

O.J. on Book Furor: 'I got paid'

O.J. Simpson is speaking out on his controversial "confessional" tome, "If I Did It."

Simpson, who was acquitted in the murders of his ex-wife Nicole and her friend Ron Goldman, explained to a Florida newspaper that he told Judith Regan, the would-be publisher of the canceled volume, "I hope this book never comes out."

"It made it look too much like an admission of guilt," Simpson said to the Palm



O. J. Simpson

Beach Post. "I wasn't happy with the hypothetical paragraphs. A ghostwriter wrote the whole thing, and I OK'd it. But there were a lot of inaccuracies about the case and about how I would have done things. But I figure I'd let it go since I didn't kill anyone."

Was he surprised that the public was so outraged by news of the book?

"I don't care," Simpson told the paper. "I got paid just the same."

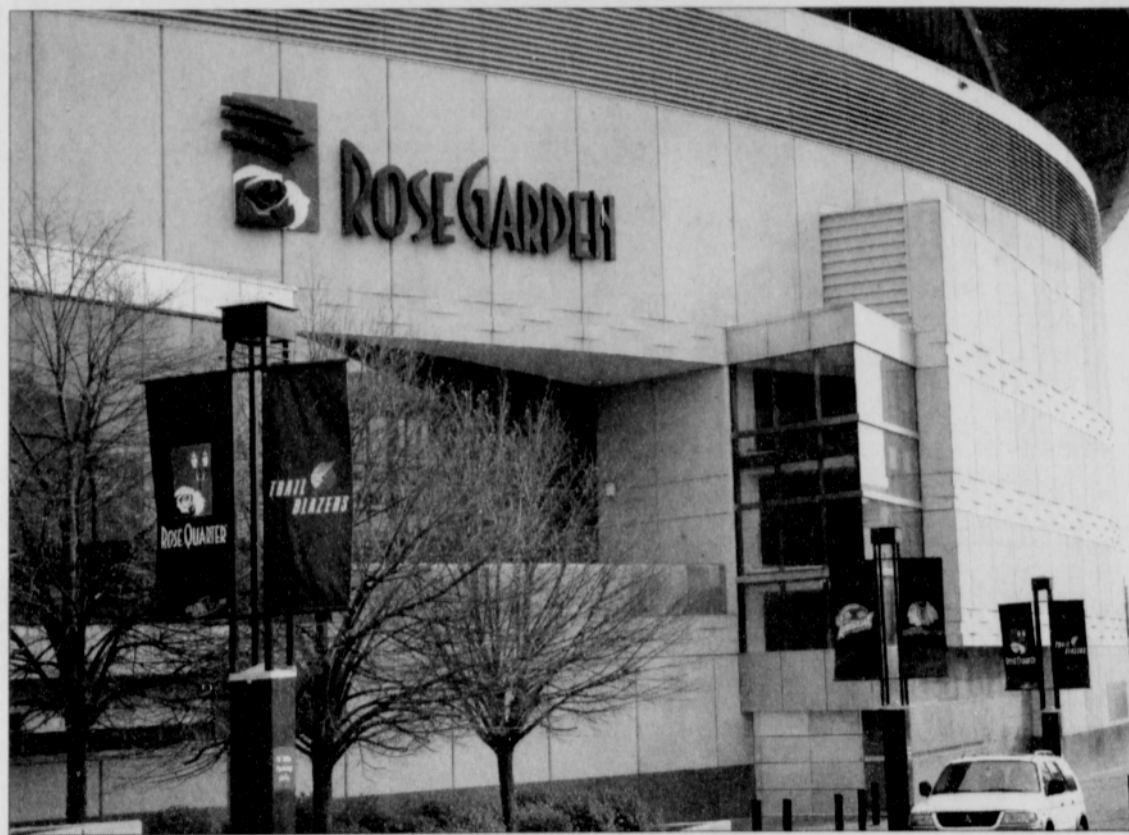


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Trail Blazer owner Paul Allen could own the Rose Garden Arena once more with plans to re-purchase the arena from a group of creditors who got control of the venue through bankruptcy.

Rose Garden Buy Back

Repurchase seen as good for Blazers

(AP) — Portland Trail Blazers owner Paul Allen said Friday he plans to repurchase the Rose Garden Arena, the home of the NBA team, after he gave up ownership in bankruptcy proceedings in 2004.

In a statement, Allen said his holding company, Vulcan Inc., has signed a letter of intent with Portland Arena Management LLC to acquire the Rose Garden through an affiliate of Vulcan. The sale price was not disclosed.

The announcement appeared to end speculation that the Blazers and the arena would be sold as a package, as Vulcan officials had said was possible last year. They had estimated last February the team could lose more than \$100 million over three years — calling the split ownership of the arena and the team a "broken financial model."

