South African traveler to speak of experiences; urge sanctions

By Betsy Clayton
Emerald Associate Editor

"Shocking" is one word to describe an American's experience in South Africa because racism is so institutionalized, said Susan Sygall, director of Eugene's Mobility International USA.

Sygall will speak tonight at 7 at Temple Beth Israel, 2550 Portland St., as part of a Clergy and Laity Concerned speaker program.

The event, co-sponsored by Mobility International USA, does not have an admission charge.

Sygall spent three weeks in South Africa in January — primarily in Johannesburg and Capetown — with six other Americans traveling as part of a small group sanctioned by the African National Congress.

"I am by no means an expert on South Africa. My only intent is to share my limited experience; but I think I did gain more than a tourist because we met with different groups," Sygall said.

Various activists within the country acted as hosts for the group. Sygall met with anti-apartheid political groups, women's groups, small community township organizations and people in the education field.

Tonight's speech will include Sygall's experiences with the anti-apartheid movement as well as a look at South African services for people with disabilities.

Architectural accessibility is minimal in the country, Sygall said, but a strong group of both black and white people are working to change it.

"The struggle for accessibility is something you see around the world but it's harder is South Africa," she said.

Children with disabilities in South Africa are separated from other children in schools. "With the school situation with the apartheid situation, disabled kids are double hit," Sygall said.

To help solve the problems in South Africa, Sygall said people in the United States need to continue pressuring the government to impose stronger economic sanctions against South Africa.

"Locally, people need to contact their elected representatives and other people who believe apartheid should cease," she said.

More importantly, Sygall said people need to realize that racism is an international problem and work against it in their local communities.

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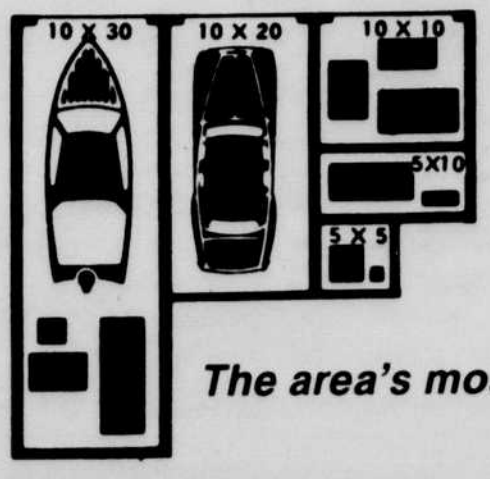

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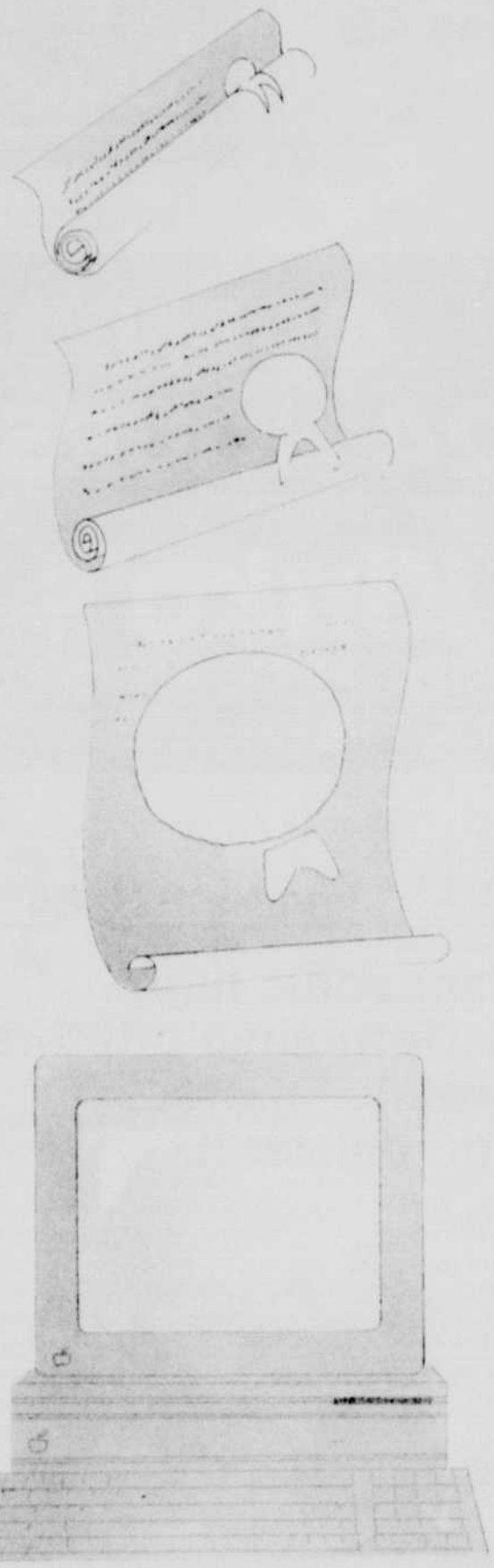

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