

Featured Writer O.B. Hill

O.B. Hill, 76, was born in Birmingham, Alabama before moving to Portland and becoming a Vanport Flood survivor. He has always been a natural performer and writer, and now records every waking moment of his life. This spring he participated in the Write Around Portland workshop in his building, Home Forward, Schrunk Riverview Tower. The workshop was a great way for him to connect with his neighbors. O.B. is currently working on his autobiography and hopes to publish it in 2018.



She Got Off The Bus

by O.B. Hill

When she was requested to move
and give up her seat she refused.
This type of behavior was not to be
tolerated by a disturbed bus driver.
He abruptly pulled over and stopped.
Getting up from his seat, walking
towards her, and making a second
request to move, or get off the bus.
That was a Long time ago. Now when
I catch the Tri-Met forty-four
going south and as it finally heads
east from Willamette Blvd, we head
up Rosa Parks Blvd., and think about
when she got off the bus, but wouldn't
give up her seat.

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Interview with Featured Writer O.B. Hill

Interviewed by Write Around Portland volunteer facilitator Amanda Gonser.

How did you find out about the Write Around Portland Workshop?

I think I saw it on a poster or flyer here. I've lived in this building over a decade, and the workshop I attended was right here in this room!

And what made you want to join?

It was a chance to meet people that I had seen but didn't really know—other tenants in the building. And it happened—camaraderie was started around this workshop table—and so now, we still greet each other when we see each other.

How did it feel to participate in the workshop?

I really enjoyed it. Write Around Portland is a great idea and really helps to stimulate your imagination.

Did you enjoy sharing your work in the group?

Oh yes, and it was easy, because I'm an entertainer. [O.B. sings a verse of a gospel song.]

Do you feel that your community in the building has changed since the workshop?

I see them passing by off and on, and they acknowledge me. They were not aware of my writing skills. In this building we are basically senior citizens and people with disabilities and it was a pleasant experience that all of the participants enjoyed it thoroughly.

How did it feel to read your writing in public at the reading?

I really enjoyed reading it. It's always a pleasure when someone appreciates the efforts that you make.

Has the workshop prompted you to continue to write?

Yes. Every day, I write. I'm in the process of writing my autobiography; the title is called *The Book of Banny, a Child of the Flood*. And I hope to publish it on the 70th anniversary of the Vanport Flood; the flood that I walked out of when I was 6 years old.

When you were in the workshop, did you have any favorite moments?

I really just enjoyed every minute and opportunity when they would give us a prompt and I could grab that up and start writing about it. And, as you see, I have saved the postcards [from the workshop facilitator]!

Would you recommend the workshop to others?

Oh yes, I think that everyone would enjoy the Write Around workshop whether they are aware of their capabilities as writers or not. It was a very good experience with camaraderie and socializing that I really enjoyed.