

# Sowards mixes family, politics into full life

By Jacquie Long  
Of the Emerald

Susan Sowards has her hands full pretty much around the clock.

Whether she's seeing out the responsibilities of a legislative aide and board member in the day hours or handling the obligations of a mother and wife during the rest of the time, Sowards is rarely bored.

As ASUO executive coordinator, Sowards has been described as "dynamite" by a fellow ASUO staff member — and it's not difficult to see why.

"She is one of the rare persons who can take on endless responsibilities and manage them all calmly and well," says ASUO Pres. Julie Davis.

Sowards has been a part of student government at the University for almost one year. Her position is described as "non-academic research associate," but the job entails much more than the title suggests.

"It's a pretty multi-purpose position in actuality, sometimes involving a lot more than I think," Sowards says.

Sowards works mainly in an advisory capacity with ASUO, functioning as a researcher, a policy analyst and a general resource person. She also serves as an instructor for the office, working to familiarize the staff with the recently added computer system.

Her position is a fairly new one, begun last year during the Hotchkiss administration, Sowards says. It is an outgrowth of the student advocate position, and Sowards says the two jobs still overlap to an extent.

"But we mainly work as supplements to each other, and I think the positions enhance one another," Sowards says.

Sowards, 34, brings a multitude of talents and experience to her job.

She first became involved in grassroots politics several years ago, which was "the first time

I'd done something more than being unhappy about political situations," Sowards says.

Not long after that she saw some literature concerning state Sen. Margie Hendriksen, who was a state representative at the time. Pleased to find a politician who shared her views, Sowards became an aide to Hendriksen. She worked with her first in the House and later in the Senate.

"And if she goes to Washington, I'd like to work for her still," Sowards adds.

Sowards says she thrives on being politically active. As a professional staff person for the ASUO, Sowards holds a three-quarter-time paid position, but she finds more than enough to keep her busy when not working there.

She currently chairs the Lane County Democratic Committee and the budget committee for the City of Eugene, serves on the steering committee of the Lane County Women's Political

Caucus, works on the Lane Joint Social Services Commission and is on the board of directors of the Rape Crisis Network.

"I think that's all I'm doing," Sowards says with a laugh.

Her commitment to some of these organizations will end soon, however. She says she'll be happy to have the extra time to spend with her husband and son, "who are a very important part of my life," she adds.

Her husband, Chuck, is a mechanic and a homemaker, the latter having been a difficult role for both of them to adjust to at first, Sowards says. But this arrangement works well now and allows their son Robin, 8, to enjoy both parents, Sowards says.

"We like to go to Em's games together, go running or just putter around the garden together," she says.

Sowards and her husband came to Eugene from Portsmouth, Ohio, where they both grew up. Tired of living there, they decided to move west in 1975, she says.

They started out picking apples in Washington. Then, as the couple traveled south toward Arizona, their car broke down. The trip ended in Eugene, where they heard nothing but good about Oregon living, she says.

"And we've been here ever since."

The Sowards were particularly attracted to the political tolerance in Oregon and to the state's initiative and referendum process, she says. Overall, she's found it much easier to



Susan Sowards

become politically active in Oregon, Sowards adds.

"This state is much more populist than Ohio, and we both just find it a more exciting place."

Thus far, Sowards' family has been very supportive of her activities, she says. Without this stability at home, Sowards believes that most wives or mothers could not be so active. The situation is fortunate for her, too, as giving up her activities may be out of the question for some time.

"I really enjoy all the political work I do and the work with the University," Sowards says. "It's great to be working with politically minded students, with people who enjoy taking control and who can enhance their world."

## Demo party 'strong'

By Paul Ertelt  
Of the Emerald

The Democratic Party came out of its San Francisco convention united and strong enough to face the Republican opposition in the fall, predict local members of the Oregon Democratic delegation.

After recently returning home from the convention, several members of the delegation spoke about their experience and their party's political prospects at a Lane County Democratic meeting in Alton Baker Park Thursday night.

"The papers and the columnists said we were going in as a divided party, but they had to admit we came out a strong party," said state Rep. Larry Hill, D-Springfield.

"I think if you watched the convention on television, you could get just as good an insight, but the spirit on the floor was something unique," said Jim Klonoski, a University political science professor.

The delegates agreed that a high point of the convention was the nomination of Rep. Geraldine Ferraro, D-N.Y., as Walter Mondale's running mate. They also said they were impressed by the speakers at the convention, especially New York Gov. Mario Cuomo and the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

"The Ferraro nomination and the level of oratory lifted us 10 to 15 points in the polls and

lifted Democrats 100 points in euphoria," Klonoski said.

Hill said he was impressed by the number of women and minority delegates at the convention. Democratic rules require that half of the delegates must be women.

"The Mississippi delegation was better than half black," he said. "In 1960, I don't think there was one black delegate at the convention."

The issues of the party were as important as its demographics, said Cheryl Hunter of Springfield.

"A lot of people are not better off under (Pres. Ronald) Reagan," she said. "How their pocketbooks are affected, how their civil rights are affected — that's what's going to win people over to the Democrats."

But the convention was not all hard work and politics. The delegates had a chance to share in San Francisco's hospitality and rub elbows with celebrities.

While driving from the Moscone Center one night, Ann Aiken of Eugene recognized a familiar face in the crowd. "Hey Andy, you want a ride?" she called out.

It was columnist Andy Rooney himself who accepted the invitation. Rooney and the passengers in the car became involved in a heated discussion about Jesse Jackson before she dropped him off in front of his hotel, she said.



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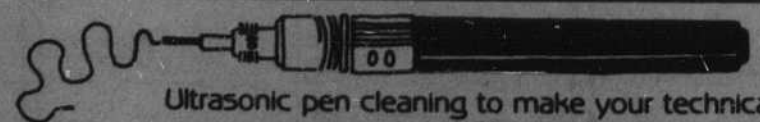
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