

Beer Garden ritual draws hundreds

By CAROLINE PETRICH
Of the Emerald

"I like to get fucked up," slurred an avid beer drinker at the Beer Garden last week. The 22-year-old advertising major refused to give her name, but her comment, as obscene as it seems, reflects the 'Thank God It's Friday — Let's Party!' mood at the weekly event in the EMU.

The Beer Garden, for those students who have yet to celebrate their 21st birthdays and don't know of the ritual, occurs every Friday afternoon from 4-7 p.m. in the EMU cafeteria and atrium. Usually a band performs and tables are moved to create space for a small dance floor.

"To me, they're pretty dull," says EMU Food Director Jim Covington, part-coordinator of the gardens. Despite that, Covington, director since 1976, oversees each Beer Garden and only "an act of God" keeps him away.

"I do them every week," he says.

The Beer Garden was born in the summer of 1975 when Covington's predecessor Ken Larson and EMU Director Adell McMillan, discussed opening a tavern in the student union building. But because of Oregon's drinking law that states no one under 21 can imbibe in the spirits and because of the large number of minors in the student body, the idea was abandoned. The Beer Gardens emerged as a compromise.

"The reason is obvious: a social gathering of students, faculty and administrators with entertainment on campus," McMillan says.

"We really didn't set out to make it a money-making event," Covington says. The Beer Gardens net about a 50 percent profit after expenses that include employee and band wages, cost of beer, hot dogs and tacos.

The food service department, Cultural Forum and EMU all collaborated on the first few Gardens. Problems were few and benefits were great, so they decided in the fall of 1976 to have them once a week.

The only big problems are the large crowds, which result from word-of-mouth advertising, Covington says.

"People in large crowds tend to get rowdy," McMillan says.

This is true.

"They're really a well-behaved group," Covington says. "Sometimes they get a little excited and start dancing on the tables."

Last week many Garden-ers lamented about the number of people, the long lines up to the beer stands and the heat. When the usually sedate cafeteria fills to capacity, things do get a little uncomfortable.

"We try not to have more than 750 people," Covington says. He estimates that the crowds range from 450 to 500 drinkers. He points out that several fac-



Photo by Mark Pynes

A "Beer Garden-er" waits for his foamy pitcher, one of the hundreds of pitchers poured during the popular event held every Friday afternoon in the EMU cafeteria.

tors affect the crowd size: the band, the time of year, other events.

"People are coming and going all the time," he says.

The crowd drains between 18 and 25 kegs of beer. Each keg holds 15.5 gallons.

With his mathematical wizardry, Covington figures that in three hours each person drinks less than a pitcher. But that's just an average, not the reality, he says. Some people drink more than others.

But the real question is how to end the long lines.

Covington supposes that a third beer stand could be put up, but that, he says, would attract only more people. The mammoth lines clog up the cafeteria, and create a chaotic crowd. People stand, walk, weave, dance, scream and, of course, drink everywhere.

He does listen to suggestions. Covington recalls that one woman, who waited an hour in

line, proposed that the line be roped-off. He was dubious yet grateful; he gave her a free pitcher.

Still, if the people in line did have beer, where would they go in the cafeteria anyway? Covington wonders.

"We really don't have enough space for the Beer Gardens to grow anymore," he says. "Anything we do at this point draws more people."

With so many bodies, does fire safety pose a problem? After analyzing the issue with the fire inspector, Covington says no.

"There's no way in the world that you can start a fire out there with all that beer," he says, chuckling.

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Woman's luck turns with generous help

EUGENE (AP) — Numerous offers of help have come to a young Eugene woman whose car, which she needed to take her son to a hospital for heart treatments, was stolen and driven until it broke down in Northern California.

Kathy Henry, 22, is divorced and lives on welfare, food stamps and her son Joey's Social Security payments.

Occasionally, she must drive Joey, who turns 5 years old Saturday, to a hospital so doctors can relax his abnormally thick heart to keep it circulating blood properly.

Joey, who is almost deaf, was born with an enlarged heart that saps his energy and slows body growth. He is scheduled for surgery later this month in Portland.

Her 12-year-old car was stolen last Saturday, but her luck has changed after her plight was publicized in newspaper stories.

A group of used-car dealers offered Henry a 1963 car worth \$400. But Henry says she'll accept an offer for a \$750 car from a group of Lane County sheriff's deputies.

Henry and her two children, Joey and 2-year-old Jessica,

also have been given \$310 in cash and a promise to help get telephone service to their duplex.

The first offer came from the families of the two 18-year-old men charged with stealing her car. They gave her \$160 to pay the towing and storage bills on her car, which was recovered near Williams, Calif.

But the car could not be repaired, short of replacing the motor. Henry kept the \$160 to be used as a down payment on another car.

Other gifts began arriving Tuesday. She found an envelope in her mailbox containing \$50 in cash and a brief note that read simply, "I hope this will help."

Later that day, a man Henry can identify only as a member of the Faith Center Church in Eugene brought \$100 in cash to her home.

Henry won't have to put her \$310 in cash gifts toward purchase of a car, but she says she knows how she'll spend it.

"With winter coming, I think I'd better get some warm clothes for them," she says, nodding at her children. "They're both starting to come down with colds already."