

Gerontology programs grow with trends

By JEFF ENGLAND
For the Emerald

As a nation we are becoming older. In 1976 about 20 million people, or 10 percent of the population, were 65 years old or older, according to Richard Kraus, author of "Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society." By the year 2,000 there will be about 32 million Americans 65 or older. The median age of Americans will be about 45.

But because people reach a certain age doesn't mean they must alter their behavior or "act their age," says gerontology assistant Prof. Kay Porter.

"My whole orientation (in teaching) is on health and growth rather than the pathology of aging," Porter says.

"Of all elderly over 65, only 5 percent are institutionalized or homebound," Porter says. "So, many more positive aspects to working with the aged exist than the stereotyped notion of being in a nursing or retirement home."

Field work with the elderly is the most important, fundamental aspect in the gerontology training process, Porter says, and opportunities for credits or for volunteer work in the community are numerous.

Friendship With The Elderly is a ASUO-sponsored program offered through ESCAPE. Lisa Pardini coordinates the program and places students in various senior agencies in the Eugene area. "A lot of people involved in the programs have done so to get rid of their stereotypes of elderly and to communicate better with them," she says.

Much to their surprise, many students are finding senior citizens who are alert, aware and have a great desire to be active, Pardini says.

Beth Dampier, a volunteer of the Eugene Adult and Family Services,

takes a small group of men on field trips once or twice a week. Besides their visit to Farrell's and the Pioneer Museum last week, Dampier has thrown frisbies and hiked up Spencer's Butte with the seniors.

"Sometimes you get to where you don't think about having fun anymore," Henry, a group member says. He pauses, and adds, "These trips — well, they're a helluva a lot better than staying in the house."

"Growing old should be a more active process, where the person is more aware of what's happening with their body," Dampier says. "It takes an active mental outlook, where you are always learning something."

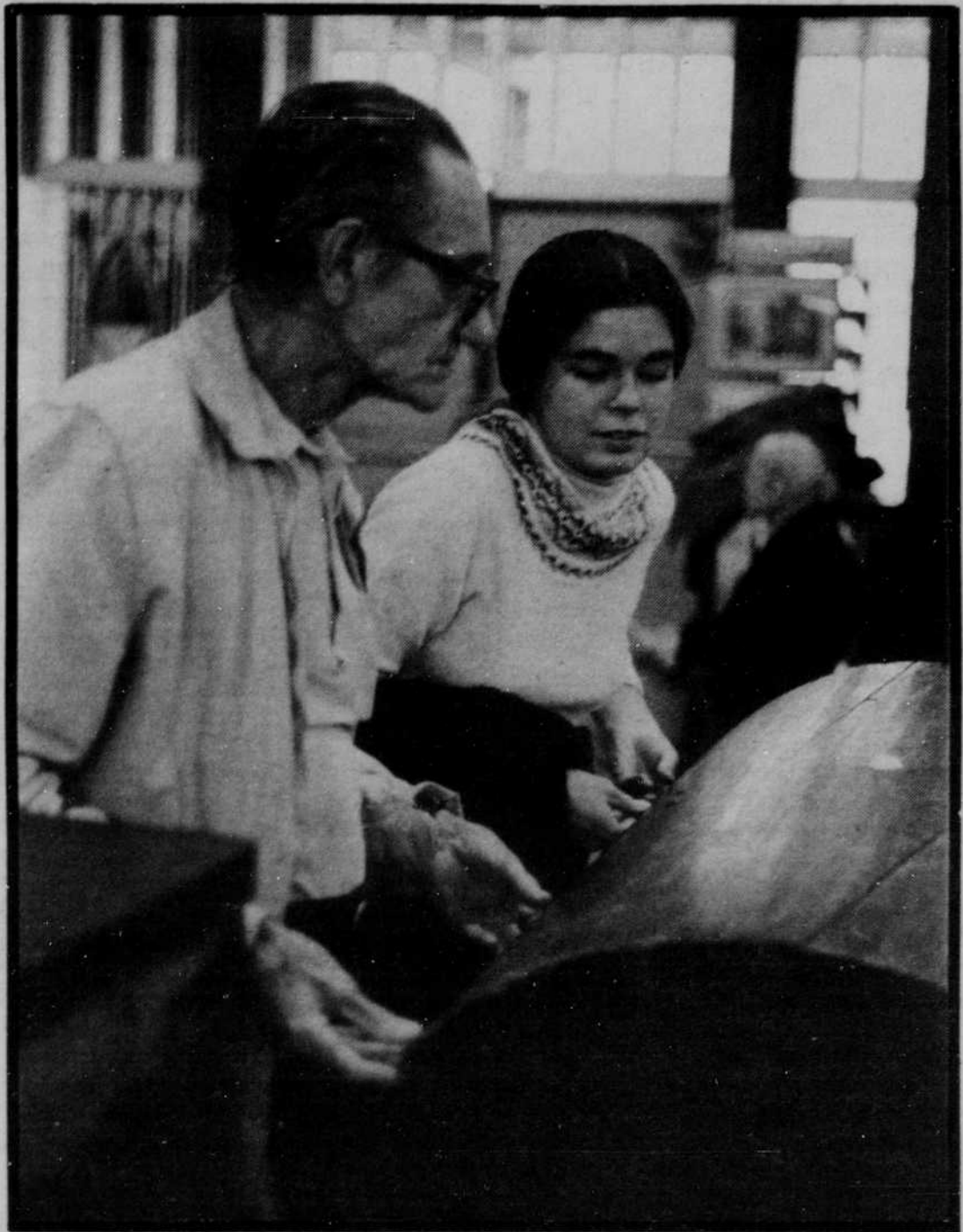
Students have an opportunity to study aging through the newly formed gerontology department's certificate, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs. Final degree approval for the department was given by the Educational Coordinating Commission in September. Courses in gerontology have been offered since 1968.

Graduate with gerontology training are fairly successful at finding jobs, Porter says. Areas where gerontology training are being applied include psychology, recreation, health, physical education, nutrition, architecture, social studies, education, and in local, regional and state administration.

Someday Dampier wants to provide an outdoor recreation program for seniors that would include river rafting, back-packing, camping, day hikes and other outdoor pursuits.

At the moment she says she considers this program dream-like, futuristic planning. But that sort of dreaming, combined with enlightenment from an innovative, well structured gerontology program can't come too soon.

After all, none of us are getting any younger.



Beth Dampier, a University gerontology student, visits with one of her older friends during a recent trip to the Pioneer Museum. Weekly field trips with

Dampier are "a helluva lot better than staying in the house," says one of her senior friends.

Photo by Martha Stanton

P.E. wheelchair pilfered

University student Mark Hanson's wheelchair was stolen from a locked P.E. storage room sometime over the weekend of October 26-28.

Hanson kept the wheelchair in the trampoline storage room because he used the wheelchair to exercise his shoulders in his P.E. class. The room was locked, and someone must have gotten into the room, while the trampolines were being used and stole it, says Hanson.

The chair is less than a year old and valued at \$750. Don Chalmers, the director of the Office of Student Advocacy, says his office is a neutral place where the chair or information about the chair can be brought without questioning.

If the chair isn't found within a

reasonable period of time, Chalmers says "we'll file a claim with the state of Oregon, asking for reimbursement of the wheelchair on the grounds of negligence in storage."

Correction

An article in Monday's issue of the Emerald about Bob Wood incorrectly identified Eugene attorney Charles O. Porter as an attorney for the city who had filed a civil suit to reclaim a half million dollars the county lost in a land exchange connected with Wood. Porter, in fact, filed the suit as a private citizen and is not connected with the city as an attorney.

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