

The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

Volume XXXVII, Number 40

Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity

www.portlandobserver.com

Wednesday • October 17, 2007

Week in The Review



Terrorism Drill Underway

A field next to Portland International Raceway is simulated ground zero for a dirty bomb attack with dozens of volunteers playing victims, while hundreds of emergency responders get the largest practice exercise in U.S. history from "TOPOFF 4," which runs through Friday. See story, page A2.

Jena 6 Response Denounced

Democratic lawmakers denounced federal authorities Tuesday for not intervening in the Jena Six case, citing racist noose-hanging incidents far beyond the small Louisiana town where a school attack garnered national attention, particularly that of Mychal Bell, jailed after a judge decided he violated the terms of his probation.

Money Race Heats Up

Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton has pulled ahead of rival Barack Obama at the bank and in the polls this week as both continue to crush Republicans in the money race. Clinton holds nearly \$35 million to Obama's \$32 million while leading Republican Rudy Giuliani reported \$11.6 million.



Large Cockfighting Bust

The largest cockfighting bust in U.S. history seized more than 5,000 roosters, hens and chicks from two training grounds Saturday at a seven-acre compound in the industrial area of San Diego, breaking a previous record of 2,500 birds at the same location six years ago.

Jefferson Amps Security

Security will be increased at Jefferson High School for the rest of the year following the school's annual homecoming dance Friday night. A shooter injured two teenagers in a non-life-threatening manner after the dance had ended.

Internet Policy Crackdown

Social-networking site Facebook agreed this week to begin addressing complaints of pornography or unwelcome contact within 24 hours of receiving them, allowing an independent review of the progress it makes in protecting its 47 million users.

Energy Prices Volatile

Oil extended a weeklong rally Tuesday to close at \$88 a barrel on tight supplies, strong demand and growing tensions along the Iraq-Turkey border, raising alarm bells for producer group OPEC, which voiced concern over the high price and blamed rampant speculation by big-money investors.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mel Renfro Back on Campus

The stars of Jefferson High School's last state championship football team of 1958 gather around their teammate, former All-Pro NFL star Mel Renfro (fourth from left) during a special homecoming celebration at the north Portland school last Friday. Renfro, who went on to have a 14-year career with the Dallas Cowboys, gave a speech to kickoff the Democrats' blowout against Cleveland.

See additional photo in sports, page B6.

Business Center Obstacles

Brooks won't dwell on the obstacles to family goals

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

By now Sam Brooks had hoped to start moving pre-leased tenants into a new Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs business center, but the stalling of construction on the building is only one of the troubles facing a city leader who just this summer became the first African-American president in the 137-year history of the Portland Business Alliance.

Brooks has fallen under a state investigation into a real-estate deal and faces pressure from business alliance members who oppose Mayor Tom Potter's recent decision to end drug and prostitution exclusion zones that disproportionately targeted people of color.

Never one to dwell on controversy, Brooks, 62, says he will concentrate instead on human-capital investment, "grooming the next generation" of minority businesspeople and leaders.

He pledges to continue serving minority communities as long as he has "the opportunity to make some things happen," but says that he's starting to feel the tiring effects of old age and has set July 2009 as his date to leave his title of "president" behind.

In addition to OAME and the business alliance, Brooks serves as president of S. Brooks and Associates, a consulting and staffing company, with his daughter, Simone Brooks positioned to take over general management.

The family is not unique in noticing the ease with which Simone could become head of the firm. People already often see "S. Brooks" in the name and ask if she's president, prompting her to say, "Not quite yet, but it does make things convenient."

Resources for a new OAME building have been more difficult to organize.

The theme of his keynote address to a minority leadership conference at Jefferson High School this month was "No one can stop

you but you," but many obstacles have been placed in front his dream to have a new facility for minority entrepreneurs.

The present headquarters, which takes up the block between Vancouver and Williams Avenue at Skidmore Street, had Atlas Sheet Metal as its previous tenant, "so everything in it is pretty much jury-rigged" for its current manifestation, according to Brooks.

Saying the delays in constructing a new center have nothing to do with his longtime business partner

tenants express satisfaction with the opportunity to operate at a professional site that allows them to interface with many other minority businesspeople.

"They do a great job making it welcoming, and I like that I get to network with the other micro-businesses," says Sharon Maxwell-Hendricks, whose contracting firm, Boanerges Group, moved out of her house this summer to set up shop at OAME's more "accessible" site.

