

# She Gets Help for the Needy

By DAN H. SELLARD  
Of The Register-Guard

It's been a rough winter for Mary Zunke, the woman who won't take "no" for an answer. Every winter is a bad one for Mrs. Zunke—her people suffer most when it's cold.

But this past winter has been particularly bad because the official welfare agencies have been short of money. In addition to helping those who can't qualify for formal aid—but whose hunger is no less because they are newly-arrived in Oregon—Mary has been able to find clothes and food to tide over families facing both unemployment and curtailed official assistance.

It's been nearly eight years since Mary first was asked to assist a family. In helping this family to a new start she found that it is possible for a woman with no means to help many.

No means? Yes, and no. Mary has no money to give away. She has barely enough for herself. But she's wealthy in other ways. She has a heart about as big as one can imagine. She has unbelievable "hustle" in a woman soon to be 75 years old. And she has other attributes highly-valued in this hectic world—a fine sense of humor, a practical way of getting things done and a deep sense of humility.

## HARD TO GET STORY

It's hard to get the whole story of Mary Zunke. She refuses to talk of herself and insists on telling about her people. But eight years of answering her telephone requests for "ads" to call attention to some family's needs and eight years of following her about on her "calls" affords an insight. The woman's attitude is the key. She's helped hundreds but gives the credit to the people who help her help the poor. She is an angel to the downtrodden and the hungry.

Yet there isn't a santimonious note in the woman's makeup. Mary doesn't "do good" for personal satisfaction, there's too much to be done to allow time for such a luxury.

Mary's been in a hurry for eight years. That first family was only a beginning. Now, Mary's job takes all her time and effort. The approach is simple. Just perseverance. It's almost impossible to refuse Mary Zunke one of her requests.

## NEW ARRIVALS

She hears of a family. It's fresh from Oklahoma, or California, or Arkansas. Or maybe Georgia. They're in Eugene but that's all. The car is broken down. The five or six kids are shabby and hungry. Father has no job. More often than not, mother is pregnant.

The family can't qualify for public welfare since the members are not residents of the state or the county. Other agencies can't help because of other facets of eligibility.

Mary gets on the phone. And she stays there until the family has been promised food, clothing, housing and until the breadwinner has the "boost" often neces-



(Register-Guard photo, Wilshire eng.)

**JUST CHECKING up on her "people" was Mary Zunke when the photo was taken the other day. The family knew Mary well, for it was she who helped them when they needed help the most.**

sary to get him back on his feet. Direct action. No questions, no red-tape. No eligibility requirement. Mary only says to herself, "Those kids have got to be fed."

Call after call. No "fooling around." Just "will you do this, will you do that?" Mary briefly outlines the family's plight and makes her requests.

## GETS RESULTS

And results she gets. She has a circle of friends to which she constantly turns. These friends have other friends. A pair of pants here, a sack of spuds from another place. Bedding. Diapers. Shoes.

Since Mary's in a hurry, she has little patience. She is aggressive almost to a fault. By her direct approach she sometimes offends.

But she's impervious to this. There's a job to do and no one else will do it.

The whole gamut of human distress goes through the front room of the green house with yellow shutters at 477 E. 3rd Ave. But Mary's done a lot of living in her 74 years and nothing shocks her. She calls a spade a spade and can be brutally frank.

Nearly always, when a family comes to her attention, it's in dire straits. Things just couldn't be any worse. But Mary isn't a court of last resort. No, she's just a friend in a strange city.

**RECALLS SOME PEOPLE**  
In her tidy kitchen last week, Mary sipped at a cup of coffee and allowed herself to reminis-

grain of salt. Mary led the photographer to the place and there the family was sharing quarters with a bunch of mangy cows.

The story in the paper did the trick and another of Mary's families was put up in quarters suitable for human beings.

There are a lot of stories. This winter alone, Mary has had as many as eight families on her active list at one time. Just a few weeks ago, she hauled a box of groceries out to a family, then found out about another bunch of people "just as bad off." Another trip, another box of groceries.

## NO LINE DRAWN

To ask if there's any line drawn for race or religion is an insult. She's never even thought of such a thing. Colored folks have benefited most from the woman's work.

There is one line, though. She won't help a "drinking man." She considers liquor a scourge. But she'll help the man's family. "Those kids don't have any blame for what that man does," she rules.

She never handles money. When she takes half a dozen pair of jeans or a bundle of diapers out, she knows how they'll be used. No so with money. "The old man" might take the money and buy wine. Mary makes no such mistakes.

Now, after eight years of having people come in at all hours of the day or night for help, Mary can point here or there and show where the help has meant a whole new life. There's a neat little house north of town where the kids are happy and healthy. A few years ago, the family was in Mary's living room seeking a meal.

