

Pay Your Dues with the Blues

The Oregon Food Bank benefits from the Waterfront Blues Festival, July 3-8, downtown
See Arts & Entertainment, inside



The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

Volume XXXVII, Number 25

Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity

www.portlandobserver.com

Wednesday • June 27, 2007

Week in The Review

Portland Jet Fighter Crashes

An F-15 jet fighter from the 142nd Fighter Wing Oregon Air National Guard went down off the Oregon coast approximately 35 nautical miles west of Cannon Beach at around 1:35 p.m. Tuesday. The aircraft was carrying one pilot. The condition of the pilot was not immediately known.

Harris Made Principal

Cynthia Harris was officially named Jefferson High School principal Tuesday. She has served as interim leader since Leon Dudley's leave of absence last spring. See story, page A2.

Repeat is One for the Books

After completing an unlikely run to a second consecutive national championship, the Oregon State University Beavers now qualify as a college baseball dynasty. See story in Sports, page B6.

Eddie's Scary Surprise

A DNA test confirms that actor Eddie Murphy is the father of the daughter of Melanie Brown, also known as Scary Spice of the English pop group Spice Girls. Brown gave birth in April and named Murphy as the father. Murphy has yet to acknowledge his newborn child.

GOP War Support Falls

Sen. George Voinovich said Tuesday the U.S. should begin pulling troops out of Iraq, joining Richard Lugar as the second Republican lawmaker in as many days to suggest President Bush's war strategy is failing.

Immigration Bill Survives

The Senate voted Tuesday on an immigration measure to sanction millions of illegal immigrants. President Bush said the bill offered a "historic opportunity for Congress to act." The test-vote of 64-35 was to stimulate the conflict-ridden legislation. It still faces hurdles in the Senate.

Wrestler Murder-Suicide

Law enforcement officials say professional wrestler Chris Benoit, 40, asphyxiated his son Daniel, 7, and wife, Nancy, leaving copies of the Bible next to each of their dead bodies, before hanging himself in a basement weightroom. See story in Sports, page B6.

Insider in Our Backyard

Retired general works on Barack Obama campaign

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Retired Air Force General Merrill "Tony" McPeak, an Oregonian living in Lake Oswego, has the distinct honor of serving as an advisor on U.S. Sen. Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

McPeak was contacted by the Obama campaign earlier this spring to become an advisor to the presidential hopeful. He accepted the call and now serves Obama as a non-paid national campaign co-chairman.

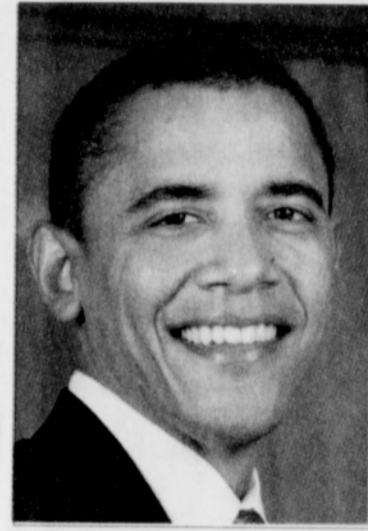
McPeak says the Democratic candidate has called him a couple times on his trusty BlackBerry, seeking advice on a series of Senate votes on appropriations for the Iraq War, including whether there should be a date for departure and what milestones to set.

"It's always a surprise when I answer the phone and it's Obama on the other end," McPeak says.

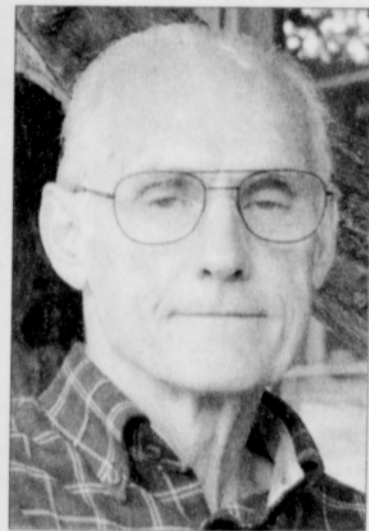
McPeak, 71, was appointed Air Force Chief of Staff by President George H. W. Bush during Operation Desert Shield and served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War.

He has a history of backing presidential candidates, but not all of them Democrats. He served as Oregon chairman for Republican Bob Dole during the 1996 presidential campaign, and endorsed George W. Bush during the 2000 election.

Before the end of Bush's first term, however, McPeak began to object strongly to his military and foreign policy decisions and has publicly denounced the war in Iraq since the invasion. He campaigned for Democrat Howard Dean during



Sen. Barack Obama



Gen. Merrill McPeak

the 2004 election and then served as an advisor for the John Kerry campaign.

"Gen. McPeak has a well-respected voice in the international community and we fully anticipate the campaign staff and senator will seek his advice on a regular basis," said Jen Psaki, Obama's campaign spokeswoman.