With his tenants happy, Brooks,



Sam Brooks



Simone Brooks

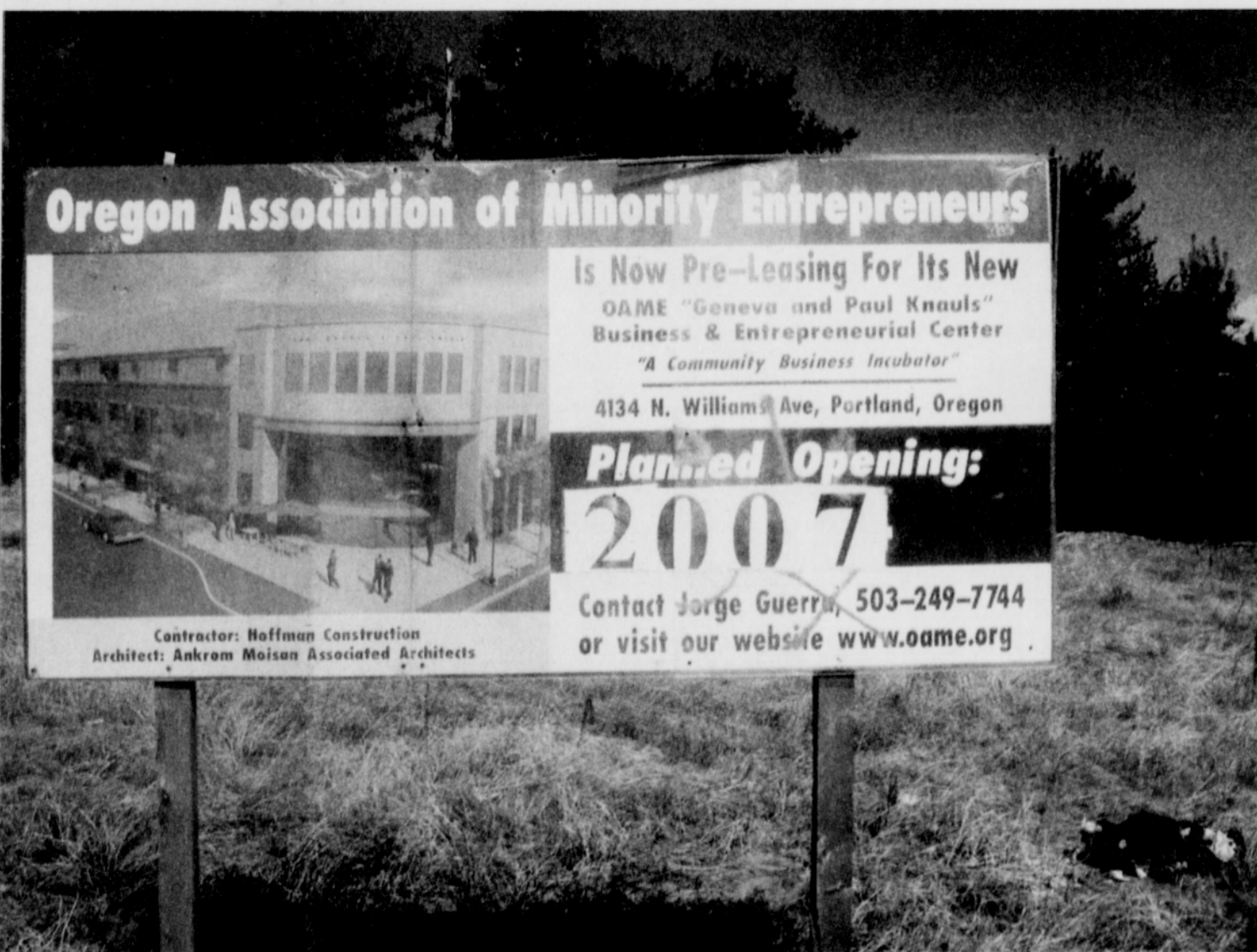


PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A billboard advertising the future site of an expanded Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs business center on North Williams Avenue shows signs of age with a planned opening date that misses its mark.

Jorge Guerra giving up his role as project manager by moving to Puerto Rico this summer, Brooks cites the recent jump in construction costs as the primary factor in postponing the project indefinitely, forcing him to look for investment partners and possibly share a larger space than the previously envisioned 50,000 square feet.

Even amid standard walls and lighting in the current 40,000-square-foot former factory, most

the self-proclaimed wheeler dealer, can be patient, having seen enough setbacks become paybacks to never despair over business delays.

Growing up on a farm in Tennessee, he remembers his family seeing education as his only hope for a good life. After a few years in Vietnam, he bided time for 10 years as an Oregon Employment Department worker, eventually running a workforce incubator at Portland Community College.

OAME moved to its current location in the late '80s with Tektronics as its anchor tenant, but the company soon returned to Beaverton. The resulting vacancy left the owner of the building, then PacifiCorp, with a large space that its power-company trucks couldn't utilize without disturbing the community.

With much more debt on the property than it was worth, Brooks recalls striking a deal: "I think we

can actually make a go of it, but you got to give us the building."

A similarly economical transaction has led to the Oregon Department of Justice's decision to open a review of a real-estate transaction on Northeast Alberta Street between OAME and Brooks at a below-average price compared to others in the area.

But the many factors to calculate

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