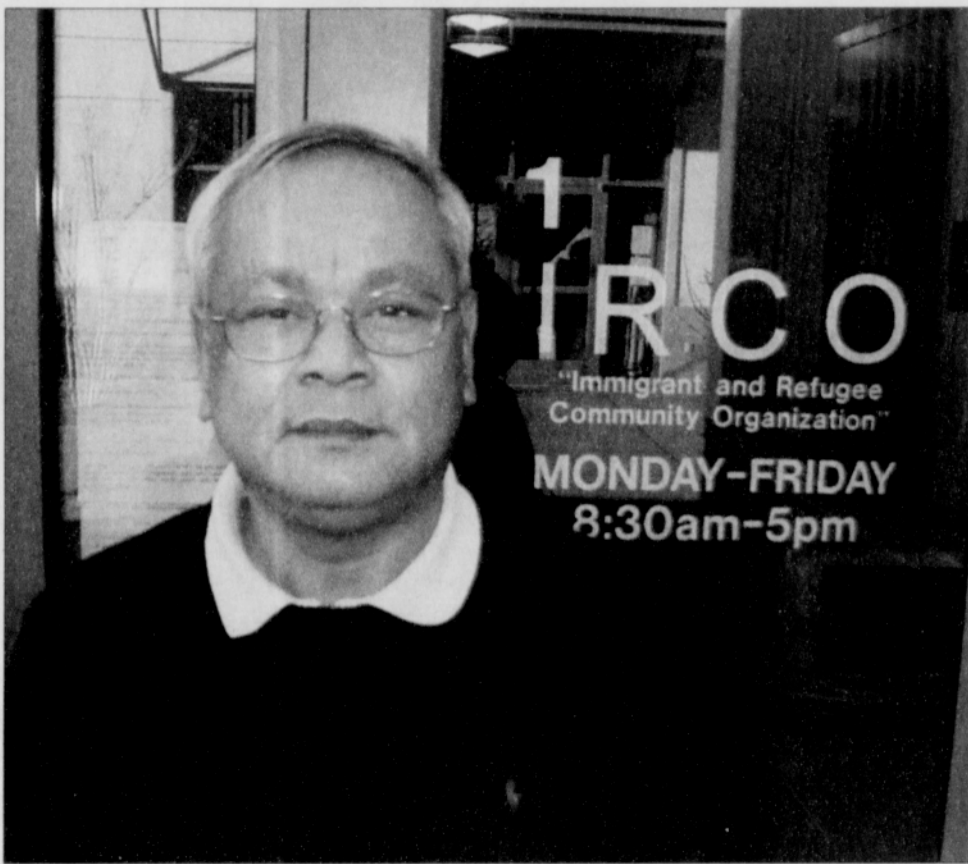


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Sokhom Tauch directs the multicultural mission of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) in Portland.

largest group is Cubans who come by way of Florida. Others come from Laos and Burma. Until recently, there were large numbers of Bosnians arriving in the Portland area fleeing the fighting in their homeland.

The largest agency of its kind in the U.S.

with 155 full-time and several hundred part-time employees, IRCO's job is to provide the new residents with the training they need to adjust to life in the U.S.

When they arrive, "Some are quite fluent in English, but that's usually not the case,"

McDonald says. "Some are illiterate even in their own languages. Some have to learn a whole new alphabet. We provide training based on their level of comprehension."

IRCO also maintains a Language Bank that can provide translators fluent in 45 languages for businesses or public and private agencies.

The biggest worry for new arrivals is finding jobs. IRCO trains new arrivals in what will be expected of them on the job sites — things like reporting for work on time, calling in sick when necessary, how people are hired and fired, work safety, and many "things we take for granted that you can't expect newcomers to understand," McDonald said.

IRCO tries to find the newcomers jobs that match previous experience and current interest. In this effort the organization works regularly with 300 employers in the greater Portland metropolitan area, mostly in the fields of metal works, health care and housekeeping, but in other fields as well.

"I could call the Portland Observer and say, 'I have a great journalist who just arrived from Tjadikistan and is ready to work,'" McDonald explained.

But finding suitable employment can be difficult, especially for highly skilled professionals.

"Someone may have professional degrees from another country that are not

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Portland Observer's Top Stories See pages A2, A3 and A6 inside

2005
IN REVIEW

Displaced residents of New Orleans wait days for help to arrive after Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, killing more than 1,300 people in 5 states. In the Big Easy, levees broke flooding 80 percent of the city, forever changing the landscape of one of America's most historic settlements. The storm also exposed the divisions of race and economic prosperity in America.



Humiliating Charge is Lesson in Profiling

Shopping trip
turns sour

BY NICOLE HOOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

G.I. Joes has lost a customer. On Dec. 19 Andra Caston and her husband, Jerome Sr. and son Jerome Jr. decided to shop at the Johnson Creek G.I. Joes located at 9600 S.E. 82nd Ave. but left the store upset and humiliated.

Andrea, a 53-year-old educator who has taught school for 30 years, said she was shocked to be accused of stealing.

She said her family stopped at the store to buy items for their yearly skiing trip in Lake Tahoe, Nev. Upon paying for two pairs of ski pants, store manager Jeff Gracey allegedly told them they were not welcomed back.

She said he falsely accused her of having a pair of ski pants underneath her jogging pants, an unlikely feat without putting obvious bulk on her medium-size frame. When she asked for store security to investigate, she said Gracey refused to search her or arrest her.

The store manager would not com-



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Andra Caston and her husband, Jerome Sr. accuses G.I. Joes of racial profiling.

ment on the accusations to the Portland Observer. Rob Simon, a spokesperson for G.I. Joes, also did not return phone calls to discuss the incident.

"I think I was stopped because I was African-American," Caston said.

She said Gracey admitted that her family was singled out and under watch since they walked through the store's doors.

According to Ms. Caston, she tried on three pairs of ski pants in the fitting room before returning the merchandise to the rack and finding two more pairs to try on.

She said her husband, a U.S. Forest Service worker and former employee of Tuskegee University, and son, had gone to another area of the store to look for other sporting goods.

While groups of shoplifters are known for splitting up in retail stores, Ms. Caston believes her family was wrongly profiled.

Even though humiliated by the experience, she said she was glad that her 14-year-old son saw the incident to see how racism is still alive.

"He has lead a sheltered life and as a young African-American male and he is going to face discrimination," she said.

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