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Reader reaction mixed

Olum, Horton scold 'Immorald'

By BILL MANNY
Of the Emerald

Acting University Pres. Paul Olum and Lane County District Attorney Pat Horton responded Thursday with distaste and disdain to the April 1 "Oregon Daily Immorald" edition of the Emerald.

During a morning press conference with Olum, talk turned from his pending appointment as University president to the content and language of the yearly April Fool's edition.

"I thought it was disgraceful," Olum said. "My feelings were most negative."

Olum characterized the "Immorald," as "infantile." Horton, meanwhile, said he was "appalled."

Olum stressed "with particular fervor," that the University has no connection with the Emerald, a newspaper independent since 1971. And that's the way the relationship should be, Olum said.

"We're not concerned with trying to control them," Olum said. "We're con-

cerned with the level of taste."

He declined to say what he'd do if he had some control, but said he plans to write the editor and register his objections. That letter appears on today's editorial page.

Olum characterized the edition's content as being at "an abysmal level."

When asked if the "Immorald" was an indication of the declining quality of student education, Olum said perhaps "Immorald" reporters were "so busy writing that stuff they never took any of our courses."

The content of that edition was peppered with four-letter words and "toilet humor." The edition lacked any "redeeming value" or "quality or purpose," he said, and the level of humor was "like a 6-year-old boy who has just discovered bathroom humor and words about sex."

Horton voiced his criticism and request for an apology in a letter to the Eugene Register-Guard. The district at-

torney said he wanted the Emerald to issue a "public apology" to football coach Rich Brooks and himself.

A front-page "Immorald" story reported that Horton had been named the new University president and his first official act as president would be to shoot Brooks.

"We can appreciate college humor as well as satire directed at public officials — but certainly not when it talks about killing people," Horton said.

Emerald managing editor Sally Hodgkinson said the Immorald's stories were clearly fiction and the Emerald would not apologize. Editor Ken Sands said he planned to write an editorial over the flap. That flap extended to several angered readers who were calling the paper's advertisers Wednesday protesting their advertising in the Emerald.

Many of those advertisers called the Emerald Thursday, and several canceled their advertising with the paper.

Olum said he was unsure what effect

the edition would have on the Legislature, which soon will be considering funding for higher education. But he said he didn't think legislators would blame all students for what a few had done in an April Fool's edition.

"It would be a horrible shame to punish the University for the bad taste and judgment of a few students."

He said he would expect such an edition to attack the University administration, but Wednesday's edition had an "utter lack of any style, wit, subtlety, quality of any kind."

The flap made front-page headlines and the local television and radio news.

The Emerald received mixed reader reaction to the issue. Several readers wrote letters to the editor, and some clipped pages from the "Immorald" and sent them to the paper with unsigned comments. One was a page clipped from the "Immorald" — picturing a hand with an extended middle finger. Posing the anonymous submitter: "Is this your IQ?"

