

Sigma Nu moves into family housing

By KATHY McMANUS
Of the Emerald

SOSC decision provokes discussion

A Southern Oregon State College decision to convert a house for married students into a fraternity isn't going over well in Ashland.

The college-owned house was one of about 55 that are rented inexpensively to married students, Phillip Campbell of the SOSC Housing Department says.

The argument against the housing department's decision rests on the difficulty married students have in finding low-cost housing.

"I don't think it's right to help single people when family housing is so hard to find," says Mary Ellen Thompson, a SOSC employee and former student.

Thompson lived in the house with her three children for seven years and says the college is unsympathetic to the needs of young families.

"Most available housing is \$300-a-month or more, and students with families to support just can't afford that," she says.

Bob Bennet, associate dean of

students, agrees that there is a shortage of "proper types" of housing for students. "The most acute problem is, definitely, married student housing," he says.

"It makes me angry," says one student. "It's discriminatory. If you're single, you can move into the dorms. We've been on the waiting list for married student housing every year."

An article in Ashland's "The Daily Tidings" reported a 75-person waiting list for the college's miscellaneous housing units in August.

Campbell defends the decision on the grounds that it provides an alternative for students. "There is a shortage of low-income housing, but there's also a need for multiple group housing on this campus," he said.

Don Lewis, dean of administration, thinks the decision is fair because more students will occupy the house.

"I think one could argue whether the house ought to be

used this way, but in weighing the facts at hand, as many as 12 students can live there as opposed to just one family with only one or two students," he said.

The house, now undergoing a \$7,900 renovation to meet fire and safety codes, will be rented to Sigma Nu members for \$500-a-month. Previously, rent was \$60-a-month.

Some question the University's outlay of funds to bring the house up to code. "It's my understanding that if a building is used for a group of students, it must meet these requirements," Lewis says. The same codes do not apply to family housing, he adds.

Lewis expects the repairs to be paid with rent revenues in one or two years. Campbell says he knows of no policy prohibiting making a profit from rents, but he says rent from the Ashland fraternity house will go into a fund for future expansion after repairs are paid off.

Donald Moon Lee, assistant housing director for the University Housing Department, says there

is a state statute that bars state schools from making a profit on rents. "All housing must be self-supporting and self liquidating," he says.

The higher rent on the house makes the improvements possible, Campbell says. "It doesn't take much knowledge of arithmetic to figure out that, financially, this is a better deal."

Better deal or not, Thompson complains that the housing department should at least repair the leaks on the roofs over young families.

Although she requested several times that the house be painted and re-roofed, nothing was ever done about it while she lived there, she says. "The rent was low, but the house was in very poor shape and very expensive to heat," she adds.

But Campbell says repairs are being done on family housing. At least two dozen houses have been renovated inside, he says.

"There seems to be a misconception," Campbell says. "That house was never bought for fam-

ily housing. The college bought these houses for the land they sit on. Most of them are very old and will be torn down. They are designated for future expansion."

"It doesn't make sense to pour a lot of money into houses that are about to be torn down," he says. "The one now being brought up to fire and safety codes is structurally very sound. We would never have put all this money into it if it weren't."

"We're not doing this for Sigma Nu. I want to make that very clear. But we need that type (group) of housing down here," he says. "I don't care if it's a fraternity or a religious group or a cooperative. I don't philosophically agree with Sigma Nu, but they have a right to establish themselves."

Meanwhile, Sigma Nu members are preparing to move into what was originally an old farm house.

The president of Sigma Nu in Ashland could not be reached for comment, but a local Sigma Nu member says he sees nothing wrong with the move. "They plan on making the house bigger later on to accommodate more members," Willy Little says.

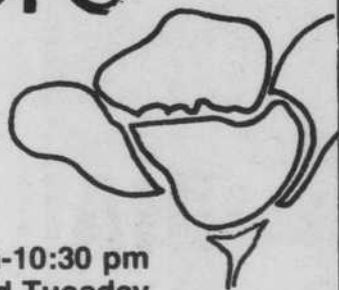
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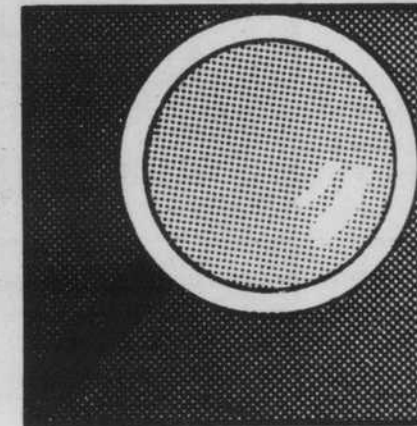
Agency plays 'watchdog'

By ERIC BENJAMINSON
Of the Emerald

First in a series of consumer reports

The darkness of federal bureaucracy parts every so often to reveal the light of a consumer-oriented agency. The Consumer Products Safety Commission may be such an organization.

The CPSC is a federal service endowed with the responsibility of maintaining the safety standards of home and consumer products. Its jurisdiction covers all those items not blanketed by other federal groups. While the CPSC does not deal with food,



drug, firearm or automobile complaints, it covers every household item not under the control of another regulatory agency.

Joe Burchyski, resident inves-

tagator at the CPSC Oregon branch in Portland, explains his one-man office is a regional representative of the main agency, which is based in Washington, D.C.

"Our primary function is to conduct industrial inspections and investigations and to check on compliance with federal safety regulations," Burchyski says. "At the same time, we also try to handle individual complaints."

The Portland office is not the agency's advertised complaint outlet. Instead, consumers with individual complaints are urged to call the commission's toll-free number in Washington, 800-638-2666.

Apart from its role as regulatory watchdog, the agency attempts to gather statistics on home accidents. Such information should aid in identifying unsafe products and in answering such basic questions as "Why do people injure themselves?" Data from these studies will be available to manufacturers to "eliminate the human factor in household accidents."

The CPSC is a federally funded, independent regulatory agency.

Burchyski says the commission is an "independent office, and is not connected with any Cabinet level agencies. Our appointments and our funding come directly from the legislative branch."

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