

'CARDBOARD CASTLE' UNDER FIRE

Vets' Dorm Conditions Examined

By Joe Gardner
Emerald Assistant News Editor

Since their construction on campus in 1946, the Veterans' dormitories have been ridiculed by the students living in them, defended by the administration as the best that can be expected for a "temporary structure" and called by fire officials a possible menace to fire-safety.

Lester Barker, Eugene fire marshal, Thursday morning said that the buildings definitely fall short of the minimum fire requirements of the city building code in many respects. Among the specific charges leveled by Barker against the dormitories were the lack of incombustible doors from rooms to hallways and the sub-standard condition of the fire doors in the halls.

He also stated that fire insulation in the corridor walls and ceilings is sufficient to withstand only a 15 minute blaze. The require-

ment calls for one hour protection.

Fire Trap

Late in December, the Eugene Register-Guard ran a series of articles on Eugene firetraps. While not specifically calling vets' dorms a firetrap, the newspaper did include a story on the poor fire conditions that prevailed in the buildings. A reporter accompanied by Eldon Winkley, deputy state fire marshal, made a tour of inspection at that time. Winkley subsequently called for a complete fire-safety inspection.

The stories of succeeding freshman classes about the so-called "Cardboard Castle" are amusing, but a personal inspection by this reporter last week failed to reveal some of the charges made against the buildings. Many of the defects so often attributed to vets dorms were noticed, however.

The buildings, originally used in

Portland shipyards, are of prefabricated plywood construction.

Heat flues running the length of the halls are littered with paper and dust, a decided menace to fire-safety according to Barker.

No special fire precautions were observed in the rooms used for ironing. Windows in the doors of these rooms which would permit passers-by to detect the presence of fire were suggested in the Register-Guard article, but they have not been added. Also, according to one resident, only one fire drill was held during fall term.

Fire Doors Slide

The fire doors separating each unit into three parts were said to be out of order by the Register-Guard. Such was not found to be the case last week. All the doors checked slid open easily when released. They are fastened shut by heat fuses which are designed to release the doors when a tempera-

ture of 165 degrees has been reached.

Since, according to Barker, the combustion of wood requires a 400 degree temperature, smoke and gas fumes alone would be sufficient to break the fuses. Fire insulation at the point of the doors runs the entire width of the building.

H. P. Barnhart, director of dormitories, stated that the University has in reality not received much criticism of the buildings from the Eugene fire department. All the recommendations of the fire marshal have been taken care of and an attempt has been made to comply with all the necessary codes, he said. Greatest concern of the administration, according to Barnhart, is the tampering with the fire alarm system by dorm residents.

Heat-activated

The alarm system at vets' dorms consists of heat-activated wires running the length of the halls and into individual rooms. Further fire precautions noted in the buildings last week were 15 fire extinguishers and two direct wire phones per unit. According to the Register-Guard article, a full-time watchman whose sole duty is to patrol the area is there each night.

A total of 259 male students now live in the vets' dorms. There are no occupants above the first floor, and every first floor room

opens directly on the outside.

Every effort is being made to replace vets' dorms by 1955, stated Barnhart. Construction of a new men's dormitory is first on the priority list of non-state financed buildings. "In the meantime, the University will do everything within its power to keep vets' dorms safe for student occupancy," he said.

Prof to Attend Drama Confab

Howard Ramey, instructor in speech and technical director of the University theater, will attend the Northwest Drama conference at the University of Washington in Seattle, Thursday through Saturday. He will represent both the University and the University theater.

This is the first time in five years that the conference has not been held on the UO campus.

Representatives of amateur organizations from ten Northwest states will meet and discuss topics pertaining to all phases of theater work at the confab. The program will feature speakers from all fields of the theater including high school, university and college, civic and community, and children's theater.

'I LOVE YOU'

Valentine's Day American Holiday; Foreign Nations Have Similar Days

By Don Wenzl
Emerald Reporter

Valentine's Day is as American as hamburgers, apple pie and ice cream. But the only ones who seem to remember it are little kids and advertisers.

