

The Millrace: a complex cleanup job

BY BOB JAMES
Of The Emerald

It is not likely that any student graduating from the university these days will carry with him fond memories of swimming in the Millrace. It is more likely that he will remember the Millrace as a polluted, nearly stagnant eyesore.

Early in this century, the Millrace was a fast-moving stream complete with over-hanging trees, frogs on lily pads, and scores of swimmers. According to Bob Tweedell in his book, *Millrace History*, the stream was once a center around which much of the social life of the University revolved. On a typical spring day it would be packed with swimmers and canoeists, Tweedell said.

By contrast, the Millrace in more recent years has, on occasion, been condemned by public health officials as unsafe for swimming, and it may hold little attraction for most students. But the millrace may not be lost — at least a local environmentalist, Walter Wentz, believes there is still hope.

Analysis

Wentz, who is chairer of the Committee for Millrace Development, reports that a step recently has been taken to restore the stream. That step, a verbal agreement between Northwest Christian College (NCC) and the City of Eugene to be signed at a later date, will grant public easement on a stretch of the Millrace owned by NCC. Such an easement will permit the city to make improvements to increase the flow of the stream. Wentz emphasized that the CMD would continue to collect easements for the remaining property through which the Millrace flows.

Several years ago the Eugene City Council resolved in a memo that the city would make necessary improvements to the Millrace if such easements were obtained.

City Manager Hugh McKinley reaffirmed the city's

interest in the matter Tuesday, but added, "It will have to go back to the council," since a different council exists today than when the past resolution was agreed upon.

Evidence that the Millrace greatly needs cleaning up was pointed out by Wentz as he guided two Emerald staff members along the Millrace Monday. His tour started by Franklin Boulevard across from the University, where the Millrace widens into a duck pond. Wentz commented that it is unfortunate the rest of the stream is not as attractive and well landscaped as this area. But then, "the rest is not visible from the road," he said.

As soon as one gets away from the road, trash is everywhere. Tin cans, bottles, old tires and other garbage lined the banks. Trees and branches off trees have fallen into the water, even though a number of snags had already been cleaned out by Wentz's group, he said.

A little farther upstream there were pipes at four different locations spewing waste into the water.

At the Coca-Cola Bottling Co., a pipe was pouring a whitish liquid, a few bottle caps, and bits of paper labels into the stream. A deposit of the little bits of paper, fanning about 15 feet into the stream, had formed.

Across the Millrace from this pipe was another, larger pipe. The pipe was a city storm sewer pipe, and steam was rising from whatever poured out of the pipe. Wentz speculated that someone had tapped their own line into the city's and was dumping illegal waste into the race, via that sewer line.

Another 50 yards upstream, waste was pouring into the Millrace from the Flagstone Motel while it was in the act of draining the washing machines in its laundromat.

After the tour was completed, the Emerald contacted various private and public officials, in an effort to discover why the situation existed. At the bottom of the pollution problem, from the interview results, is the fact that there exists no central sewer system to serve the area, and, as a result, the Millrace is used as a sewer.

The solution, however, is not as simple as installing a sewer — sewers are expensive, and private and public firms reluctant to foot the costs.

For example, Jack Foster, president of the Emerald

Bottling and Canning Co., which bottles Coca-Cola, agrees that the Millrace is "one of the most polluted bodies of water in the county" and he regrets adding to it.

But, he said Tuesday, he feels it is the city's obligation to provide his company with a sewer. "Every area in a city ought to be served by sewers," he says.

He is supported by Vern Adkinson of the Lane Regional Pollution Authority. Adkinson, who has studied the situation, said Tuesday that Foster "has done everything that he can to get action initiated...he doesn't want to be a polluter any more than anyone else."

On the other side of the coin, however, city officials feel there is not great enough demand to justify building a sewer to serve the residences and firms.

Don Allen, director of public works, said Tuesday there is "no sanitary system planned for over there." He said he feels it is up to Foster to build his own line to join the sewer system on Franklin Blvd.

