
Go After the Pushers

To The Editor: Many community people came to the Arbor Hill Community Center to listen about drug abuse, with the workshop. Many concerned community people were waiting for a chance to listen to the Albany District Attorney, who failed to appear because he had made other plans to be at a Boy Scout program.

The D.A. sent two people in his place, one an assistant D.A. and the other, an investigator. The Assistant D.A. introduced him, then started talking about a program the D.A. has. Its name is District Attorney Readiness Team (D.A.R.T). This young man said this program is made up of community people. Mr. Van Dyke asked, "Who are these people?" The assistant D.A. could not answer, because he had no knowledge. The only knowledge he had was to explain what sections of the law would pertain to the drug addict. This would only apply if the addict is arrested.

Many of the people at the meeting were more concerned with what and how the D.A. was going to use his office to make some real arrests. We were more concerned with the arrest of the big and little pusher. Once this starts to happen then we can focus our effort in dealing with the user through drug programs and maybe eliminate most drugs from our community. If the D.A. cannot respond to the Inner City needs, then he should step aside or hire a better investigator.

Come on, Mr. D.A. Albany is waiting.

GORDON D. VAN NEOS
SAM E. McDOWELL

Albany

2/6/72

*J. Gordon D Van - Ness, when to Dr King - funeral in Atlanta, Georgia
also when to Memphis where the shooting took place "1968" A YEAR OF ^{good} ~~men~~*



MOMENTS AFTER THE SHOOTING—Aides point out to police where the shot came from that struck their leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who lies fatally wounded at their feet on the balcony of the Memphis, Tenn., motel. The photograph was released by Life magazine, which obtained it exclusively from photographer Joseph Louw of Public Broadcasts Laboratory. Louw was in Memphis on assignment as assistant producer of a television show on Dr. King's planned "poor people's march." He was in his motel room two doors from Dr. King's when he heard the shot, rushed out and photographed the scene. (Copyright 1968 Time, Inc., via AP Wirephoto).

Gordon Van-Ness started fund RAISING Drive for these fire victims, which no Agency would help until, some one made a start. He is the man



OCCUPANTS SAFE—Twelve people became homeless as a result of a fire that began in the rear of a frame dwelling at 136 Knox Street in Albany early today. Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Burke and their six children resided on the first floor. They had to seek refuge with neighbors. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Grady, who reside on the 2d floor, and their two children are in Cleveland, Ohio, and unaware of the fire. The fire spread to the adjoining home at 138 Knox Street, but occupants names are unknown. There were no reported injuries at the two-alarm fire, which was reported at 4:27 a.m.

Obituaries

Gordon Van Ness, 50; founder of 'Brothers' civil rights group

By Craig Brandon

Staff writer

ALBANY — Gordon Van Ness, a founder of the city's home-grown civil rights group "The Brothers" and a lifelong crusader for the local black community died Thursday. He was 50.

He was a boxer's son who saw discrimination firsthand and took an active, and often dangerous, stand against racism and bigotry.

He was arrested several times for disorderly conduct during civil rights protests in the 1960s.

He met the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other national leaders of the civil rights movement and lived to see the day when a black could run for president and hold some of the top jobs in state government.

Earlier this year, as the main organizer of the Brothers reunion, he looked at the progress blacks had made and felt his place in the city's history was secure.

"Most people find it hard to remember when there were no blacks in the police department or fire department," he told *The Times Union* during an interview earlier this year. "Blacks had no political power. We were just votes the machine could buy for \$5. The Brothers made them realize we were a threat. After that blacks could never be taken for granted."

He was one of the black leaders William Kennedy interviewed for Kennedy's informal history "O, Albany!"

As a member of the Brothers during the civil rights unrest of the late 1960s, he patrolled the streets of Arbor Hill, defusing confrontations between blacks and police and helped set up community programs to help blacks find jobs and housing.

That work continued for the rest of his life. At the time of his death he was active in minority adoption programs, president of the Albany black veterans group, the NAACP, the Urban League and a member of the Albany Human Rights Commission.

One of his last accomplishments and the fulfillment of a longtime dream was the opening of a Community Referral Center on Clinton Avenue to help minorities find their way through the maze of red tape involving utilities, welfare, housing, schools, police and drug abuse. It opened earlier this year.

"What we found in the '60s is still here in the '90s," Van Ness said in the interview. "People just don't know where to go for the services they're entitled to, and we're basically

trying to build the bridge to close the gap."

The Rev. Clarence Newton, a fellow founder of the Brothers, a longtime friend and fellow founder of the referral center, said Van Ness was the type of man who came along only once in a lifetime.

"He was one of the dedicated Brothers right from the beginning," he said. "One of his dreams was to set up this referral center and we did that together. He was a brilliant man, always striving for the next goal. He was a quiet man, but he was always there to help. He never turned anyone down."

One of his motivations for organizing a Brothers reunion earlier this year, he said, was to make sure the group's efforts were clearly understood by the younger generation of blacks.

His own son and granddaughter, he said, knew little about the civil rights movement and he hoped that their work would not be forgotten. Friends said it was now seemed as if Van Ness was setting the record straight in preparation for his untimely death.

"Most people have forgotten about us," said Van Ness, "and that's too bad."

Van Ness was undergoing treatment for cardiac arrhythmia and died of a heart attack.

He was employed as an affirmative action officer for the state Health Department for more than seven years. He counseled individuals who said they had been treated unfairly and gave them career guidance.

