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Portland's lively left-of-center history is brought back to life in 'Red Guide' by John Terry

Interesting, the things found in the closets of Portland's radical past:

- The founder of the exclusive Catlin Gabel School was accused of being a communist.
- Two Tuskegee Airmen of World War II fame were from Portland; 12 in all were from Oregon.
- The principal of Kenton Elementary School allied herself with social reformer Jane Addams, played host to muckraker Upton Sinclair and hobnobbed with Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House.

All this and much more thanks to the closet-cleaning work of intrepid Portland radical Michael Munk, whose new book, "*The Portland Red Guide, Sites and Stories of our Radical Past*," is new from Portland State University's Ooligan Press.

Munk is a native of Prague, Czechoslovakia, whose family fled the Nazis and came to Portland in 1939. He's a graduate of Lincoln High School and Reed College, has a master's degree from the University of Oregon and doctorate from New York University. For 25 years Munk taught political science at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, Chicago's Roosevelt University and Rutgers before retiring in Portland.

Munk -- Internet moniker "lastmarx" -- freely admits he's about as far to the political left as one can get without straying into the lunatic fringe. He's also an engaging personality with a delicious sense of irony evident throughout "Red Guide."

The book is divided into six political eras from the 19th century to the present, each entry in each section numbered and cross-referenced to maps and photographs.

Here is where radical writer John Reed grew up unfettered by Portland's upper-upper crust. There is where the Marine Workers Industrial Union headquartered during the 1934 Maritime Strike. Here is where Dr. Marie Equi in 1918 railed against war and was rewarded with three years in San Quentin.

Much of Munk's material understandably deals with the social, labor and political conflicts that roiled local waters throughout the city's history, events old-guard conservatives would just as soon see black-lined from its history. It also memorializes many who added richly to the city's fabric and heritage -- racial minorities, social reformers, religious leaders.

Ruth Catlin opened Miss Catlin's School for Girls in 1911 on Northwest Irving Street. She dedicated it to the "independence and freedom of action for women" and drew students "largely from Portland's wealthy elite," Munk says. She turned the school over to a board of directors in 1928 to become Catlin Gabel School.

The late 1930s found her on the infamous Portland Police Red Squad's list of communist sympathizers because she was active in a group "devoted to defending the elected Spanish government against a fascist invasion," says Munk.

Brothers Robert (Ruby) and Carl Deiz, graduates of Franklin High School, were Portland's contribution to the Tuskegee Airmen. Robert flew 93 missions with the segregated 332nd Fighter Group in Europe and was featured on a 1943 War Bond poster, "one of few depicting a black person," Munk says. Another Tuskegee airman, Charles Duke, was the first African American member of the Portland Police Department.

Grace De Graff, Kenton Elementary principal, was among the founders of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, organized to urge women worldwide to "refuse to do the work men cannot do because they are busy murdering other men."

Munk quotes a De Graff niece as recalling her thinking "what the Russians were doing was a desirable state of affairs," but also "Aaron Frank (of the department store Meier & Frank) was the nicest man" for helping out needy Kenton families.

You can reach John Terry, a retired copy editor for *The Oregonian* and member of the Oregon Geographic Names Board, at terryjohnf@cs.com

The Portland Red Guide is published by Ooligan Press. For more information please visit our website, at www.ooliganpress.pdx.edu