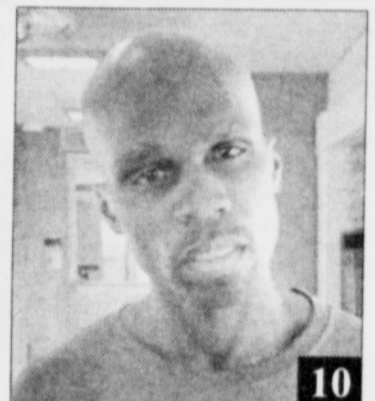
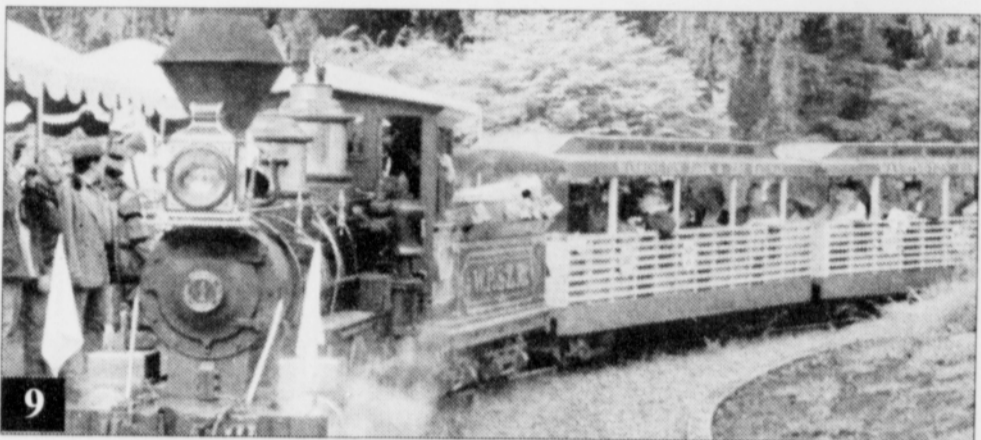


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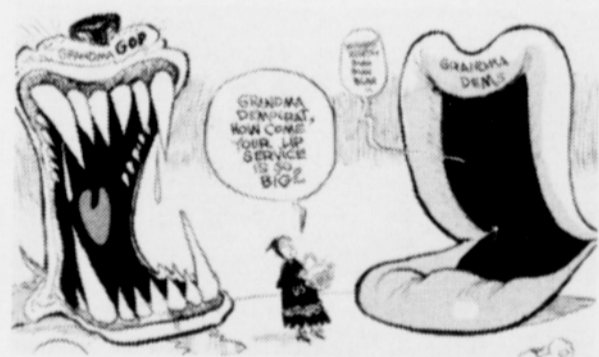
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What's on your list today?

LOCAL NEWS

Bicycle Safety First

Busy streets get the red flag

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Corry Huff has almost been clobbered more times than he cares to remember riding his bike through Portland.

Last summer, he was riding his bike downhill on Barbur Boulevard in southwest Portland when a minivan pulled out in front of him. He slammed on the brakes missing the van by inches.

"She was completely oblivious," said Huff of the driver's reaction when he confronted her. "Had no idea I was even there."

As the soggy seasons give way to summer and more Portlanders take to the streets on bikes, scenarios Huff went through might become more common. But there are a couple things that cyclists and motorists can do to make the road a safer place.

One of the big things bicyclists can do to stay safe is to stay off roads that aren't meant for bikes.

According to Greg Raisman, traffic safety specialist with the Portland Department of Transportation, 80 percent of bicycle crashes occur on 30 percent of streets. Most of those streets, said Raisman, are arterial streets—i.e. Martin Luther King Jr. and Columbia boulevards—designed for swiftly moving vehicles, not bicycles.

The city has invested heavily in bike lanes and a network of "neighborhood greenways," which are roads that have sparse and slow moving car traffic and are more suited for walking and riding bikes. If you want to enjoy the city on two wheels, said Raisman, stay on these streets.

According to Raisman, about 24 percent of Portland is within five miles of a neighborhood greenway, and the city is on track to get 90 percent.

"We're on track to build a network that connects the entire city," he said.

Steph Routh, the director of the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, said that new cyclists will try to stick to the side of a road to let drivers pass by, and will duck into gaps between parked cars to give motorists maximum space. This may seem like a



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Willamette Pedestrian Coalition Director Steph Routh puts safety first by not riding her bicycle on major thoroughfares that accommodate automobiles but little else, like Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard behind her.

good way to share the road, said Routh, but it could put cyclists at greater risk when they unexpectedly emerge from the gap.

Although bicyclists are only required to have front and back lights, Routh said it's a good idea to get reflective tape on both sides of the bike.

"I think drivers really appreciate it," she said.

Margaux Mennesson, spokesperson for the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, encourages bicyclists to ride defensively, and seconds Raisman's suggestion to stay on the back roads.

"We generally encourage everyone to be really aware of others on the road," she said.

A common mistake of people who may only take to two-wheels occa-

sionally is passing through intersections on the side of a car. Mennesson said that bicyclists can easily put themselves in a driver's blind spot and in harms way.

According to analysis of Portland Police Bureau data by the BTA, about 13 percent of all accidents that occur are due to a cyclist running a stop sign or traffic signal to about 11 percent for drivers. One of the most common causes of an accident is when a driver makes a turn in front of a bicyclist, often referred to as a right or left hook, which makes up about 15 percent of crashes.

Mennesson also encourages drivers to keep their eyes peeled for bikes on the road. Routh also adds an even more basic word of advice.

"Relax, you'll get there," she said.