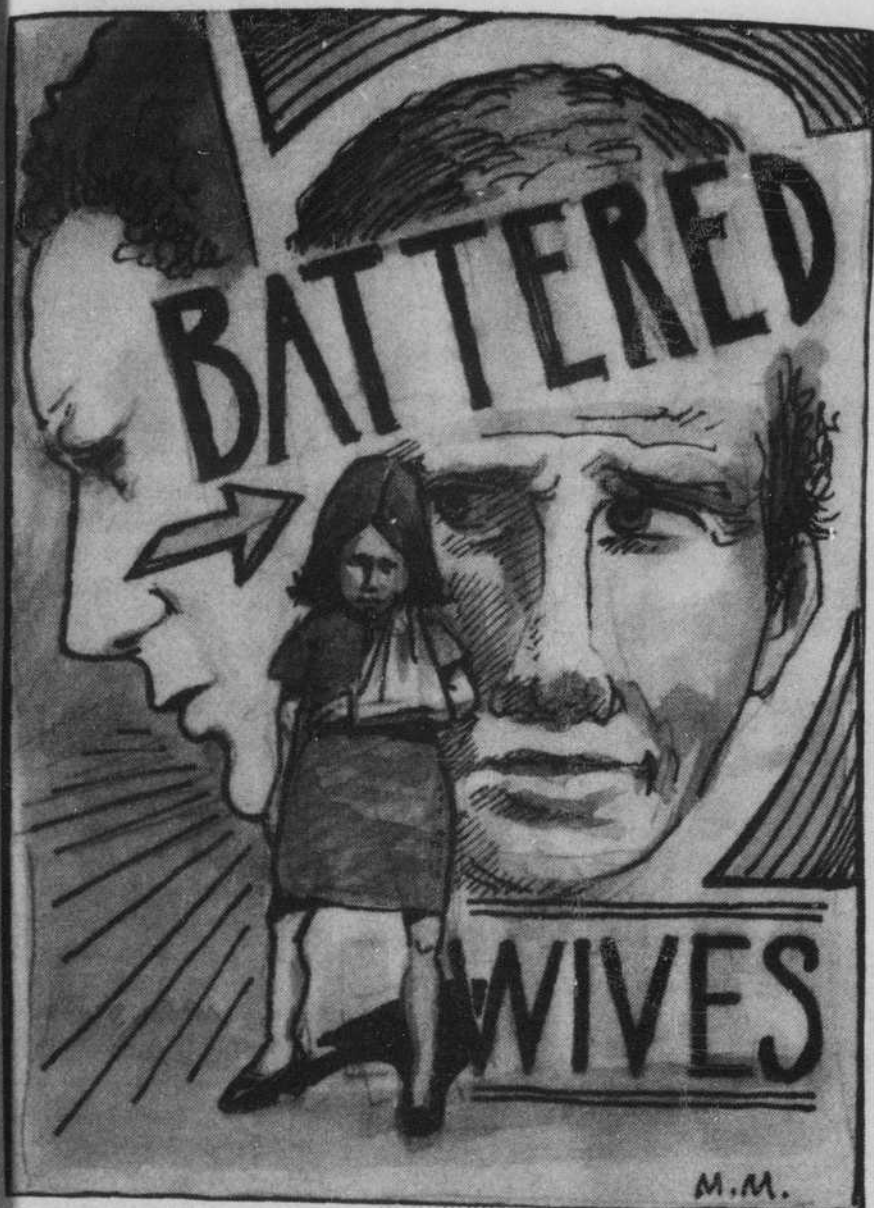




Drawing by MARGARET MUNGER

District attorney creates domestic violence division

By SHIRLEY KRAUS
Of the Emerald

It's a quiet Sunday evening. Families relax in their homes, trying to make the weekend last just a little bit longer. Suddenly piercing screams interrupt the serene atmosphere. They are coming from next door, where a couple known to have a turbulent relationship resides. The police are notified. They arrive at the scene to see the wife sitting at the kitchen table, hunched over, weeping brokenly. Her eyes are puffy, and numerous welts and bruises are already forming on her body. A leather belt lies on the floor nearby, and the husband is nowhere to be seen.

Wife beating is an old problem, but because of increased citizen interest and apparent pressure from community groups, Pat Horton, Lane County district attorney, formed a domestic violence unit the beginning of January.

The domestic violence unit is headed by Deputy Eileen Simpson. She will screen all cases, prosecute persons and maintain statistics for the first time.

Horton is also forming a victim-assistance program to help victims cope with the legal process.

In addition, a state law went into effect Oct. 4 requiring police

to arrest a person who has threatened or harmed another person in a domestic disturbance unless the victim objects to the arrest.

"We are intensifying efforts to convince and support women to help them go through with the case," says Horton.

The new programs are a result of a panel held during December on the legal aspects of domestic violence, says Shady Grove, community educator at Womenspace, an emergency shelter program. She feels it was because of pressure from her organization and other community groups that Horton formed the new unit and program.

"He's never deemed it important enough to be a crime rather than just a domestic disturbance," says Grove.

A major problem in domestic violence cases, according to Horton, lies in the fact that victims are reluctant to testify against the man involved or they object to his arrest. Horton says financial dependence, love and fear are reasons for that reluctance.

But the reasons go farther than that, Grove says.

"There is an acceptance of violence toward women in our society. There's the assumption that a man's home is his castle, and his wife and kids are possessions and he's able to do

what ever he wants with them. There's an assumption that it's okay to slap your wife around a bit to bring her into line."

So what can a victim of wife-beating do?

Womenspace, one of six shelter homes in Oregon, provides a 24-hour crisis line to victims in the Eugene-Springfield area. In 1977, more than 250 women received aid through the center, says Grove.

Womenspace also provides temporary emergency shelter for victims. Homes are provided by volunteers in the community.

Other services include legal advice, medical attention, counseling and employment counseling and referral. Assistance is also provided welfare or other financial aid, child care and child custody.

Womenspace holds a drop-in center on Mondays at 12:30 p.m. at the Eugene Public Library for wife beating victims. Grove says many women have few friends, possessive husbands and are embarrassed to talk about their situation. Many are surprised and relieved to know they are not alone.

"Many women have tried to get out before, but have had nowhere to go," says Grove. "We are helping these women stand on their own two feet."

Youth buyers target of program proposal

"Let the buyer beware" is the purpose of a program proposed by the country's district attorney's office, which would direct special attention to college students.

Pat Horton, county district attorney, announced in a press conference Thursday morning that the consumer protection division of his office has submitted a grant proposal to HEW to establish a consumer education program. The proposed \$35,000 program would employ an education specialist and produce educational materials.

The program would take a three-fold approach toward educating the residents of Lane County, according to Horton. One format would deal with the public at large, with a "basic, overview of rights," says Horton.

"The youthful consumer," meaning college-age students

and high school seniors would be the emphasized under a second provision of the proposal, says Horton. He points out that these consumers are just now beginning to make major purchases, such as cars and engagement rings.

The elderly would also receive special attention under the program. This facet was included in the proposal because senior citizens "are the most frequently cheated," says the district attorney.

Horton says consumer fraud crimes are unique because "they depend on the consent of the victim to cooperate with the thief." As such, he feels education is the only way to effectively combat the crime.

According to statistics compiled by the district attorney's office, there is a demand for such education.

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