

Black professionals find success in white-dominated businesses

By Teri Sperry

Numbers may be few, but the achievements are many among Lincoln's black business and public figures.

One man who has had considerable success in a white-dominated field is Alan Young, owner of Alan Young Buick Inc. at 421 N. 48th St.

He bought the business four years ago, after completing training in a car dealer development program. General Motors began the program in 1972 to increase the number of black and other minority candidates for car dealership, Young said.

In the early 1960s, the average black person would have felt it impossible to achieve this position, he said. He said he does not think his race is an important factor today in his career progress.

"It is a difficult job for anybody... I'm here to serve the public," he said. "It doesn't really give me a lot of time to think about the situation being black or white. The product speaks for itself."

Young also said black franchise ownership is essential for social equality. "I think the success of any minority group is dependent on their ability to get involved in small and medium business ventures."

Blacks still have significant problems, he said, but unlike minorities in most other countries, they have opportunities to solve those problems.

"America is the greatest country in the world," Young said. "I hope that during the next generation, all blacks and other minority group members can gain the opportunity to be involved in all segments of American society."

Making Hopes a Reality

Gerald Henderson is working to make Young's hope a reality. Since June 1968, Henderson has been an Equal Opportunities Officer, directing the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights. He has experienced discrimination personally, so he finds his position as a civil rights professional especially rewarding, he said.

Henderson said improvement in minority conditions can best be achieved through the legal system.

"I don't care about the person's attitude toward me," he said. "They may hate me because I am black. But... I'm not interested in changing their attitude; I think it will change as they comply with the law."

He said education is the key to success, not only for members of minority groups, but for all people, and that schools must be racially integrated. He stressed the importance of neighborhood and business integration.

"Things change. And the real change... is that you and I get to know each other," Henderson said.

E. Shelton Burden is an attorney and assistant



Staff photo by Craig Andrese.

Lincoln businessman Alan Young

director of programs for the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women. She attributes her achievements to her drive to do every task as well as she possibly can, her willingness to make sacrifices, and luck. She said a great deal in life depends on knowing the right people and "being in the right place at the right time."

Changing Majority Attitudes

Burden said she has been able to accomplish some of the goals she has set, but she does not consider herself successful. Personal success must include improvement for one's ethnic group, she said, because, "regardless of how high a plane a black person may reach, in the mind of the average person on the street, he or she is no better than the least of the members of that ethnic group."

"I was black before I became a lawyer. I was black before I even became a woman," she said.

When she first came to Lincoln as an inexperienced lawyer seeking employment, Burden said she believes she was turned down for many jobs on the basis of her sex, race or both. However, she said her skin color has not presented problems in working with women across the state of Nebraska.

"Women are aware of the fact that the race problem and the sex problem are one and the same," Burden said. She said the problem must be eliminated by changing existing majority attitudes as well as by enacting civil rights and regulations.

"We must attack it from all angles," she said.

Although she said she faces frustrations concerning her work, her personal life, and racial issues, Burden shares an optimistic outlook with both Alan Young and Gerald Henderson.

"What keeps us all going is the hope that things will get better," she said.

Director hopes to 'energize' Sheldon

By Kelli Kellogg

Leaving the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to assume directorship of Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery wasn't a hard decision for George Neubert to make.

In fact, he said he wonders how he could have ever left Nebraska in the first place.

Born in Minnesota in 1942, Neubert, who replaces the retired Norman Geske, graduated from Beatrice High School in 1960 after living in Nebraska for 10 years. He said a fifth grade experience helped determine his career and, eventually, his return to Nebraska.

Neubert's father, who was interested in history and natural science, decided to take his three children to visit Morrill Hall.

"We saw that big elephant," Neubert remembered, "but I had a little more energy and ran to the top floor, which was then the old art department and museum."

At that time, he said he had no idea that art was supposed to be "good" for him, or that the objects around him were worth money.

But a Calder sculpture caught his eye, and intrigued him.

"It raised a lot of questions in my mind, which turned me to books. It really got me excited," Neubert said. "Why I came back to Nebraska probably relates to that boyhood experience."

The director said he hopes to give back to the gallery the energy and enthusiasm it once gave him. Beyond his duties as director, his first priority is to "energize" Sheldon.

"I think because it's been here now over 20 years, it's become something taken for granted," Neubert said.

In order to reverse that trend, he wants to expand programming and, with the help of an additional wing he hopes will get underway soon, bring in specialized shows without taking down the gallery's permanent collection.

However, he said limited space isn't the biggest problem. Neubert said he believes that university professors could and should increase their use of

Blood banks working to stop AIDS spread

By Chris Welsch

Although only one case of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome has been confirmed in Nebraska, Lincoln blood banks and plasma centers are taking steps to prevent infection through blood and plasma donors.

The first and only AIDS fatality occurred in Omaha in March.

Dr. Paul Stoesz, director of disease control for the Nebraska State Health Department, said most "educational activity" on the disease is coming from the news media in Nebraska.

He said AIDS is a possible threat only in Lincoln and Omaha, where the largest gay communities reside. Healthy heterosexuals have little to fear from the disease, he said.

Shelley Tanderup, manager of the Lincoln Plasma Center, 2021 O St., said each donor is asked to fill out a questionnaire on his or her medical history.

Some of the questions on the form pertain to AIDS, Tanderup said. If a donor answers yes on questions about the symptoms of AIDS (recurring dizziness, heavy night sweats or swollen glands) he or she is asked not to donate plasma.

The questions also cover the five groups most prone to AIDS: Haitians or visitors to Haiti, intravenous drug users, male homosexuals, bisexuals or partners to one of the above.

Sandy Czaplowski, head nurse at the Community Blood Bank, 2966 O St., said the blood bank also uses medical history questionnaires asking questions about AIDS symptoms. They also check for swollen lymph glands during the physical examination prior to donation.

Donors may decline to answer the questions, Czaplowski said, but they are not allowed to donate blood.

Don Eitel, spokesman for Phoenix-based Associated Bioscience, said his corporation has to abide by the AIDS guidelines set up by the Food and Drug Administration in March. The guidelines include questions on AIDS symptoms and examination of lymph glands before allowing a person to donate blood or plasma.

Associated Bioscience runs five University Plasma Centers across the country, including the center at 1442 O St. in Lincoln.

Eitel said Associated Bioscience has not noticed any significant decrease in blood donations as a result of AIDS.

"Being across the street from major campuses, we don't see that," (decrease) he said. "If we were located downtown in a major city, like San Francisco or Los Angeles, where AIDS are more of a problem, we might see a decrease."

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Sheldon's materials.

"I feel we can be an integral part of the educational process," he said. "I hope that professors, when giving assignments, can be reminded what a resource the Sheldon collection provides for numerous departments and colleges."

Adding to those resources is one of Neubert's main goals. A reverence for 19th century art prompted him to develop an exhibits program for the Oakland Museum/Art Department during his tenure there as chief curator from 1970 to 1980. Neubert would like to do similar projects at the Sheldon.

Historic value is one reason why he loves 19th century landscapes.

"If we had looked at those paintings 75 years ago and understood their message," Neubert said, "we would not have the problems with conservation (and) pollution."

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Staff photo by John Zoz

George Neubert, director of Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.