



Waitin' on a call

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## Bomb threat mars Ethiopian benefit

By Cynthia Whitfield

Of the Emerald

A bomb threat disrupted Sunday night's Heart of Oregon's Pledge to Ethiopia benefit to raise funds for famine victims in Ethiopia. No bomb was found, and the concert resumed within thirty minutes.

The threat came after an already disappointing day for HOPE. The fund-raising effort fell far short of HOPE's \$200,000 goal. By late Sunday evening only \$3,200 had been collected.

HOPE member Arzinia Richardson said the caller said he "didn't like the idea of raising money for niggers."

HOPE, a four-member Eugene-based organization, and Public Health International of Oregon, sponsored three Hult Center concerts Sunday, which featured rock, jazz, folk and gospel music in the Silva Concert

Hall.

The ticket price for each concert was originally set at \$12.50, but was lowered to \$7.50 Tuesday because of low ticket sales.

But by noon Sunday, local radio stations announced that tickets were no longer necessary. Instead, HOPE decided to accept donations of any kind for admission to the concerts.

All proceeds from the concert will be donated to Oxfam America, an organization working to provide famine relief and educational self-help projects to Ethiopians.

"We had sold only about 50 tickets before this morning," said Denny Guelher, a promotions volunteer for HOPE. Guelher said Ken Kesey "grabbed him" and suggested the concerts should be a give-as-you can community event.

Guelher blamed Eugene's warm weather and sunny skies for part of the problem. The HOPE staff asked local radio stations to inform listeners of the change in admission policy. The radio stations responded by urging listeners to come to the Hult, bringing "anything you can afford."

The first concert, classical and jazz performances, featuring the Eugene Ballet Company and nationally recognized jazz performer Bobby McFerrin, was attended by an estimated 50-100 persons. Several concert goers said they would have liked to stay for McFerrin's performance, but had purchased tickets for the stage performance of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in the Hult Center's Soreng Theatre.

Meanwhile, additional entertainment provided at the Eugene Hilton also drew sparse crowds.



Photo by Steven Wall



Photo by Dean Guernsey

The Whitetones performed before a sparse crowd at the Hilton Sunday afternoon as part of the HOPE benefit.

## EPA sued for studies' findings

# Local use of dioxin sprays scrutinized

By Dave Berns

Of the Emerald

Dioxin — the word creates the imagery of life-threatening chemicals and brings to mind the evacuation of small towns such as Times Beach, Mo.

Yet, has the dioxin threat been overplayed by the media in recent years? A University law student and his wife do not believe so.

Paul Merrell and Carol Van Strum, who are residents of Five Rivers, have sued the federal Environmental Protection Agency in an attempt to force the agency to release all documents relating to the EPA's studies of the impact of herbicides on human health in the Siuslaw National Forest.

The lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in late October, names William Ruckelshaus, former EPA administrator, as the defendant.

Merrell has, in the past, filed two other lawsuits seeking bans on the use of herbicides in Oregon.

"The EPA is withholding information on the effects of dioxin spraying all over the country," said Van Strum in a recent interview.

"The agency did studies in Hemlock, Mich.; Hempstead, N.Y.; San Antonio, Texas; and Chicago. I don't believe they contacted any area residents with the results of these studies," she said.

Van Strum has written a book titled "A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights," which describes the events leading up to her lawsuit.

"In the spring of 1979 our valley was sprayed with the herbicide 2,4,5-T. That summer five of seven pregnant women miscarried, two kids almost died from spinal meningitis, and people suffered from both gastrointestinal and respiratory problems," Van Strum said.

There is much circumstantial evidence to suggest that these events were related to the herbicide spraying, she said. "But the EPA will not release information that supports our beliefs."

Recently, the Lane County Board of Commissioners sent a letter to U.S. House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, requesting that O'Neill initiate a House investigation into Van Strum's charges.

### What is the EPA doing?

The EPA tries to release as much information as possible on the study of dioxins, said Anita Frankel of the EPA's Seattle office.

"A lot of fear exists about dioxins," Frankel said. "People just hear the word dioxin, and the publicity is going to hurt anyone trying to perform an objective study. Unfortunately, the EPA hasn't been involved in the study of dioxin for very long."

But the agency is working to increase the amount of information it has on dioxins, she said.

In late 1983, the agency developed a "National Dioxin Strategy," said Barry Korb, of the EPA's Washington D.C. office.

The strategy orders studies to determine the health effects of dioxin and an examination of possible methods for the disposal of the contaminant, Korb said.

### Structure of dioxin

A dioxin is composed of two six-sided benzene rings that are linked by two oxygen molecules. In most dioxins,

chlorine molecules bond with the benzene. It is the location of the chlorine on the benzene that determines the form of dioxin present in an herbicide.

In 2,4,5-T, the numbers indicate that the chlorine is located on points 2, 4, and 5 of the benzene ring.

There are 75 types of dioxin, with the most toxic being 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, also known as TCDD.

### Herbicide use in Oregon

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management routinely sprayed Oregon's forests with dioxin contaminated herbicides. The purpose of the sprayings was to kill grass and brush that interfered with timber growth on BLM and Forest Service lands. The 1979 spraying that Van Strum described was part of this program.

Since early 1984, a federal court order has ended the use of herbicides on federal lands in Oregon and Washington. U.S. 9th District Judge James Burns ruled that the BLM and Forest Service must give him a "worst case scenario," outlining the

health effects of the herbicides, before he would consider lifting the ban.

### Local environmentalist supports Van Strum

Mary O'Brien of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides supports both the ban and Van Strum's concerns about dioxin.

"There is plenty of circumstantial evidence of birth defects, cancers and respiratory problems, yet we don't know how toxic most dioxins are because they haven't been tested. Currently, the only pesticides recognized as dangerous and banned by the EPA are 2,4,5-T and Silvex," said O'Brien, who has a doctorate in botany.

But the 14-year-old EPA is not sufficiently investigating the effects of most dioxin-contaminated herbicides, O'Brien said.

### OSU scientist believes dioxins are harmless

Yet Michael Newton, a professor of forest ecology at

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