

Bike thieves show lack of awareness

The bicycle thieves were busy last week. Did you happen to notice? There were five bicycles stolen in broad daylight from various locations around campus. In each instance the thieves were in plain view of students. And in each instance the thieves "stole" a bicycle with virtual immunity.

More than a quarter of a million dollars worth of bicycles are stolen annually from the campus-area. Bike theft is doubtless the most frequently committed crime at this University. And it doesn't appear to be on the decrease.

She pushed the bolt-cutters into her backpack and they walked to the bikerack on 13th Avenue. Anyone behind her could see the red handles of the boltcutters blatantly protruding from her backpack. The light-blue bicycle was chained to the rack. She brought out the bolt-cutters and bite into the chrome metal. About five feet away a man was slowly putting on his jacket, watching her. The metal of the lock sounded a loud crack. She nearly leaped out of her skin from fright.

She snatched the pieces of the broken lock and quickly tucked the bolt-cutters into her backpack. In an instant they were walking "stolen" bicycle from the rack. The man finished buttoning his jacket — unlocked his own bicycle and rode away.

It was an obvious bicycle theft which the man buttoning his jacket watched from beginning to end without saying a word.

The bicycle was locked to the light pole in front of the dorms. It was sunny and around 5 in the afternoon. People were milling about, talking, playing frisbee, or listening to music in their dorm rooms. The thief approached a bicycle. It looked familiar. He set the jaws of the two-and-a-half-foot long bolt-cutters on the lock. Crack.

A large number of people saw the thief cut the lock and "steal" this bicycle. But once again, no one interfered while the thief worked.

In all five bicycles were "stolen" by the six "bicycle thieves." Each reported being noticed — or watched from the time they cut the lock, to the time they rode off — but no one stopped their thievery.

These occurrences are incredible to think of. During all the daylight incidents of obvious theft of locked bicycles not a single person notified Campus Security, nor so much as asked the thieves what they were doing.

The "ring" of bicycle thieves were actually members of Professor Galen Rarick's Precision Journalism class stealing their own bicycles while conducting a controlled experiment in "participant observation" reporting. It was also a test of student awareness and social responsibility.

Needless to say, we all failed the test.

It's supposed to be callous Easterners who would let a woman get raped and murdered rather than "get involved" by notifying the police. We, in Eugene, Oregon, pride ourselves on being more involved. That's untrue, as the "bicycle thieves" proved. Apparently, there is little conception of social responsibility among students at this University.

The outright acquiescence of those watching the bicycles being "stolen" begs the question whether this irresponsible attitude extends also to crimes with victims, such as rape or assault. To mutely witness an act that has all the props and actions of a bicycle theft and say nothing implies that the terrified screams of a woman being brutally assaulted would fall on careless ears.

A citizen's social responsibility exists before the action of the law, before the involvement of the police. It is the action of a citizen who, knowing the law, either disrupts a crime in progress or notifies the police. On this campus a call to the public safety office might effectively halt a crime — such as bicycle theft — in progress.

In the case of the journalism "bicycle thieves" (and many other crimes that are not violent in character) all it would have taken to stop their "stealing" was the question: "Is that your bike?"

No one had the courage nor concern to ask.



letters

Alarming

Monday's editorial about racist remarks by a math professor was alarming for two reasons. First, the use of racial stereotypes (if accurately reported) to warm up the class is intolerable and certainly embarrassing; rest assured that heads will not roll.

The second reason is the core of the problem: you and the rest of the class sat idly by and watched the incident without comment or criticism. Apathy is no cure for racism.

It has been rumored that college is established to promote the free exchange of ideas. Unfortunately, many students here are content to be neither part of the problem nor the solution, which never works in practice. In this way, they (as you have) rob themselves of the most important facet of their education.

If you want to stop racism, sexism or any other form of social impropriety, try doing something when it happens rather than hiding behind the Emerald; you might achieve something.

Jim Rowell
GTF, math

Coupons

People should be aware that the Oregon Photo Lab coupons which appear frequently in the Emerald do not necessarily guarantee that you will get your whole roll of film developed. Oregon Photo Lab reserves the right to decide which negatives are "good" enough to print and which ones would be a waste of their paper. They will still charge you the full "sales" price.

I took some of my "bad" negatives to the University

Bookstore for printing after Oregon Photo Lab refused to print them. The prints were as clean as the ones that Oregon Photo Lab had printed.

That "sales" price is not much of a bargain after you add in what you have to pay a second developer to print the negatives that Oregon Photo Lab won't print.

S. Hilton
CIS

Unusual

A rather startling occurrence happened earlier this week as I was passing by the ROTC building on my way home. I glanced down the driveway of the building to see a uniformed man pointed a gun in my direction — he was obviously aiming it at a tree two feet in front of me.

I did what seemed natural when confronted with the bizarre and the unusual: I froze. Meanwhile I watched the soldier lower the gun and turn, with nervous laughter towards the other young men he was with.

The next day I spoke to the secretary of ROTC; explaining that I would like to complain about this unsettling event. Somehow it didn't seem like the type of public relations which ROTC would need around this campus and perhaps the supervisor could say a few words to the soldier in question.

As irony would have it, the supervisor had been that soldier — just showing a good example.

Brenda Bettridge
Counseling

Non-coverage

I would like to respond to Paul Danzer's "Non-coverage" of

the soccer game between Portland and New York last week. Two things upset me. First, Danzer does give credit to Portland for playing a good first half, but his descriptions of the play are incredibly in favor of New York. Hardly mentioned was John Bain's first goal which was one of the finest efforts you'll ever see in sports. Bain ran through a maze of three defenders and drilled it high over the outstretched arms of the Cosmo goalie. Bain made one of the worlds' greatest teams look like mere children.

Worse yet though are Danzer's comments on the number of fans in attendance. He states there should have been at least 20,000 instead of 15,000 who were there. Does Danzer realize it was a Wednesday and not a Saturday? The 15,000 represents more than 4,000 over their average of last year. Finally, if soccer at the professional level does die, it will be the fault of media personnel like Danzer. Rather than report the sheer beauty and athletic skill the game has to offer, they prefer to find something to criticize about it. I live in Eugene and travel to every home game that Portland plays including the Cosmo game. That game and soccer itself deserve more than was given by Danzer.

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Senior, telecommunications

letters policy

The Emerald will accept and attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on issues, ideas and topics of interest to the University community.

staff

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