

ACT advocate addresses Demo Forum

By MADELEINE MATTHEW
Of the Emerald

Amazon Community Tenants (ACT) presented their case for the first time in a public arena Monday when tenant advocate David Mason addressed the Lane County Democratic Forum at their weekly luncheon.

Mason recounted the history of the Amazon housing project from its early days as temporary hous-

ing during WWII.

The University purchased the barracks in the early 1940's, renting them out for only \$26 per unit.

The rent remained fairly low until the early 1970's, when the housing office said that Amazon was losing money and decided to raise the rent. "The rent has increased nearly 100 per cent over the last five years," Mason says.

Tenants wanting to preserve low-cost housing formed Amazon

Cooperating Tenants in 1972, which is the present-day ACT.

Mason explained the issues surrounding the rent strike, including the problems tenants have encountered with the housing office. "They are just paying us lip service and don't want to bring students into the decision-making process," he asserted.

He added that he sees no reason why there can't be a joint effort in Amazon governance, because students in Amazon are

generally older, have families, hold professional jobs, and are previous homeowners.

According to Mason, one of the reasons graduates attend certain universities is that they may be guaranteed low-cost housing, but he worries that it may be disappearing at this University.

"The housing office has no real plan to improve Amazon," said Mason. He cited several examples of incompetent moves made by the housing office which he feels did more harm than good to Amazon.

Skirting and insulation were once removed for two years from several apartments, resulting in higher heating bills and cold during the winter months.

Last year the housing office spent \$150,000 to replace concrete foundations in certain buildings. "Today some doors don't open or close, floors have buckled, and different parts of the buildings are settling at different rates. They have subtracted from the life expectancy of Amazon instead of adding to it," Mason explained.

ACT says that if problems in cost inefficiencies are corrected, rent could be kept to a minimum at Amazon.

"The rent strike is not just over a \$10 rent increase," he explained, "but it is a catalyst for several grievances. It is over how cruel, insensitive and slow the housing office is in responding to tenant needs, and over the cosmetic ideas they have for improving the project."

Mason also said the strike concerns the inefficient manner in which the housing office operates. "They don't even know where their budget goes," said Mason. "They need an accountant and management with people skills. A great deal can also be gained by working with those who live there. Our advice cannot be ignored."

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City proposes 'Gut' solutions

By LORRAINE NELSON
Of the Emerald

A series of experiments to find a solution to the "Gut" problem on South Willamette Street gained approval by the Eugene City Council Monday night.

Proposed solutions for eliminating the noise, litter and safety hazards caused by "Gut" draggers include barricades to restrict traffic to a five-block area — on Willamette between 24th Place to 29th Avenue — an increase in street lighting on Oak Street and on the alley between Portland and Willamette Streets, a new traffic signal at 24th Place and Willamette, trash receptacles, public restrooms and an outreach worker.

Jeff Budd of Looking Glass, a Eugene youth agency, said he felt a youth worker was needed to work on the streets with the "Gut" draggers. "A youth worker would be effective because youth workers are not police and could communicate (to the draggers) on their level," Budd said.

Budd was one of five citizens who expressed concerns over South Willamette Street "Gut" traffic in a city council public hearing on the matter Monday night.

The city staff reported to the council that the police department had noted a "significant improve-

ment" over the last year due to educational efforts to increase public awareness.

Jon Silvermoon of the Friendly Neighborhood Association said he did not agree with recommendations from the city staff against activities on the "Gut" for youths. "A youth center or dances or other activities is essential," Silvermoon said. "The Gut is not only a traffic problem." He said he had 260 signatures against full barricades to restrict traffic to a five-block area as a solution.

Cordelia Ruddy of the Southtown Merchants Association said the merchants were "torn between wanting to get rid of the Gut dragging 100 per cent, but very much against permanent barricades." She said they would like to keep Friday night hours but can't. "Most of the businesses cater to adults," Ruddy said, "and no adult in his right mind will go near the Gut on Friday night. We want this area well-policed."

The Parks and Recreation department objected to restroom facilities for vandalism reasons. Silvermoon said he personally did not see them as a problem and suggested that the facilities "could be designed to lower the potential for vandalism."

Assistant City Manager A. Keith Martin said he felt trash receptacles would be worthless because

they would not be accessible to moving cars.

Martin said the six police officers who work the Gut on weekends issued approximately 300 citations during the winter months. He said citations during the summer months would probably number around 400. The most frequently cited violation is VBR — Violation of Basic Rule. A VBR

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Business student dies of overdose

A 21-year-old business administration student died early Wednesday morning, apparently of a drug overdose.

According to Eugene police reports, Randy Alan Jeitz, 1869 Kincaid St. No. 16, was taken to Sacred Heart Hospital at 1:50 a.m. after he became unconscious at his apartment. He was pronounced dead on arrival.

A police investigation is continuing.

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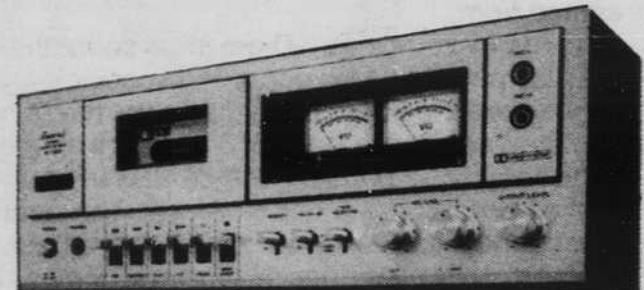
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