

Report details nursing home patients' rights

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Acknowledging the fact that many senior citizens give up a good portion of their rights when they enter nursing home facilities, Ron Wyden, newly appointed member of the State Board of Nursing Home administrators, released a report detailing the legal rights of state nursing home patients two weeks ago.

The report, which is the first of its kind in the state, was released during a Lane County Long Term Care Council (LTCC) hearing on Nursing Home CARE March 10. The evidence gathered at the hearing was to go into a report by the council on nursing facilities in the area.

Wyden, head of the Oregon Gray Panthers Organization explained the report was prepared because of a "feeling of powerlessness" seniors have when they enter nursing facilities.

"There is a feeling of powerlessness that the people have when they are in the nursing homes because they have lost choices and freedom to influence their lives," Wyden said.

Most of the patients' freedom to schedule their daytime activities are limited, the report says. Much of that loss is due to administrative convenience in a group living situation.

The report is based in part on a federal Medicare and Medicaid "Patients' Bill of Rights," Wyden said, which outlined more than a

dozen guaranteed rights granted to occupants of nursing home facilities.

The Oregon report, Wyden said, should be used as a tool to ensure that the rights of all patients are not violated. It could also be used by nursing home administrators as a guideline for better home operation.

Besides releasing the 11-page report, Wyden fielded questions from nearly 40 senior citizens who attended the hearing and outlined his concern for a statewide organization of relatives and friends of nursing home patients that would help to ensure the rights of those patients.

"I'm convinced that what we need in this state is an organiza-

tion of family and friends of nursing home patients who would act as advocates for seniors' rights," he said.

That organization could be responsible to see that complaints by nursing home patients are channeled to the proper authorities, Wyden said. The organization could also provide a "statewide network" of services such as visitation and legal aid.

That organization of family and friends, coupled with the legal report, may be the answer to a problem that has plagued nursing home reform for years, Wyden said. The reluctance of nursing home patients to speak out when they feel their rights have been violated has been a problem for

several years, he explained.

"On the basis of testimony held in Lane County two years ago, it showed that patients are reluctant to speak out," Wyden said. "This reluctance is a concern everywhere in the country. It's the heart of nursing home reform."

If the patients don't feel they can speak out, Wyden said, those interested in nursing home reform won't be able to effectively change facilities that may be violating patients' rights.

The LTCC will be releasing a report on local nursing home care within the next two weeks, said Jim Davis, head of the council and executive director of the Lane County Gray Panthers chapter.

Foreign students spend vacation trekking Oregon during tour

Forty-four foreign students returned to the University this week after touring Oregon, staying with host families and visiting with Gov. Bob Straub.

"During the tour we experienced a cross-section of life in Oregon. We visited the state Legislature in Salem where we met Gov. Straub," according to Peter Ng, assistant tour leader. Ng is a marketing student from Singapore.

"We also visited Timberline Lodge, Warm Springs Indian Re-

servation, The Dalles, Madras, Lava Butte and other points of interest in Central Oregon. All of us stayed with host families when we visited The Dalles and Madras," he said.

At Madras the foreign student group organized a concert for townspeople. Students sang songs from their countries, and showed slides of their homeland.

Members of the group also participated in a mock trial while in Madras, and ended the trip with a

stop near Hoodoo Ski Bowl for a snowball fight.

"Not only did we learn much about Oregon, but we were able to share our various insights and experiences with the Oregonians we met on the trip," summarized Ng.

Frohnmayer (Continued from Page 10)

would have to cut back enormously," he says.

Saying there are no easy solutions to air pollution problems, the candidate says future alternatives to field burning might include alternative year burning, sanitizing fields with special herbicides or fungicides and developing a mobile burner.

Frohnmayer expresses great interest in the Willamette Valley Rail Study, which is looking at the feasibility of light rail transportation in the valley corridor. But, he says state funds for mass transit will be hard to come by because the need for roads is perceived to be great by rural areas, which, he adds, hold a lot of power in the Legislature.

On his proposal to allow the Oregon Senate to meet continuously instead of every two years, Frohnmayer says, "It's designed to get at the problem of maintaining a citizen legislature while enabling the Legislature to deal with on-going and continuous problems of state government."

He says the proposal would permit, but not require, the Senate to meet when the House is adjourned, allowing the Senate to do some of the work the State Emergency Board and interim legislative committees do now.

On other matters, Frohnmayer says,

— He is concerned about a lack of reforestation of cut-over timber lands.