Now enjoying his life in a Portland suburb and working in the private sector, McPeak's heavy criticism for the Bush administration is as gentle as a blunt axe. He spoke with the Portland Observer about his role in the Obama campaign and shared what advice he's given Obama so far.

Why do you support Obama?

When I look at the field of other candidates I get discouraged. I think the cupboard is fairly bare, with the sole exception of Obama, because he's got potential. He has a pretty intuitive understanding of international matters. Not like Bush, who's never been outside a parking lot in Houston, Texas.

Is there a science to choosing which candidate to back?

No, but I've never talked to anyone whom I felt was as squared away as Barack Obama. He won't be perfect, but we have to ask ourselves, what kind of mistakes do we want to live with? He'll make the right mistakes.

What issues did you discuss with Obama?

[During our first meeting] he wanted to talk about national security issues and the war in particular. I think I gave him perspective. I'm a middle of the road kind of guy who's interested in making this

continued ▼ on page A6

Leaving a Troubled Youth Behind

Judge brings unique perspectives

BY CHARITY PRATER
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For a man who grew up in Compton, otherwise known as South-Central Los Angeles, Kenneth Walker has come a long way to become who he is today.

An African-American man who grew up in poverty and hung around friends that were into crime and drugs, Walker is an example of the obstacles in life that can be overcome with persistence and a dedication to learning.

This spring, Gov. Ted Kulongoski made the long-time Portland attorney one of only two black judges in the state court system by his appointment as an Oregon Circuit Court Judge in Multnomah County.

Walker's life began to turn around when he left Los Angeles in 1970 at the age of 17 to get his GED through a special program at Washington State University. He was then able to take his GED back to his high school in LA and receive a diploma. It was

on his return to LA that he realized the severity of crime and poverty and knew that he wanted to return to the Pacific Northwest.

"When I lived there as a child, I could not see the forest through the trees," says Walker. "It was not until I left that I could really see how bad that place really was. I knew that was not the place for me."

Once he returned to Oregon permanently, he began attending Lane Community College in Eugene where he was the Vice President of the student body. Soon, he was elected to the National Student Association and had the opportunity to live in Washington, D.C. for a year.

In 1976, he graduated from the University of Oregon where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in community service and public affairs.

"I thought that I would get a good job after I earned my B.A. but when I got to Portland I got a job as a night security guard working for \$600 a month," says Walker. "That is when I realized that I wanted to go to law school."

In 1980, he graduated from law school and began working as a general attorney. Only three years later Walker started the first African-American law firm in Oregon, which kept him busy for 17 years, until his appointment to the bench in March.



PHOTO BY CHARITY PRATER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Circuit Court Judge Kenneth Walker is proud of the diversity he brings to the bench.

"I am almost scared to tell people how fun it is to have this job!" says Walker. "There was so much pressure to win being an attorney and now there is no pressure anymore."

As a hobby, Walker is a football official for varsity and junior varsity teams.

"Being a judge is a lot like football. You call the balls and strikes. Make sure people

are treated equally. Make the game fair and let the chips fall where they may," says Walker. "The first day I was appointed I knew that this was the perfect job for me."

He now works to maintain quality and balance in the courtroom. He makes sure that everyone of every race and gender is

continued ▼ on page A3

Case Study in Legal Fight Has Tragic Ending

Lifelong diligence outshines end-of-life struggle

BY RAYMOND RENDELMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A funeral last week cast some light on the human suffering that can result when court-appointed lawyers are unfit to aid mentally-ill black men.

Johnny Orr never got the legal representation he needed to die in dignity, according to his family and friends.

An avid golfer and hard worker, Orr suffered from a stroke in 2002 and lost his comfortable suburban home.

Gresham NAACP representative Ruth Pitts-London and other advo-

ates were inspired by Orr's legal wrangling and pushed for requiring lawyer diversity-training for all attorneys, but found their proposed bill stalled this week as the Legislature session in Salem winds to a close.

"Dealing with his issue points out how much legal-representation reform is needed," says Calvin Henry, president of the Oregon Assembly of Black Affairs.

People close to Orr said that because of cultural differences he could never find a lawyer he could trust or a lawyer who could trust him.



Johnny Lewis Orr smiles in his Aloha home years before a stroke led to the repossession of the house. Advocates use his life to address the problems that minorities and the mentally-ill have in obtaining adequate legal advocacy.

Pitts-London likens Orr's story to "modern-day slavery," saying that much suffering stems from the trouble blacks have in obtaining and keeping good lawyers.

To help clients navigate legal issues, lawyers should be able to empathize with the root causes of a clients' mistrust of the legal system, Pitts-London argues.

Born in Alabama on July 25, 1942, Orr grew up amid the tumultuous epicenter of civil-rights struggles, ingraining in him an intense aversion to legal affairs that advocates say is common among minorities.

After moving to Portland and graduating from Roosevelt High School, Orr worked his way up to a management position at Montgom-

continued ▼ on page A3

PRESORT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PORTLAND OR
PERMIT
NO. 1610

Oregon Newspaper Project
UO Library
1299 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1299