

Snow fun turns ugly as hundreds pelt cars

Snow clouds from Alaska moved in ominous unison across the Northwest on Wednesday, dropping several inches of snow on Eugene. While some University students stayed inside the warmth of their apartments and dorm rooms that night, the snow brought out the dark and chilling side of others.

As snowball fights go, this was one of the worst. Participants in the calamitous scene no doubt began throwing snowballs in the spirit of fun, but they were transformed into the instruments of a riot. Innocent passersby who avoided becoming victims found themselves unbelieving witnesses.

Whether the participants of the melee came together from every corner of the muted white campus landscape to clash at the intersection of Agate Street and 15th Avenue, or gathered from the surrounding dormitories — Hamilton and Walton Halls — makes little difference.

The vandals have fled into the safety of mass anonymity. Unlike destructive juveniles in high school, University students are not well known by their classmates, and cannot be easily identified; especially when a mob of 200 join in a act of nocturnal stupidity that causes witnesses to flee and turns away the efforts of the police with an organized and vicious attack of balls of snow and ice.

Perhaps the attackers found it humorous when a passing bicyclist was struck in the head by a snowball, which caused him to crash. Perhaps they were amused when the snowball fight caused a driver to veer into a utility pole. Perhaps they didn't consider the anger and hurt of the victims who had no desire to join in the snowball fight. Nor did they think of the safety of the motorists who, in addition to dealing with the already hazardous driving conditions, had to drive through a gang of students bent on forcing their cars off the road, grabbing en masse onto the rear bumpers, opening the doors and throwing snowballs at the drivers, or denting the car doors with balls of ice.

Whatever explanation may be forthcoming regarding the psychosis that turns the brains of college students into slush when snow falls on a campus unaccustomed to severe turns in the weather, the Wednesday incident merits no rationalization. There simply is no excuse.

It is unlikely any one person or group can be singled out as the instigator of the destruction and the insanity, but at least those responsible for the broken windows should step forward, or they should be turned in. Anyone who can be proved to have caused damage should be turned in.

Police and campus security report similar incidents elsewhere, at the University Inn in particular, and point out that the same thing happens whenever we see a good deal of snow in Eugene. But the more seasoned also quickly note that the Feb. 1 incident between Walton and Hamilton Halls is by far the worst in memory.

More important, however, incidents of harassment continued as the snow fell Thursday. Students in the backs of pickup trucks drove around campus hurling snowballs at pedestrians. Students threw snowballs at moving cars, causing near-accidents all around campus.

Wanton disregard for the property and the health of the campus and Eugene communities tarnishes the public image of the University.

No doubt we will be paying for the idiocy of the students involved for weeks to come, not only through changes in attitudes toward students from members of the local community, but in attitudes toward the perceived recklessness of college students in general.

Although campus security and Eugene police assure us that little could be done to calm the hysteria, we hope for an official stand on the elimination of future incidents, especially considering their inevitability in an area where snow is uncommon. If not, we can expect action from the owners of the damaged cars — who should not be subjected to threats against their property or themselves.

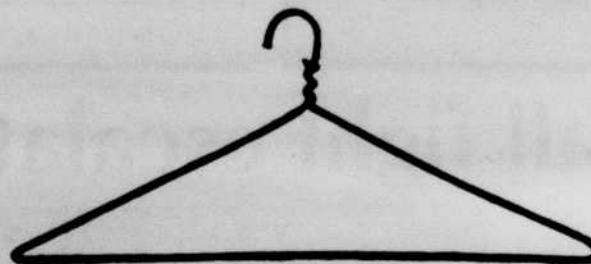
Part of the college experience no doubt includes having a good time. But students involved in Wednesday night's snowball fight need to learn a few things about another part of the college experience: the social responsibility of learning to be an adult.

The snow zombies with the frostbitten brains who staged their little war in our midst should be reminded that they owe a number of people an apology.

They owe an apology to the people who innocently stepped into the snowball fight. They owe an apology to the Eugene police officers who, upon being threatened by 200 people hurling balls of ice, were forced to leave. They owe an apology to the University community.