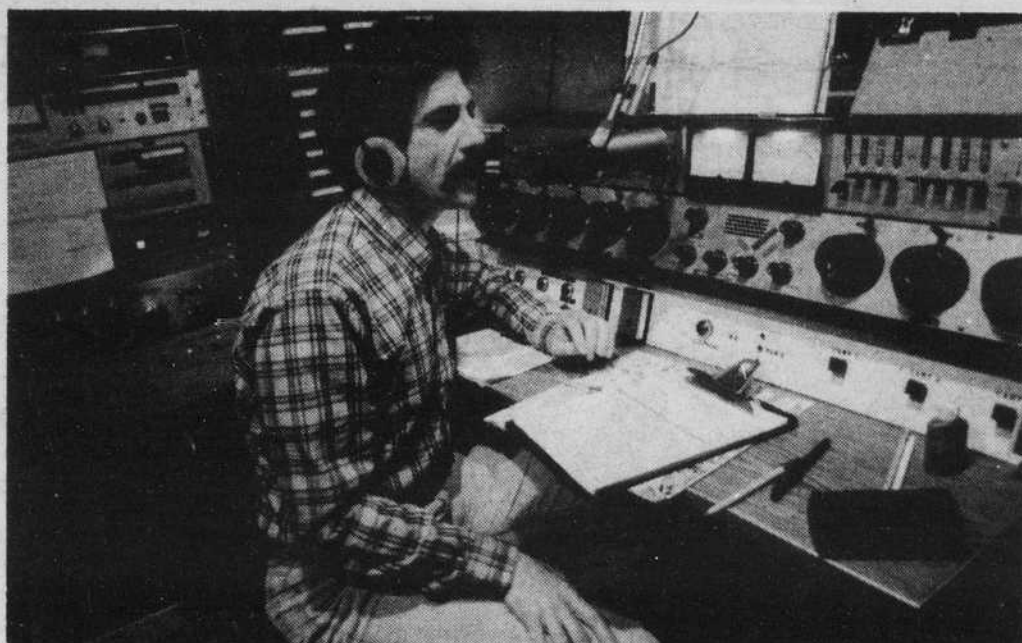


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Program director John Podkin broadcasts from the station's modern control room atop Villard Hall.



Photo courtesy University archives

... a far cry from the station's early facilities where veterans kept tuned the radio communications skills they'd learned in World War II.

KWAX: a classic comes of age

By PAUL TELLES
Of the Emerald

Almost no one had an FM radio, but most everyone was excited when KWAX, the University's radio station, signed on the air in April, 1951.

KWAX was prompted by the return of World War II veterans who had radio experience and wanted to keep their hands in communications during their college careers.

With its broadcast area limited to the campus by its 10-watt transmitter, the station was a rather haphazard operation, usually going off the air during University breaks.

But things have changed.

As KWAX prepares to celebrate its 30th birthday Saturday night in the Gerlinger Alumni Lounge, the station is operated by eight full-time staff with the help of about 20 part-time volunteers.

The station will soon move its 400-watt transmitting facilities from Villard Hall to the KVAL tower on Blanton Heights, a move that will increase the station's range by moving the antenna several thousand feet above ground level.

In its earliest incarnations, the station broadcast "middle-of-the-road" music programmed by the student staffs, but the station now dedicates most of

its airtime to classical music.

After the burst of enthusiasm over the station's inception, interest in radio on campus began to subside as television, then a hot new medium, arrived.

Interest also was retarded by the FM broadcasting that was available only to students living in specially-wired residence halls. Consequently, the station plodded through the 1950s, attracting little attention.

In the 1960s, however, interest in the station revived when Carl "Pop" Fisher donated a KUGN-FM transmitter, boosting the station's power to 400 watts.

Shortly after the donation, the station was placed in the jurisdiction of the now-defunct Division of Broadcast Services because, wrote the Emerald, "University officials began to realize that they had a real radio station on their hands, a station that was seen by some as the voice of the University."

The administrative change provoked some rancor among the student staff, which felt it had lost a measure of control over the station. But the DBS was primarily concerned with the television system and left KWAX alone.

However, the station was not to be spared from the turmoil prevalent in American society at the time.

Throughout the 1960s, students and University officials continued to wrangle over student control of

the station. Rumors circulated of fist-fights and marijuana-smoking in the studio. One student decided to give free advertisements to his choice for Eugene mayor.

One student began announcing on the air that KWAX was the voice of "radio free Eugene." Finally, in 1969 a student broadcast a four-letter word, prompting a visit from several angry Federal Communications Commission engineers.

The obscenity flap resulted in no FCC sanctions, but the University responded by putting the station under professional management.

Although few students who had run the free-wheeling KWAX were satisfied by the compromise, the controversy subsided. The argument became academic in the early 1970s when the station joined the newly formed NPR, which requires member stations to have professional staff and not be run as educational facilities.

In 1970, the KWAX staff decided to stay on the air during spring break and experiment with classical music programming. The response was so overwhelming that the campus telephone operator asked the station to stop soliciting comments.

KWAX had reached its present form.