

Cleaning up

J-school janitor tells of colorful life riding the rails

By LISA McCORMACK
Of the Emerald

If you're a damsel in distress frantically searching Allen Hall for a safety pin, Arlow Atkinson might be your knight in shining armor.

At least he thinks so.

Arlow, the Allen Hall custodian, keeps a large safety pin attached to the pocket of his stained blue work shirt for just such an occasion.

"He's devoted to the opposite sex," says Brian Carleton, Arlow's student co-worker. "He knows all the girls around here."

Even if you don't need a safety pin, it still may be worthwhile to visit Arlow at his "office" in 217 Allen, which he shares with bleach, mops, chalk and erasers.

Arlow is a master storyteller, specializing in tales of his winter odysseys riding the rails during the Depression.

"I had no destination. I was just bummin' ... just riding the rails to see the country and get a little education," he says. "What I was interested in was how the country produced and how they went about it. I'd compare the way they was doin' things with

the way it was being done here."

Arlow is quick to point out that he was a "bum" during those sojourns south — not a hobo.

A hobo, he says, is a professional bum.

"A hobo was before our time. Some of them had a little trade they worked at goin' round the various houses, like sharpenin' knives and scissors or sellin' varnish to spruce 'em didn't do."

But "some of 'em didn't do a dag-durned thing except bum."

While bumming, Arlow often would stay at campsites called "jungles," usually under bridges or near railroad sidings. Arlow says he has seen as many as 200 bums in one jungle.

The first rule in bum etiquette is not to enter the jungle without something to throw into the communal stewpot, Arlow says.

The second rule is "minding your own dag-durn business. Don't ask any questions about so-and-so's name or where he's from. You could talk, yes, and

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they'd talk with you. But don't ask questions."

Arlow says Pres. Herbert Hoover caught a lot of flak during jungle talks. "I won't repeat what they said about Hoover," Arlow says. "It wouldn't do for some ears to hear — they might blush."

Like all good storytellers, Arlow has developed a pattern and rhythm to the telling that borders on ritual. He often ignores questions that take him off his chartered course. If by chance he is lead astray by such questions, he quickly will pick up where he left off.

Some claim Arlow is better at storytelling than tending to his job as custodian. Arlow couldn't agree more.

"I'm never in a big hurry unless I want to go fishin'," he says. "I'm a mischeivous old rascal. As far as being about to stand up to a tough day's work — them days is gone. But when allowed to set my own pace, I'll catch up."

Journalism Prof. Roy Halverson describes Arlow as irrepresible. "He never seems serious about anything. I'll say,

'How are you doing Arlow?' and he'll say 'As little as possible.' And without batting an eye or smiling, he'll just walk on by. That's not your standard response — but that's Arlow."

Jack Hart, another journalism professor, says Arlow sometimes comes into his office and plops himself down in the chair opposite his desk to either fall asleep or watch Hart work — or both.

"It is very unnerving. He'll just sit," Hart says. "He kind of whistles."

And the sequence begins.

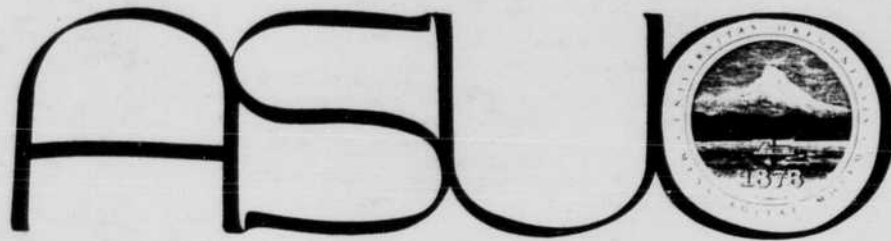
Hart: "How you doing, Arlow? I don't have time to talk."

Arlow: "That's okay." (Doesn't move.)

Hart: "Sorry we don't have time to talk, Arlow."

Arlow: "That's okay."

Then Arlow falls asleep.



Associated Students—University of Oregon

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June 5, 1981

Dear Students:

The University of Oregon is in serious financial trouble. The effects are already becoming noticeable! University of Oregon's share of faculty cuts could be upwards to 40. Resignations of 34 faculty members have already been confirmed for next year. The admission requirement has been boosted from 2.50 to 2.75 which will impact on students. Finally, the most noticeable affect is on tuition levels. The ways and means subcommittee of Education has recommended a budget note of an 18% increase in tuition a term for resident undergraduates. This works out to roughly \$463.00 a term for tuition. We need to act now!

When you go home or where ever you go, contact your parents and have them write a letter in support of the Governor's revenue package.

If we don't support this package then we will have to take a 10% cut. This would devastate the University. The committee members and addresses are below. This is our last salvation!

Many thanks for your help,

Rich Wilkins
ASUO President

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