We invite the participants of the snowball fight to apologize. If they insist their dangerously juvenile behavior was just good, clean fun, they are wrong. It was deplorable.

WILLIS 9/1989
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE



A KINDER, GENTLER
BACK-ALLEY ABORTION

Letters

Homophobia

On Jan. 19, I made a phone call to the Office of Public Safety. I wanted to know the procedure I should follow if I received a threatening phone call while working in a campus building and felt that I needed an escort out of the building.

I work late at night on campus sometimes and the officer indicated that if I felt I was in that much danger I should find another job. I attempted to restate my question and he interrupted me with a reference to the Gay and Lesbian Alliance incident. He was totally unconcerned about my personal safety. After a few more frustrating attempts to get the information I needed, the officer hung up on me.

I called back and spoke with another dispatcher. She informed me that the other officer thought my call was "a set up." (She was referring to the recent incidents involving the GALA office). I assured her that it wasn't. She answered my question.

As I understand it, a person in need of assistance must verbally request an escort from public safety, otherwise their office will not investigate the building. I am concerned that the first officer acted unsympathetically and unprofessionally toward me. His obvious homophobia made him unnecessarily defensive. His suspiciousness of the validity of my questions made him less able to perform his job well. I am aware that GALA is requesting that the Office of Public Safety provide workshops to educate their employees about homophobia and I believe the need for them is evident.

Laurel Sharp
Eugene

Change of heart

In response to "RU-486" (ODE, Jan. 27) by Peter Backes. I shall comment briefly.

First, I am not a fallen evangelist.

In fact, if any man falls who is claiming to be a follower of Christ, the scripture says "he has a God who is faithful to forgive." No evangelist who follows Jesus Christ has ever claimed to be incapable of sin, but rather believes that the grace of God who did live a perfect life on Earth, then allowed himself to be killed by men whose deeds matched the worst televangelist's ... is sufficient. Putting one's faith in anything else will cause even the "strongest" to fall.

So Peter, it appears that your weak attempt to stereotype those who stand up against abortion has failed before it even started. I simply want to say that laws cannot change peoples' hearts. But if a person makes just laws, and is unable to enforce them, he is much better than a man who makes compromising laws and leads people astray. The law serves as a reminder of what is right. Any idiot can contrive schemes which will allow him to break laws and stand a good chance of not getting caught. But, if the laws themselves are not just, such a man is not even reminded that he is an evil doer. Therefore, I will support the establishment of just laws without regard to how we shall enforce them.

Robert Weigel
Lab technician

Communication

The ODE (Jan. 26) front page featured an article concerning the Eugene Emergency Housing Opportunity shelter and the deteriorated communications between the occupants and the shelter management. Another article on this same front page covered a speech by Professor Kramarae in which she highlighted some of the difficulties males and females experience attempting to communicate in this society.

Apparently all management personnel of the shelter are males; the adult occupants are all females. It's not surprising

serious problems have developed!

Maybe management should obtain a copy of Professor Kramarae's speech, study it, and then put its usable pointers into practice. Or easier yet, management could apply some common sense coupled with a little heart to their differences with the occupants.

Donald Kleindl
Eugene

No members

There has been a misunderstanding as to the reasoning behind the Incidental Fee Committee's decision to not fund Women in Philosophy. The IFC's decision had very little to do with its redundancy to the Philosophy Club. Clearly there is a need on campus for a Women in Philosophy. This is why the IFC passed the program's goal statement as fundable.

The IFC moved not to fund Women in Philosophy for three major reasons. First, before the meeting the committee found the director impossible to contact, indicating that the program was not accessible to the average student on campus. Second, the program proved to have only one active member: the director. When asked why nothing happened last term the response was that the director was out of town. Finally, one dollar has been spent to date showing that the money could be more wisely spent elsewhere.

This decision is one that shows the IFC's commitment to balancing both strong cultural diversity on campus and accountability to IFC funded programs.

I would hope that in the future the Oregon Daily Emerald will be more careful about reporting IFC reasoning, and I invite anyone who has questions to come to our office and talk to members.

J. Lauren Norris
IFC chairwoman