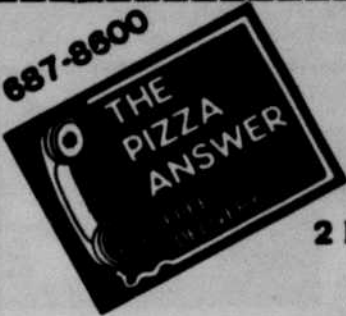




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Local eateries having problems with people who 'dine and dash'

By Cami Swanson
Emerald Reporter

One night a couple of months ago, two girls ordered the biggest dinner on the menu at the International House of Pancakes. During their meal, IHOP manager Ellen Handy noticed that the girls tended to get up and go the restroom frequently.

After they had finished eating, one of the girls came up to the register to get change for the cigarette machine. The other girl sneaked out while the cashier wasn't looking, and the first girl soon followed.

This is just one instance of what is commonly called "dining and dashing." It has the area's restaurant owners and operators frustrated and angry.

"It happens almost every night," Handy said. "And it happens all year round."

Handy estimates that IHOP, 355 E. Broadway, which is open 24 hours a day, loses about \$30 to \$50 dollars every week due to people who leave without paying their bill. She said that the main "dine and dash" culprits at her restaurant are not college students, but are generally younger high-school-age kids or transients.

"I don't think it's the (college) students. I think it's the mall-rats. I know that's



Photo by Gregor Okorn

The International House of Pancakes loses about \$30 to \$50 a week because of people who leave without paying their bill

awful to say, but I really don't think it's the students," Handy said.

Hoots manager George Duncan, who said the restaurant has lost approximately \$400 since Hoots, 440 E. 8th Ave., was reopened Jan. 14 this year, disagrees.

"It is the college kids," he said. "The majority of them are good. We have a bunch of darn good kids who come in to crack a book late at night, and we encourage that. But there is a certain element."

"I don't know what it is,

maybe they're trying to show off in front of their girlfriends. It hurts when the students are supposed to be studying and trying to make something of themselves, and then some pull stunts like that. It's very juvenile," he said.

According to Duncan, one of the most common ways people leave without paying their bill is by getting into an argument with another table. Then, while the waitress' attention is diverted by the disturbance, they leave quickly. The majority of these incidents happen during the graveyard shift, from 1:30 to 4:30 a.m.

"The girls are pretty tired. They're on their feet all day. It's hard for them to watch everybody, especially if you only have one girl up front," Duncan said.

Both Duncan and Hardy said that they rarely call the police about people who leave their bills.

"We can press charges, but sometimes that's more of a hassle. We can call the police and describe the person, but that doesn't mean they're going to find them," Hardy explained.

Eugene Police Department spokesman Tim Birr said that "dining and dashing" is a class A misdemeanor and will most likely result in a fine if the individual is caught.



Photo by Gregor Okorn

Geneva Bowers(left) and Carol Stringer work behind the counter at Hoots, a popular restaurant where some patrons "dine and dash."

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