

Alternative to tear gas developed for security

By Betsy Grace
Of the Emerald

The threat of being attacked is nothing new, but a recently developed product may prevent an assault from occurring.

The Wolff Alert is a small cylindrical canister that fits into a terry cloth wrist band. When pressure is applied to its top, forced air produces an ear-piercing blast. The athletic-type wrist band keeps the alert readily accessible to one's fingertips, unlike traditional whistles or tear gas containers that are easily dropped or misplaced says Rita Wolff, who developed the product.

Wolff was looking for an alternative to tear gas for assault prevention while jogging because she was afraid of being overpowered by her assailant and doused with the fumes herself if she tried using it. She modified an old ski sock to hold a whistle canister and felt safer with that.

After tremendous response from her friends, Wolff presented the device to a sports company that researched the model and received favorable reactions from field testers.

The Wolff Alert has gained the support of Mary Ellen Johnson of the Yamhill County Rape Victims Program. Johnson plans to show the alert throughout the state, Wolff says.

"It's the only product of its kind that is safe, legal, and can't be used against the victim," Wolff said.

In addition to providing assault protection, the Wolff Alert can be used by children or hikers to call for attention when they are lost or in trouble, Wolff says. The whistle will blast

up to 60 times before it loses its pressure.

Wolff recently received a testimonial of the alert's effectiveness. "A Portland dentist gave one to his nurse and she used it while jogging to frighten off a vicious dog," Wolff says.

Although Capt. Oakley Glenn of the University's Campus Security has not had direct experience with the Wolff Alert, he says his officers would respond to its sound.

"Basically, anything that will help (in battling the problem of assault) we're for," Glenn says.

But often times people fail to use protection products consistently, or else they take on a false sense of confidence, he adds.

"Any time you have more than one person together you have a much safer situation," Glenn says.

Nadia Telsey, director of Eugene's Rape Crisis Network, says that widespread familiarity is what makes safety devices such as the Wolff Alert beneficial. "If you organize around them so entire dorms know the sound and will assist or summon help, you have greater effectiveness," she says.

The University Bookstore received the first shipment of Wolff Alerts in January. Bookstore employee, Stacy Miller, says several have sold despite a lack of advertising. Priced at \$9.98, the Wolff Alert sells for about half the cost of a tear gas product called Chemstop, also carried at the bookstore.

Rita Wolff and her husband Jeffery are marketing the whistles from their home in Newberg, Ore. and hope to distribute them nationally.

Religious studies interest rises

By Kirsten Bolin
Of the Emerald

With class subjects ranging from Japanese Buddhism to Western Christianity, the University's Department of Religious Studies is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, reflecting a trend toward increasing interest in religious studies.

The department, which has only four professors, is the second oldest of its kind among state institutions in the country. It was founded in the 1934-35 academic year as a non-major department with one professor.

Since then, the program has expanded and evolved to meet the changing needs of the University's student body, says department head Hee-Jin Kim.

Currently, 10 to 15 students major in religious studies each year, many going on to teach or join a graduate program at another university.

Trends in religion, such as the 1960s fascination with Oriental religions and the current interest in Christianity, are explored by the department's small staff.

"We want to offer a balanced program so we can deal with whatever society has to offer," says Jack Sanders, professor of biblical studies. College-age students are more likely to be professing religion now than they have for the last 20 years Sanders says.

But having a religious affiliation is not an important or even a common prerequisite among students currently taking classes, he adds.

"It's not necessary to be religious to study religion. It's an ideal way to understand our society as well as others," he says.

The religious studies department has experienced steady enrollment increases in its

courses as well as increases in the number of courses offered, all of which contribute to the continuing success of the department, Kim says.

Students take religion courses in an effort to understand life's values and purposes, says G. Douglas Straton, philosophy of religion and ethics professor.

"Students are interested in large subjects and seek connec-

tions between religion and other areas," Straton says.

He credits the religious studies faculty with helping students to reach their own conclusions without giving them concrete answers.

Religious studies courses examine the history and philosophy of the world's religions as well as their origins, and rituals.



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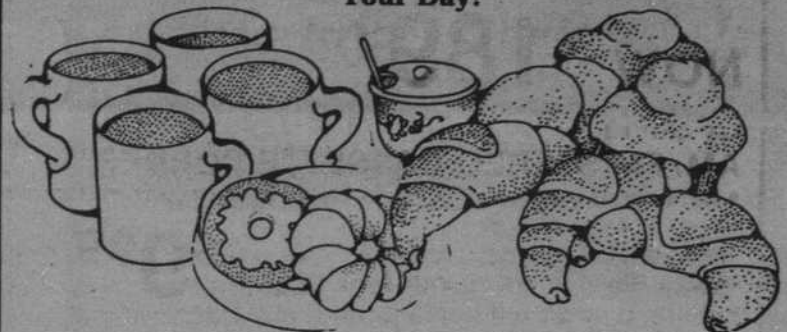
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