— Energy conservation is one area for which the state could provide a "major incentive." He notes he has been notified he will probably be appointed to an energy conservation legislative task force.

— Raising basic state school support to 50 percent was a "laudable goal," but there are many other sectors competing for the money.

The most difficult thing to do in the Legislature, says Frohnmayer, is to see where the state will be 10, 20 or 30 years from now.

It is "all too easy," he says, to be caught up in short-run problems. He adds he tries to look at programs from a long-range viewpoint.

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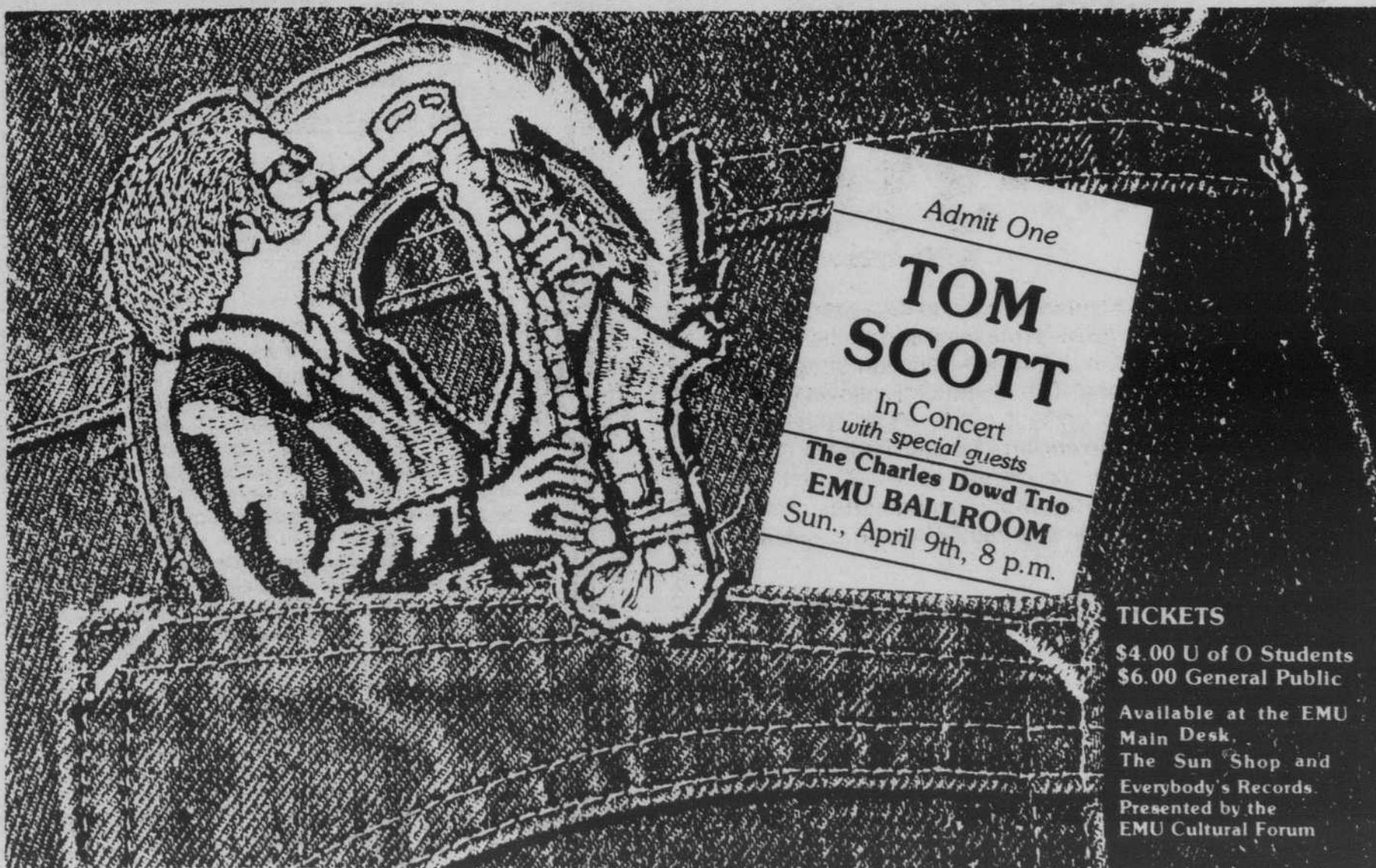
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