It is not known exactly who made the first paper heart sent to a loved one inscribed "I love you." But interviews with foreign students indicate the custom as now observed is strictly American, and that it is spreading through America's wide postwar contacts.

Janine Etchepare said that in France, a predominantly Catholic country, the day is observed as a saint's feast day and is little different than any other feast day.

"Since the war," Miss Etchepare said, "the custom has begun growth. Although it has not the commercial magnitude as here in the States, French merchants are pushing the day, and Feb. 14 is a great flower-selling day."

In Czechoslovakia, Iren Kudriavcev reports there is no such day as Valentine's Day.

"I can't remember any particular

day set aside for lovers in my country," she said. "Last year was my first experience with Valentine's Day. The custom is peculiarly American and I love it."

"Valentine's Day is for the young, and young in heart, isn't it?" asked Judith Pederson of Denmark.

"We don't have a day exactly like Valentine's Day, but we do have a day called Fastelavns Dag. It can be on any Monday in February, and is primarily for the young."

Miss Pederson explained that Fastelavns Dag is something like Halloween in America. The children dress up in costumes and masks, and go around to all the houses asking for candies, cookies or money. There is no school on this day and time normally spent in school is spent in this Danish version of "trick or treat."

"In the evening, we have barrel-breaking parties," she said. "A wooden barrel containing a cat and many gifts is set before a group of young people. They line up and each take his or her turn at trying to break the barrel with a wooden bat."

Miss Pederson said the barrel-breaking can be compared to the Mexican pinata at Christmas time. If a boy breaks the barrel, he chooses a girl to be queen and she

is called the Cat-Queen. If the girl breaks the barrel, she chooses a Cat-King.

"There is a gift in the barrel for each person at the party," Miss Pederson added.

Elfriede Kralik of Vienna, Austria, says that Austria too has no Valentine's Day, but like Miss Etchepare reports that post-war American influence has caused an increase in flower sales on February 14.

"From January 1 until the night before Lent is just one big party in Austria," Miss Kralik said. "The tempo quickens to get all the partying done in the last three days before Lent. These days are called Fasching Dienstag — days before the fast days of Lent."

"I used to go to a ball at least every other night during the party season," she stated. "There were balls every night during the Ball season. One goes to so many parties, you are glad to see the Lenten season arrive."

Miss Kralik said the balls begin at 8 in the evening and last till five in the morning. "Each boy is to dance with each girl at least once before, and once after midnight, or he isn't considered to have good manners," she said.

At each party a girl with her ticket is given a small gift like a scarf, handkerchief or some other small gift.

Jazz Band Mixer Slated For Feb. 20

"Experiments in Modern Jazz," will be the theme of a band mixer to be presented by music students in Gerlinger hall Feb. 20. Following the program, a small combo will play for dancing.

Dean Theodore Kratt of the music school will begin the program with a speech on the "Outlook for Bandsmen in 1953." Dick Stuart and Dick Ramsdell, graduate students in music, will give a symposium on modern dance music. The rest of the program, under the chairmanship of Robert Moore, sophomore in music, will consist of arrangements for large dance band, dixieland and combo groups.

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Carson to Hear KWAX on AM

Plans are now under way for the installation of a transmitter which will enable Carson hall residents to pick up campus radio station KWAX over regular AM radio sets.

According to Elwood Kretsinger, assistant professor of speech, this is part of a long-range program to wire all dormitories on campus with a direct line from the broadcasting station that can pick up all KWAX programs on a frequency of 880 kilocycles. Completion of the Carson wire will be made by next month.

The transmitter itself is being built by Kretsinger at a cost of approximately \$200 from a KRO gift fund. Commercial transmitters of the same size cost \$1800. This is to be installed in one of the steam tunnels leading to the dormitories from the physical plant. Work on the project was begun three weeks ago.

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