Allen said the team was suffering serious financial problems last

year as the Blazers were wrapping up one of the worst seasons in franchise history, finishing with the NBA's worst record, 21-61.

The talk of a sale had gone so far last year that former Trail Blazer Terry Porter and Mark Wattles, who founded the Hollywood Video chain in Oregon, had expressed interest in buying the team.

Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft Corp., built the Rose Garden without public money. But when the team's sister company, Oregon Arena Corp., declared bankruptcy in 2004, Allen chose to give up ownership rather than continue to pay interest on construction debt. He handed over control of the arena on Jan. 1, 2005.

The loss of the arena cost the Trail Blazers revenue from luxury suites and other arena sources, made worse by declining ticket sales.

"With this letter of intent, we've

taken a positive step forward. Assuming this deal gets finalized, it will be a major milestone which will strengthen the long-term financial health of the Trail Blazers," Allen said in the statement.

The announcement was welcomed by Thomas Luther, chairman of Portland Arena Management, who said in the release that the deal will "ensure that the Trail Blazers will remain in Portland."

"The team has long been an integral part of the community, and we believe this resolution benefits all interested parties," Luther said.

Mayor Tom Potter also said the agreement was a strong signal "the Blazers will remain an important part of Portland in the future."

NBA Commissioner David Stern thanked the Blazers and the arena company for their efforts, saying "the ultimate winners here are the fans of the Portland Trail Blazers and the City of Portland."

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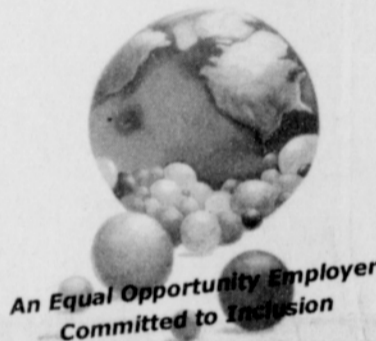
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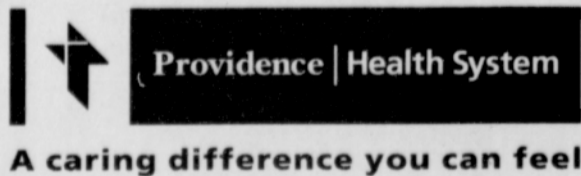
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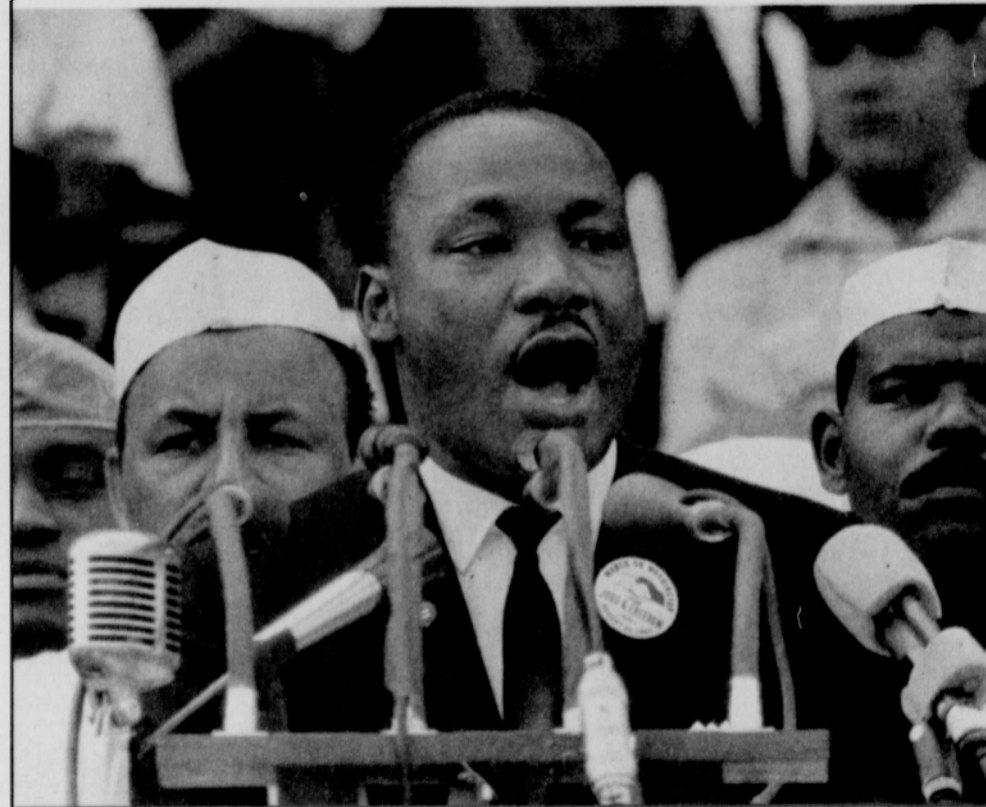


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