Lee VanDeCarr, Van Ness' immediate supervisor in the department, said he was "a very caring person who always had times to discuss your needs. He had good, solid advice for everyone. He was respected, not only because he was a good employee, but because he was a good person too."

He is survived by his wife, Mildred; two sons, Melvin Van Ness of Albany and David Van Ness of Albany; a foster son, Emanuel McBroom of Albany; his parents, Richard and Carrie Benson of Albany; five sisters, Mary McIntosh, Diane Gordon, Sharlene Hermance, Carol Simmons, Grace and Tammie Benson, all of Albany; five brothers, Richard Benson Jr., Albert Benson and David Benson, all of Albany, Wayne Benson of Dublin, Calif., and Tyrone Godlette of Springfield, Va.; and two granddaughters.

A service will be at 1 p.m. Monday in Union Missionary Baptist Church on Morton Avenue in Albany.

Burial will be in Evergreen Memorial Park in Colonie.

Calling hours are 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday in the church.

Arrangements are by the Garland Brothers Funeral Home of Albany.



Van Ness

Times Union
10/23/90

Obituaries

Albany civil rights leader Gordon Van Ness mourned

By Jay Jochnowitz
Staff writer

ALBANY — An estimated 300 people, including activists, public officials, military veterans, family and friends of Gordon Van Ness, packed a small church Monday to say goodbye to one of the city's foremost civil rights leaders.

The diverse group, including such dignitaries as Gen. Lawrence Flynn, commander of the New York National Guard, and grass-roots activists such as Leon Van Dyke, a fellow founder of the Brothers civil rights group here, bid Van Ness a quiet farewell, lauding him in simple, somber terms.

"He was a very nice person and he stood his position when he knew it was right," said the Rev. Norman Macklin of the Union Missionary Baptist Church on Morton Avenue, where the service was held. "He set an example that some of us can follow ... to do right by our fellow man."

Van Ness, 50, who died Thursday of a heart attack two days before his birthday, was a founder of the Brothers, who, during the civil rights unrest of the 1960s, patrolled the streets of Arbor Hill, defusing confrontations between blacks and police.

He was a member of the Albany Human Rights Commission and president of the Albany branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Albany Urban League and the 369th Veterans Association, a black veterans group.

Employed as an affirmative-action officer for the state Health

Department, he helped set up programs to help blacks find jobs and housing, including the Community Referral Center on Clinton Avenue, which helps minorities deal with red tape involving police, drug abuse, welfare and schools.

"Gordon kept us ever mindful of our basic mission of serving the black community ... and to act as an advocate and agent for change," said Thurmon Myers of the Association of Black Social Workers. That group, along with the 369th Veterans Association, honored Van Ness with proclamations. Members of the veterans group from New York City attended the ceremony.

The service was a mix of the elements in Van Ness' life. Somber comments about Van Ness were interlaced with upbeat hymns that had many of those who came clapping and a few swaying in their seats. A military honor guard escorted his flag-draped coffin out of the church for burial at Evergreen Memorial Park in Colonie.

Attending were an array of Albany figures: defense attorneys Mark Mishler and Lanny Walter, active in civil rights cases; Vera Michaelson, co-chairwoman of the Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism; Deputy Albany County Executive Jack McEneaney; Anne Pope, president of the Albany NAACP chapter; 2nd Ward Alderman Keith St. John; former 3rd Ward Alderman Nebraska Brace; and Frank Alphonso, director of the city's Equal Employment Opportunity Office.

"I think it was a great tribute to his life," said Pope. "He was a trooper. He'll be missed."

Irene A. Gebo; former state secretary

SCHENECTADY — Irene A. Gebo of Van Cortland Street died Saturday at her residence after a short illness.

Born in Pennsylvania, Mrs. Gebo moved to Schenectady as a young girl and graduated from Mont Pleasant High School. She was employed as a secretary for the state Department of Adult and Control for many years, retiring in 1986.

Mrs. Gebo was a member of the Edison Club and the Breezy Hill Club of Pompano Beach, Fla.

She was a communicant of St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church.

The widow of Lawrence Gebo, Mrs. Gebo is survived by a daughter.

Patricia Wania of Schenectady; a son, Robert L. Gebo of Glenville; a brother, Richard Zimer of Boca Raton, Fla.; three sisters, Regina Hamelin and Wanda Krawetz, both of Rotterdam, and Jane Olsen of Scotia; six grandchildren; and one great-grandson.

Services will be held at 8:30 a.m. today in the Daly Funeral Home, 242 McClellan St., and at 9 a.m. in St. Luke's Church.

Burial will be in St. John's Cemetery, Lansingburgh.

Contributions may be made to the Hospice of Schenectady.

son; a
blanson;
Sr. of
John A.
J.; and
llin of
eefe of

m. in
etery,
to the
alance
nteer
White-
ay
m C.
all
bert
six
and-
8:30
242
St.
gar-
7-9
and
eth-
ncy
us-
Pa.,
ge,
of
er,
a
es-
th-
ey,
n-
ss
n.
s-
e,
n.
e
k

ve
Ni
vi
re

ty
Fr
wa
Se
ye
wa

Sc
gr
Un

vel
ge
l
Str
Glo

S

ser
Sac
He
in
a sl
E
Ber
life
Ele
mor
M
Hun
S

G
B
Cra
died
Sara
ness
A
dra
Co.
then
for
from
H
Char
the
M
dur

EC
TI
Syc
Hos
Bo
Shev
resid
form
Troy