

# Restaurant owner critical of hospital's plan

By Wayne Aulse  
Of the Emerald

Lenny Nathan does not hate Sacred Heart General Hospital.

"In general, I think they're a good hospital. I like 'em." But, Nathan says, "it ain't the Pope standing over there blessing me, either."

The lease on Lenny's Nosh Bar, Nathan's restaurant, expires in March. Although he is not certain, Nathan believes Sacred Heart, which owns the property, will not renew his lease. In fact, a little over a year ago, "they tried to kick me out ahead of time," he says.

"Now, after they tried to get me out ahead of time, what would you assume when they can legally and with no problem get me out? They're going to get me out, right?" Nathan says.

Nathan moved to Eugene from San Francisco 10 years ago to open a restaurant and bar with his son, but the deal fell through and Nathan decided to open a place of his own instead. In March 1979, Nathan began selling food in a cubicle he named Lenny's Nosh Bar, tucked away in a little courtyard on 13th Avenue near the University campus.

"I knew I had seven years, but I thought they would renew (the lease)." So he bought a beer and wine license, bought out his neighbor's lease and expanded his restaurant to twice its original size.

Nathan spent nearly \$40,000 with the expectation of being able to stay at his present location for longer than the original lease specified.

When neighboring Sahalie Natural Foods made a deal with the hospital to move across the street so that Sacred Heart could use the space for parking, Nathan reacted positively. He approved of the way Sacred Heart helped Sahalie move to such an ideal location.

"If I'd known that one was available, I would've grabbed it in a minute," he says.

But when the city of Eugene started its new parking plan in the University district two years ago, the event

triggered a reaction from Sacred Heart that cast a shadow on Nathan's hopes for the future.

"This all started when the city came up with that new parking plan. It's all with different letters on your car, and you can park two hours... that's when this whole thing came up, after that. We were doing fine until then," he says.

What followed was a complicated series of events based on a dispute over leasing rights to The Courtyard. Nathan explains that the original lease holder on The Courtyard, Frank Mowreader, fixed up the area and offered subleases to Nathan and other businesses.

But when Mowreader's own four-year lease expired, he failed to renew his option within the legally specified time. The catch, Nathan says, was that Mowreader continued to offer subleases to people wanting space in The Courtyard past the time when his own lease had expired, and Sacred Heart approved the subleases anyway.

But in May 1984, when faced with a perceived parking crunch, Sacred Heart decided it should stop leasing The Courtyard to Mowreader and transform the site into a parking lot, Nathan says.

"Boom, they sent out eviction notices," Nathan says. "I said no. I went over and told 'em, 'Hey, I ain't going.'"

Lenny said he told Sacred Heart officials that they approved Mowreader's sub-leasing The Courtyard without his having a lease of his own — in effect saying that Mowreader did have a lease.

"Otherwise, how could he lease The Courtyard out and they (Sacred Heart) say, 'all right'? They screwed up," Nathan says. "What it all boiled down to was that legally Sacred Heart would have had a real fight to get us out, so they dropped it."

Sacred Heart has not told Nathan that he will be evicted, but because hospital officials still contend more parking is needed, it appears that it is only a matter of time before the restaurant is removed.

"They haven't guaranteed me that I've got to get

out, but they're not talking about renewing the lease, and the lease is up. What else I gotta know?" Nathan says.

Nathan emphasizes that he has no hard feelings toward Sacred Heart. "This is not Sacred Heart's problem. I'm not saying that they owe me anything. I don't blame them for anything."

"The only thing I have to say about this whole situation is that I don't think they really need all this parking. I think that's a lot of bull," he says. "I don't see the need for parking with all the parking there is in this structure across the street. How much do they need for Christ's sake?"

Nathan says the best possibility for saving the restaurant would be if the city of Eugene stepped in and barred the hospital from demolishing The Courtyard. There also is a chance that Sacred Heart might back off in the face of poor publicity.

"They're very sensitive to bad press. They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars getting good press," Nathan says. "You see on television, 'The hospital with a heart,' or 'The place with a heart,' and how wonderful they were to this little girl that was in there having a baby or whatever. You hear that on TV. I'll go on and I'll tell 'em, 'They threw me out.'"

Nathan says he appreciates the support University students have shown his restaurant, although he doubts how effective their efforts to save the popular eatery have been.

"I don't even know what they're doing, really. They're a little bit disorganized I would say," Nathan says. "Christ, they had some kind of benefit a while ago and people were coming around here asking me, 'Where is it?' It was supposed to be at Animal House, but there was nobody there. They were advertising it on the radio and it wasn't there."

