

# The Portland Observer



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Special edition features inside

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'City of Roses'



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PHOTO BY JOESPH HARRISON PHOTOGRAPY

One of the first African-American residents in Vancouver, and a link to the origins of a black community that started with the shipbuilding jobs of World War II, Ida Jones (right) celebrates her 100th birthday with Bertha Baugh, another one of Vancouver's first African-American residents. Both women have served as community activists and leaders for more than 65 years and neither of them show any signs of quitting.

# Enduring Courage

## Generations follow first black families

BY JANE ELDER WULF

After Pearl Harbor, when Henry J. Kaiser built his shipyards in Vancouver and north Portland, workers poured in from all over America to restore the Navy's Pacific Fleet. Among these were the first African Americans to establish a presence in Vancouver.

Portland already had a settled black population, and

connections with Portland were strong from the start, but the African-American newcomers across the river found themselves breaking ground.

"We never saw so many white folks in all our lives," some of these new residents recalled in interviews for the book *First Families of Vancouver's African American Community: From World War Two to the Twenty-First Century* (published last March by Vancouver NAACP #1139). "And they never saw so many black folks, neither! But we got the job done."

By war's end, 9,000 African Americans were living in Vancouver.

Mrs. Ida (Oliver) Jones, who turned 104 last year, was one of those shipyard workers. A welder, she was going onto the dock one morning when she heard loudspeakers announce the war was over.

"We went home and wondered what we were gonna do," Jones said. "A lot of people left, but we made up our minds we were gonna stay."

While most of the black workers did find it easier to leave the Vancouver area for other pursuits, for Jones and others, Vancouver was home by then. They formed

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