

# UNIVERSITY

## Housing lawsuit still pending

By Colleen Pohlig  
Emerald Reporter

Student Ann Piazza and her domestic partner are still waiting, six months after filing a lawsuit against the State Board of Higher Education for denying them family housing on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Piazza and Pamela Harbeintner filed the lawsuit late last spring after their claim with the University's Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity was denied in July 1990.

The claim was denied because University family housing requires that couples be legally married or have custody of minor children.

Housing accepts married couples, married couples with children and single parents with children.

Although the couple offered proof that they were joined in a ceremony of holy union by a minister of the Unitarian Church of Eugene and Lane County four years ago, neither family housing, nor the state, recognize this as a legal marriage.

Piazza said she believes it is unfair that she and her partner are denied housing on the basis of their sexual orientation.

"It's unfair that we have to pay a fortune for rent when straight couples are barely paying anything in family housing," Piazza said. "We've always thought of ourselves as regular people, and we think it is our natural right to have access to family housing."

"We are just as domestic as everyone else."

A fairly recent change in housing policy allows single parents to have another adult living with them without reporting their relationship to housing. This is the closest a gay or lesbian couple can come to living in family housing.



File photo  
Pamela Harbeintner and Ann Piazza are suing the State Board of Higher Education for denying them family housing on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Because neither Piazza nor her partner have children, the couple is suing for discrimination because they do not have children. A heterosexual couple without children may live in family housing, but a gay or lesbian couple without children is denied housing.

Another facet to this issue is the amount of current available space in housing. Piazza said her hopes raised when she saw a recent ad for available space in family housing.

Piazza said she believed housing would let her and her partner in if they needed to fill spaces, but the answer was no once again.

Housing allows, on certain occasions, couples who are engaged to be married to live in housing, yet they do not recognize a domestic partnership.

Two or three couples engaged to be married within one month are now living in housing, said Michael Eyster, housing director.

"The couples have to show evidence of sincere marriage in-

tentions, such as a wedding invitation," Eyster said.

Piazza's lawsuit, which is mainly contesting on the basis of discrimination because the couple has no children, is still in the "pushing papers" stage, Piazza said.

Piazza said the lawyers, from the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Association in Portland, who are handling the case told her to expect a wait of one to two years until the trial materializes. Piazza, now a post-baccalaureate, said she will most likely graduate by the time the case goes to trial.

Because of this, the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance is the co-signer on the case. In the event that Piazza graduates before the case goes to trial, the LGBA will take over the case.

"I think it's ridiculous that in this day and age, with so many advances for gay and lesbian couples, the University persists in this monolithic ideal of married heterosexual relationships being the only valid family units," said Sue Dockstader, co-LGBA director.

In this case, I think (the court) reached into the political grab bag and made a value judgment about the IFC, and to me that's troubling.

"All I really wanted by filing this suit was a chance to present my side," he said. "I recognize, just as any rational person out there, that they could still vote me out for whatever reason."

Colson said he also believes this decision removes the electoral accountability of current IFC members because they will not have to recast their votes in light of his defense, which Colson has never been allowed to present publicly.

"Voters have a right to know the cause that a person is being removed for, and who voted yea or nay," Colson said. "That's a fundamental tenet for being accountable for your decisions."

"If these people stand for kicking people out of office because they don't like them because they hold different political views, the voters should know that," he said.

"There was absolutely nothing of substance to why they kicked me out based upon the facts as I know them," Colson said.

## COLSON

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the IFC because, according to the court's opinion, "reinstating him to office would merely result in the IFC revoting to remove him from office."

Justices Matthew Cate and Joseph Ssebanakitta concurred with this opinion.

Chief Justice Stephen Briggs agreed that Colson's rights were violated but disagreed with the court's rationale for refusing to reinstate him to the IFC.

In the dissenting opinion Briggs wrote: "If the IFC revotes to remove him from office, that is their prerogative. It is not for the court to predict what the IFC would do."

Colson called the court's decision paradoxical, and wrote a letter to the court asking it to reconsider his reinstatement.

"They're going to uphold the rights of individuals in the future," Colson said, "but I'm being left out of it — and I'm the one that filed the case."

## ET ALS

### MEETINGS

Alpha Phi Omega will have a meeting and a party tonight, call 346-9911 for more information.

Graduate School Mentorship Program will meet tonight at 5:30 in the EMU Board Room. Call 346-2803 for more information.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Jo Sonja Watson recall petition signing table will be set up in the EMU Courtyard today from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call 344-1183 for more information.

Gladis Sibrian, a FMLN representative, will speak on the prospects for peace in El Salvador tonight at 7:30 in the EMU Fir Room. Call 346-3194 for more information.

Deadline for submitting Et als to the Emerald front desk, EMU Suite 300, is noon the day before publication. Et als run the day of the event unless the event takes place before noon.

Notices of events with a donation or admission charge will not be accepted. Campus events and those scheduled nearest the publication date will be given priority.

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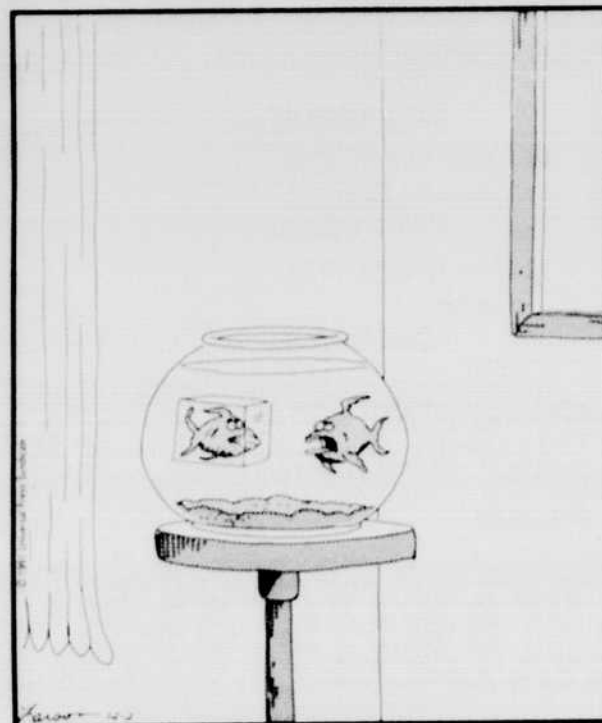
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By GARY LARSON



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