



Photo by Karin Elstad

Up in the air, junior juggler! A young student in a Eugene juggling class joins the widening ranks of tossing troubadours as interest in the sport grows.

Juggling picks up in city

By TOM VISOKY
Of the Emerald

One. Two. Pass. One. Two. Pass. One. Two. Drop!

With that inevitable drop the human juggling machine shuts down, but only temporarily. Within seconds the errant juggler picks up his red and white Juggle Bug club, regains his composure and the juggling juggernaut is ready to roll.

And, again. One. Two.

Students in Tom Dewart's juggling class move to this beat. Every Monday and Tuesday night, Dewart and his enthusiastic crew gather at the Lane Community College Downtown Center to juggle balls, clubs — you name it.

Monday night's spotlight belongs to beginning students who try to master mysterious yet basic three-ball juggling tosses. The more confident students gather on Tuesday nights to work on complex and outlandish juggling tricks.

On this Tuesday, the seven classmates are polishing up an intricate group-juggling routine known as a "feed." Dewart stands at focal point five feet in front of the students grouped in a semi-circle. Each person holds three brightly colored juggling clubs, two in one hand and one in the other.

On Dewart's signal, the group members simultaneously raise their clubs in front of them, and, suddenly, the 21 clubs fly.

Dewart lets the students synchronize their juggling patterns. Then he begins to trade one club with each person, mechanically working his way from one end of the semi-circle to the other and back again.

One. Two. Pass. One. Two. Pass.

The profusion of colorful clubs goes up and down and flies back and forth with nary a dip in

height or a break in rhythm. For a moment the jugglers merge into a cohesive unit: a juggling machine.

But, invariably, someone's concentration flags. Someone else's grip falters. Finally, the inevitable happens: a club drops and the machine stops.

But, dropping a club or ball is as much a part of juggling as tossing. Both moves are rooted deep in antiquity.

The Greeks and Romans immortalized juggling on various artifacts, including coins and pottery. Medieval minstrels and troubadours incorporated juggling into ballad singing and poetry readings.

After lying dormant for a few centuries, juggling re-emerged in the early 1900s. Legendary jugglers, like the American Bobby May and the Italian Enrico Rastelli, crisscrossed the country during the roaring 20s, astounding audiences with their prodigious flinging feats.

Rastelli could do a one-handed handstand while simultaneously spinning a cylinder with his feet and juggling three balls in his free hand.

With the formation of the International Jugglers Association in 1939, juggling bounced out of the vaudeville hall into the community.

Dewart, 1980 president of the IJA, has vigorously promoted juggling in Eugene. In 1976 Dewart started his small juggling class, and since then he has taught hundreds of people how to juggle.

LCC offers the class which costs \$22 per term. People interested in joining can stop by the downtown center on the mall during class hours from 7-9 p.m. or can contact Dewart at 683-8344.

Although there are some talented jugglers in

Continued on Page 20



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