

Campus vandals leave high-priced trail of destruction

By Michael Drummond
Emerald Associate Editor

Vandalism: "Webster's New World Dictionary" defines it as malicious destruction or damage to property. The University accepts that definition, but also defines vandalism in terms of money.

The University spends thousands of dollars each year cleaning up the defacement and destruction caused by campus and community vandals.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1988, the cost of vandalism to the school was \$40,339.94. The University's insurance fund covered \$34,426.01 of that.

From July 1, 1988, to Jan. 20, 1989, the University has incurred \$26,996.02 in vandalism damage, with \$20,619.91 covered by its insurance fund. Vandalism damages included broken windows, broken doors, graffiti and water and fire damage.

Although these numbers indicate that a lot of vandalism has occurred during the last year and a half, the figures do not represent an increase in campus vandalism from years past, according to the University's Physical Plant, the department in charge of cleaning and repairing vandalized school property.

"I don't think that it's any worse than it has been in the past — it cycles," said Paul Petersen, assistant director of the Physical Plant.

Petersen, who has worked at the University for 20 years, said most vandalism on campus nowadays deals with broken windows and damaged lighting fixtures, particularly the light poles that dot campus paths.

"There seems to be a streak on light poles," Petersen said.

The stairwell in PLC recently has been the target of spray-paint attacks, and the Physical Plant is still dealing with water damage to the handball courts located east of the covered tennis courts.

Physical Plant workers returned from Christmas break to discover that somebody had placed a hose on the courts, causing flooding and permanent damage. Many of the floorboards are beginning to cup or buckle, and it may cost



File photo

Vandals repeatedly have spray-painted the PLC stairwell over the years, as this 1985 photo reveals. Defacement of the stairwell still occurs.

more than \$40,000 to replace court surfaces, according to Petersen.

University Housing also has its share of vandalism problems, from broken windows to damaged fire-safety equipment. But vandalism in the dorms has decreased since the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to Nancy Wright, director of facility services for University Housing.

One reason for the decrease in dorm hall vandalism was the establishment of an in-house repair staff in 1983. Rather than have the Physical Plant come out every time vandalism is reported, the housing department's in-house staff takes care of the clean-up, including replacing windows, Wright said.

Another reason for a decrease of vandalism incidents in the dorms is the housing department's damage-repair policy, Wright said. Under this policy, dorm residents share in paying for vandalism damage in their halls if no one steps forward to claim responsibility.

"We feel it helps build accountability for the community. Placing one's self in a group living environment implies a certain willingness to take responsibility for what goes on in that environment," Wright said.

Correction

In the Jan. 24 Emerald, former Connecticut senator Lowell Weicker was identified in a story about his winning of the Wayne Morse Integrity in Politics Award as a

Democrat. Weicker is a Republican.

The Emerald regrets any confusion that may have resulted from this error.



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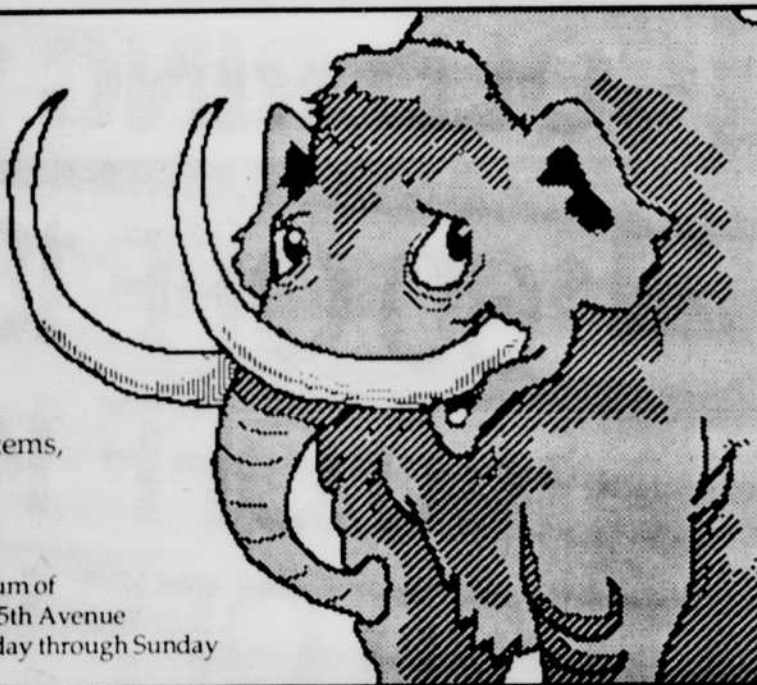
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