Some of the families drift away. Some "fall apart." Others she never hears of again. And some come back for more help.

## NO ANSWER

Mary has no answer as to what makes "her people" the way they are. But her husband, Bob, gives a solution.

"There's one answer. Adult delinquency." He illustrates. When a family is on the rocks, it's because of Mom or Pop. Sure, admits Zunke, there are conditions and circumstances. But he insists there's always a parent to blame.

Sometimes it's drink. More often, one or other of the adults lacks the "spunk" to make a way in life. "Having too many kids" is also one of Bob's reasons for the down-and-outers.

It's for Mary's husband to help give the credit. He says "the biggest thing that woman does for these people is to give them a little push to get started again. Sometimes a meal can start a new life."

A medal could be cast, inscribed with Mary Zunke's name and listing her achievements. But a higher reward is due.

Some scientists believe that brick was manufactured as early as 12,000 years ago.

# Welfare Needs Go on Ballot

(Continued from Page 1)

jumped from 128 in 1951 to 153 last year.

For aid to the permanently and totally disabled, the monthly average increased from 40 in 1951 to 75 in 1953.

Aside from case load increases, the welfare problem is growing more acute because of the county's limited funds within its regular budget.

Despite heavy timber receipts, the county still has had to levy a property tax right up to its base limits to finance its yearly program.

## NEED SPECIAL VOTE

Lane County's tax base is now \$910,390. This excludes \$110,000 in special levies which are not computed within the 6 per cent limitation.

The county's base during 1954-55 can be increased only 6 per cent—to \$965,013 without a special vote of the people.

Commissioners said Friday it is mandatory that the county budget sufficient revenue to meet growing welfare needs. This means that if the special levy is rejected the money must come out of the county's "base budget."

Petersen said Friday that if this should happen it would mean a virtual halt to the county's road improvement program.

## ROAD PROGRAM

"We wouldn't have enough money to do much, if any, paving work. Minimum maintenance would be all the county could finance."

At present, not a cent of general road fund money is raised by a property tax. Expenditures are offset in this way:

Gas tax apportionment, \$700,000; forest service timber receipts \$975,000; O & C receipts, \$274,500; cash on hand, \$285,000; court fines, \$80,000; miscellaneous, \$74,000.

From this it is seen that the entire road program hinges on the amount of receipts the county is likely to receive during the fiscal year. If receipts drop sharply, the program could be drastically curtailed, Petersen said.

Since the commissioners are expecting a \$500,000 reduction in timber receipts, other funds are needed to insure a continuance of the current expenditure rate for permanent road work.

The key to the situation rests with the welfare levy. If taxpayers vote the special tax to finance the welfare program, there will be sufficient revenue to operate all county departments adequately.

The commissioners were not sure just how they would handle the problem if the welfare levy is rejected.

# Java Padders Needn't Tell The Customers

SALEM (AP)—Oregon eating establishments which use a coffee "stretcher" to pad out their coffee will not be required to post signs telling customers that something has been added to their cup of java, the State Department of Agriculture said here Saturday.

The department said that a regulation put into effect in 1941 under the Oregon food act was being rescinded. Department spokesmen said that after study by the department's legal staff it was decided the regulation exceeded the provisions of the food act.

The department said, however, that proper labels will be required on all packages of the coffee stretcher which are sold as such.

# Hummingbirds Herald Spring

Mrs. Roy Bert's hummingbirds are back again for their 20th consecutive season at her 206 Howard St. home, she reported Friday.

This year they arrived on March 19 and headed straight for her wild currant bushes, as they've been doing for the 20-some years she has been observing their habits.

Lacking the regularity of the Capistrano and Meridian Bridge swallows, the hummers, nevertheless, manage to make it in the month of March, the earliest date of their arrival having been on a March 12, the latest a March 28.

Mrs. Bert's hummingbirds, however, were not the first to appear in the Eugene area. Mrs. Lloyd Elliott, on DeLay Drive, reported last week that the tiny birds had been around her place for several days.

The Onion Editor was too busy trying to clean up last summer's garden refuse to record the exact date of the arrival of the spring harbingers.

# Veterans Draw Jobless Pay

SALEM (AP)—Oregon veterans of the Korean War have drawn \$1,155,034 in federal unemployment benefits since the program started 18 months ago, the State Unemployment Compensation Commission reports.

Returning service men can get a maximum of \$26 a week for 26 weeks, but only 155 have drawn the full amount. Claims have been filed by 8,269 Korean veterans, but thousands of them have been placed in jobs by the State Employment Service.

Payments to veterans of World War 11 in Oregon totaled 32 million dollars.

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