

PLC elevators boast an unflattering reputation

Lack of money prevents their modernization

By Wendy Fisher
Emerald Contributor

Of the 43 passenger elevators on campus, it seems the most memorable are the two elevators in PLC.

Memorable, in this case, is used in the negative sense.

Most people who ride the elevator remember the long wait for it, the sudden lurch as it stops and starts, the failure of the elevator to stop before the door opens, the lack of Braille button indicators, and a button panel that is too high for people in wheelchairs.

They also remember getting stuck between floors.

"I just got stuck between the third and fourth floors," said sociology peer adviser Kelli Gallippi, who managed to make it to her eighth floor office. She and five others on the elevator pushed buttons until the elevator moved to the fourth floor where they pried open the doors. Everyone got off the elevator and took the stairs, Gallippi said.

Several other faculty and staff in PLC have also been stuck in the elevator.

Economics professor Joe Stone said he gets stuck in the elevators about five times a year and has to pry open the elevator doors to get out.

Stone said he was even forced to climb out of one of the elevators five years ago when it stopped between floors.

Sociology office manager Barbara Lutan said she was stuck in the elevator for 10 minutes in 1988.



Photo by Mark Vlen

PLC's elevators are notorious for being slow and unpredictable, and modernization may not be possible until 1991.

"You should always carry a book with you in case you get stuck," she said. Lutan added, however, that she has only been stuck in the elevators once in 14 years.

Shelly Carlson of the political science department said she is used to the elevator problems.

"We just kind of learned to live with it," she said.

The elevators may have problems, but unlike elevator horror films it's impossible for the elevator cars to fall, said Ernie Svensson, preventative maintenance supervisor.

The elevators are held by five or six cables, which are consistently tested for stretching and rusting. If problems are found, the cables are replaced, Svensson said.

All campus elevators are inspected by a state inspector. A no-load test, in which the elevator begins its descent and the

emergency brake is applied, is done annually and a full-load test, in which the elevator is loaded to its weight capacity and the emergency brake applied during its descent, is done every five years. PLC's elevators passed both tests.

Svensson explained that if an accident occurred, the elevator would be shut down until a state inspector examined it.

The PLC elevators' problems are well-known to the University Physical Plant.

John Chappell, Physical Plant associate director, said PLC's elevators, "have been a real pain for years." Chappell and elevator mechanic Terry Jones said the problems with PLC's elevators are due to a combination of factors.

It takes 800 relay switches, working properly, to operate the elevators. A problem with one switch and the elevator won't work properly.

The elevators are more than 20 years old, are the most used on campus and serve the largest building on campus — ten floors.

Moreover, Chappell said that when the elevators were originally purchased in 1967, they were not top-of-the-line models.

Jones said he receives one to two calls a week to repair one or the other of the elevators. That figure, however, is down from the four to five calls Jones used to receive.

Five years ago the Physical Plant began a preventative maintenance program. Jones said he now checks the elevators once a week, and problems have declined significantly.

In July, Physical Plant Director George Hecht enlisted an elevator consultant company to study the two PLC elevators.

Although the company said they've seen worse elevators,

their study recommended, "the modernization of the two Westinghouse passenger elevators (PLC's elevators)." The modernization recommended by the company included making the elevators accessible to the disabled.

"By modernizing the existing equipment ... you would be eliminating many of the current components which are causing maintenance difficulties and shutdown," the study added.

So why hasn't the University replaced or upgraded the elevators? Lack of money, said Hecht.

The price to modernize the two elevators is approximately \$90,000 apiece. PLC has a third elevator shaft, but according to federal law, an elevator cannot be installed there unless the other two elevators are modernized.

The capital repair budget gives maintenance \$850,000 a year. The elevator maintenance alone was almost \$80,000 last year and is expected to be more than \$100,000 this year. Add in repairs to roofs, sidewalks and other structures and the budget doesn't cover the needed repairs and replacements, Hecht said.

The future for the elevators is in limbo right now, said George Pernsteiner, vice-chancellor for facilities for the Oregon State System of High Education.

The University has a budget plan, entitled the Achievement Modernization Program, for \$1.5 million, which Pernsteiner said includes modernizing the two elevators.

The plan is currently in front of the Oregon Legislature, Pernsteiner said.

If the project is accepted, the money won't be available until July 1991. Then the University must decide where to spend it.

The hottest trend in laundry finds Eugene in Club Wash

By Stacy Ivie
Emerald Associate Editor

Students seeking a social atmosphere or a place to meet that special someone have another option to offset the singles bars and coffee houses.

The concept is social laundry, and the nationwide trend has come to Eugene in the form of Club Wash.

Owners of coin-operated laundry facilities across the country are grasping at the threads of this new fad: up-scaled laundromats that not only serve a purpose, but provide a social scene as an added bonus.

The idea is contagious. So far, coin-operated laundromat trade journals report that between 150-200 up-scale laundromats have cropped up across the country.

Locally, Bill and Montra Dickey, owners of Club Wash, are banking on the fact that University students will warm up to the same services.

"We are turning the laundry chore into an event," Montra said.

The first-of-its-kind laundromat in the campus area was concocted from an idea the Dickeys had when they attended the University.

"We hated to do our laundry. Everyone hates to do their laundry, but it just has to be done," Bill said.

Bill read an article eight years ago focusing on a social laundromat on the University of Texas campus. "The place was doing great and students were loving it. It has been in the back of my mind since then."

Bill and Montra decided it was time to take the

step in August 1989 when they approached Sacred Heart Hospital to discuss renting some hospital-owned space on 13th Avenue. "They didn't like up to the idea (of a laundromat). They said they didn't want bums sleeping in the dryers," Bill said, smiling.

When their current building opened up last school year, the Dickeys gave Sacred Heart a second sales pitch and were successful.

Club Wash, 595 E. 13th Ave., formerly Sahalie's Natural Food Store, opened its doors on June 16, which Bill openly admits was a terrible time to start business with students departing.

But since fall term rolled around, business has picked up to the point that the Dickeys are now planning to add more washers and dryers.

What attracts the students? A big screen television, video games, music, a deli featuring salads, soups, sandwiches and the like, and of course, the laundry facilities.

"I do my laundry here because it's clean and new and offers me a place to study," said Natasha Juliana, a second-year University student, who reads through a class packet while her laundry is being done. The television blares in the background entertaining other laundry-doers.

And there are no bums sleeping in the dryers. Montra said that safety is a big factor. "In a study done in the spring, students reported that they didn't like going to laundromats because they didn't feel safe. (The store is) attended at all times, so we don't have that problem."

Success is also partially attributed to the envi-



Photo by Sean Poston

University students Ann Lulay and Sean Haffner spend a night fluffing and folding at the hottest spot to do laundry, Eugene's Club Wash.

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