

Graphic by Lorraine Rath

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few dollars, abandoned after a short ride, or simply claimed by the thief for personal transportation.

"It really depends on what the intent is of the person who steals the bike," Hunter said.

If a theft victim spots his or her bike locked somewhere, Hunter suggested that someone call the OPS while the owner watches the bike. She said it would also be acceptable to lock the bike with a second lock until the police arrive. Proof of ownership would be essential in such a case, she added.

Hunter said police stakeouts to catch a bike thieves would be "wonderful." OPS usually cuts the thief's lock, however, since stakeouts for bike thefts are a low police priority, she said.

Last April, however, it was the final straw for Hunter when a man in tears reported the theft of his \$900 bicycle from racks located near Lawrence Hall. It was one of several reported thefts from that same location, so Hunter decided to take a stab at it.

Out of uniform and toting a backpack, Hunter watched the area with support available from nearby officers. Less than an hour had passed when she saw three males try to steal a bike. Two acted as lookouts while the third cut the lock with boltcutters. At that moment she arrested them.

Questioning the thieves, one of whom was a juvenile, led police to several stolen bikes at local pawn shops. The value of the bikes ranged from \$400 to \$600 each, Hunter said.

Theft of a bike valued at \$200 or more is a class C felony in Oregon, punishable by up to five years imprisonment. Stealing a bike worth less than that is a class A misdemeanor, the maximum penalty being a one-year imprisonment. The penalty for both crimes may involve monetary fines as well.

City police reported in 1971 that an advertisement on an EMU bulletin board stated that 10-speed bicycles were "available." The message provided instructions to call a number between 5:30 and 6 p.m. An investigation revealed that a man waited by a pay phone on campus, took orders for specific styles and makes of bikes, and then went out and stole them for his customers.

Birr said that two weeks ago residents of the Westmoreland housing complex reported a suspicious man looking at bikes. Police responding to the call found lock-cutting tools in the man's backpack. He had not cut any locks, but a resident manager agreed to press charges for trespassing.

The police are rarely so successful in apprehending thieves or retrieving stolen bikes, however. Less than 12 percent of the bikes reported stolen in Eugene during 1986 have been recovered.

J.R. Stults, owner of J.R.'s Pawn Shop and Trade Center at 1456 Willamette St., is all too familiar with the problem of bike theft. He said that in the past year 10 bikes were stolen from in front of his store, where they were unlocked and on display.

Stults buys used bikes, but only with a serial number and a piece of photo identification of whoever is selling it. That information is checked twice a week by police, Stults said.

Serial numbers also are checked at Second Nature Bicycles, 446 E. 13th Ave.

"Whenever anyone comes in with a stolen bike, we run a check on it and turn it in to the cops," owner Milo Overbay

said. "That's kind of gotten around on the theft circle so they know not to sell to Second Nature."

Overbay said he knew of a theft ring in the past operated by college-age men who recruited juveniles to do the stealing for a cut of the haul, divided up in either money or parts.

"There is a persistent problem with juvenile rings because when they get caught the penalties are so minor — typically a few hours of public service or something — that it makes it very easy for them to get practice so they don't get caught in the future," Overbay said.

Overbay and Stu Greenleaf, owner of Stu's Eugene Bicycles at 771 Blair Blvd., both said they hadn't heard of any bikes stolen that were properly locked with a U-lock.

"It's insurance and a lot cheaper than dealing with the hassle of a stolen bike," Overbay said.

Made of solid, hardened steel (dubbed "Kryptonite") and sold with guarantees, U-locks cost between \$18 and \$35.

Overbay said the guarantees are credible, but cautioned that the bike must be securely locked to something.

According to Hunter, who personally receives campus bike theft reports, many of the stolen bikes are locked, but not properly so.

She advised that quick-release front wheels be removed and locked to the rear wheel, the frame and a good bike rack. She also said it's wise to keep bikes in dorm rooms, apartments and offices when possible.

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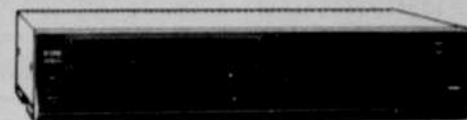
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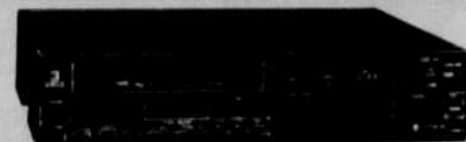
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