The cost for such a line, by Foster's estimation, would be \$35,000, which he said he feels is out of the question. Foster also pointed out the sewer system for Franklin Boulevard is already at its full capacity.

Of course there are other factors involved in eliminating the pollution of the Millrace, but persons contacted generally agreed the central issue is that of sanitary sewers. Until sewers are installed, most agreed, polluters have little alternative but to continue to pollute.

The problem can be alleviated, somewhat, as pointed out by Wentz and others, if the flow of the stream is increased.

But that, too, will be no simple feat. According to Harold Babcock, director of the University's Physical Plant, it can not be accomplished "without the expensive procedure of adding pumps" or an equally expensive dam. In addition, the intake area, located on the Willamette River, would have to be enlarged and improved to accommodate the greater flow of water, he said.

Babcock asserted it will be "a very complicated solution when it comes — or else it would have been done before."

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AT THE DOOR

'Charlie' in Pocket Playhouse

Fairly good? Better than that

BY JIM HUNTER
Of The Emerald

Any time you get PhD and Masters candidates in theater appearing in the same play you assume it will come off pretty well.

When you consider there are only three actors in the cast you figure it better be damn good.

"Charlie," presented Tuesday night in the Pocket Playhouse, would have fallen in that latter category if not for a couple of irking aspects. In any event, "Charlie" is a good, thought-provoking play that holds your interest.

David Pellman, the doctoral candidate, and Martin Treat, the masters candidate, both gave complete if different performances.

Pellman played the grandfather who with his grandson, played by Lance Cooley, came to see an occultist, Treat, for glasses. The

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reason for the glasses. So Grandpa can shoot. Shoot? Shoot what? Why, Charlie, of course.

In this Slawomir Mrozek play the audience is posed the question of whether it is better to resist those urges and impulses which while not the best things to do are satisfying, or is it better to give in, rationalize and do them and to hell with it all.

Treat does a fine job in conveying his changing attitude about the shooting of Charlie. He moves from feelings of disbelief, to disgust, to acceptance and finally to encouragement.

Pellman is convincing as a tottering old codger. At several points in the play Pellman, shotgun in hand, noses around, under chairs and over couches, while Treat and Cooley are debating the merit of shooting Charlie. And Pellman, not the dialogue, holds the audience's attention.

Director William Gary got an exceptional performance out of Cooley, in only his second role.

It was the little touches that made the play move and, consequently, interesting.

Approximately halfway through the 45-minute play you come to the realization that grandpa and grandson are not just eccentric but maniacal. It came when the two accused Treat of being Charlie. They're rational?

Obviously, because Treat had objected to grandpa's shooting at anything but targets or birds, so he has to be Charlie. The "touch" involved was Treat in a chair with the shotgun under his chin while the only lighting employed was one spotlight located above the chair. Shining on Treat's upturned face it gave the impression of a grilling in a Grade-B detective flick.

Treat's metamorphosis from disbeliever to one who accepts the whole thing coming down on him is another instance. In his attempt to catch a fly buzzing around the room, Treat has his hand on grandpa's gun. Instead of ripping it from his "patient's" hands he nabs and crushes the fly.

The two unsettling aspects of "Charlie" elicited two very different reactions. Toward the end of the play the telephone rang. Fine, unfortunately it was off the hook — something always good for a laugh.

The first miscue crept up on the audience. Scheduled to start at 8 p.m. no action took place until 8:05. The first five minutes had Treat laying, reading, on a couch waiting for whatever patient or patients might drop by.

A minute or two of observing Treat engrossed in his book is dandy, but after four minutes the audience was restless and the pre-play chatter started again. Luckily Pellman and Cooley arrived in the nick of time.

Despite being a 45-minute play that should run only 40 minutes it is an entertaining visual lesson on whether one should or not, as the expression goes, do it if it feels good. The second and last dose of to do or not to do your own thing takes place at 8 p.m. in the Pocket Playhouse.