Nathan says he understands the anger many students feel toward Sacred Heart. "You find a place that's got a little atmosphere for yourself in your spare time, a place where you feel comfortable to hang out and meet each other, and they're going to tear it down and put in a parking lot. That would piss me off, too."

In his view, the reason Sacred Heart wants to tear down Lenny's Nosh Bar is not entirely because of the parking situation. Part of the reason is the nature of the place.

"I've got the wrong kind of place for them. They don't like this; it's too funky. I'm sure they would much rather see Wendy's here than Lenny's because that's their mental attitude over there."

Regardless of the reason, Nathan is convinced that Sacred Heart will not let him stay on its property. And in the future, Nathan says he is not sure exactly what will happen.

"I don't know anything for sure, but I don't think I want to relocate. That would be the end of it if I can't stay here."

If he did relocate, Nathan says it would probably be in Eugene somewhere. "I might do it here because I have a certain following that I could naturally capitalize on." But, he adds, "I don't want to go into debt for another 30 or 40 grand."

At present, Nathan still has three and a half months to sell Lenny's where he is now. But at age 65, Nathan figures he will probably have to begin relying on the government for his income. Nathan clearly is not happy about the prospect, but he hasn't lost his sense of humor about it either.

"I wish I'd stayed in California when you get down to it now. In other words, I really didn't set myself up too good for my old age," Nathan says. "As it is, I'm going to be living off Social Security, which means I'll have to start eating dog food, you know."



Photo by Karen Stallwood

Lenny Nathan, owner of Lenny's Nosh Bar, fears that Sacred Heart General Hospital, which has expressed a need for more parking space, has no intention of renewing his lease when it expires in March.

## Police beat

A suspect entered the shower room at Adams Dorm Dec. 5 at 9:20 a.m. A woman in the shower room chased the suspect, who fled on foot. He is described as a white male, 30-40 years old, 6 feet, 165 pounds. He was wearing a blue baseball hat, blue jeans and a blue jacket.

An anonymous phone caller alerted Campus Security regarding an injured woman in a restroom in the Education Annex Dec. 5 at 9:30 p.m. Officers responding to the call didn't find the woman, but blood was discovered in the restroom area. The incident is being investigated.

A wool coat valued at \$125 was stolen from Hawthorne Dorm between Dec. 5-8.

Three white male suspects were observed carrying a 25-foot spruce tree away from the vicinity of 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street Dec. 6 at 12:30 a.m. The tree was valued at \$2,000.

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An EMU bomb threat was phoned into the Eugene Police Department at 5:05 p.m. Dec. 6. The building was searched, but no bomb was found.

A VCR and two movie cassettes rented from the University Bookstore Dec. 2 were reported stolen Saturday after they were not returned. The equipment was valued at \$429.

A lamppost valued at \$500 was pushed over near the University Inn Saturday. Three white male suspects were observed near the scene, but no citations were issued.

A bulletin board in Caswell Dorm was set afire on Saturday or Sunday. The wall was scorched and a light fixture was damaged. Police are investigating the incident as felony arson. No damage estimate was determined.

The Hamilton complex mail room was burglarized on Saturday or Sunday.

Numerous mailboxes were broken into and mail was scattered about the room. Police are still compiling a list of stolen items.

A camera and accessories valued at \$1404 were stolen from a vehicle parked near Lawrence Hall Sunday between 7-8 p.m.

A sanitary napkin dispenser in the Law School was broken into on Sunday or Monday. A small amount of change was stolen.

Miniature sculptures, jewelry, pewter spoons and an undetermined amount of cash and checks were stolen from the Museum of Natural History giftshop between Sunday and Monday. Estimated value of the items was \$400.

Hai Thanh Tran, 19, a resident of Parsons Hall, was cited and released for shoplifting at the University Bookstore Monday.

A suspect entered the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority Tuesday at 4:45 a.m. He entered a woman's room and she awoke to find him standing naked near her bed. She threw things at him and he fled. He is described as a white male, 25-35 years old, 5 feet 9 inches, with a medium build and dark brown hair. Police said it was unknown how the man entered the house.

A wallet and contents valued at \$34 were stolen from the Main Library Tuesday between noon and 2 p.m. The wallet was returned after it was found without the cash in a parking lot.

Christina Elizabeth O'Connell, 18, 1504 E. 15th Ave., was cited and released for shoplifting at the University Bookstore Wednesday.

Two bicycles were stolen; none was recovered.

Compiled by Kim Kaady

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