

# Poet speaks with 'her left foot'

By Hope Nealson  
Emerald Reporter

It's not everyone who comes away from the Carson Dining Hall raving about the food. But then, Gaby is an exceptional woman.

"Gaby" Brimmer is a nationally recognized figure who has written four books of poetry not with her hands, but with her left foot.

Gaby has cerebral palsy and cannot speak. She communicates with her left foot, tapping out sentences on an electric typewriter and clicking once for yes and twice for no. Her poetry and lecture tours have made her a leader of Mexico's disabled community.

Gaby toured campus last week, speaking to an education class with the help of volunteers and her attendant Imelda.

To commemorate her stay in Eugene, City Council member Shawn Boles presented Brimmer with an honorary Eugene citizenship Wednesday along with some Euphoria chocolate.

Brimmer came to Eugene last month to receive treatment from the Oregon Rehabilitation Center for the deteriorating condition of her left foot.

After she suffered a seemingly minor fall at her home last year in Mexico City, she gradually lost control of the foot.

Because she could no longer express her thoughts, Brimmer began to slip into a deep depression.

In June 1991, Mobility Inter-

national, an organization that promotes and arranges travel exchanges between disabled people all over the world, sent a letter to ORC. Mobility International's American headquarters are in Eugene.

ORC, part of Sacred Heart General Hospital, offered to help, testing Brimmer to find solutions to her dilemma.

Outpatient Medical Director Bruce Becker, who helped work with Brimmer, said it was his job to figure out why Brimmer had been losing the function of her left leg.

Becker said there is not a single cause, but the diagnostic team has come up with some treatment plans and an improved wheelchair.

University student Chris Brown, who helped bring Brimmer to Eugene, said it took a grass roots effort to get her here.

"Everyone who is involved volunteered their time and support," he said.

Brown said watching Brimmer communicate is a rewarding aspect of working with her.

"The most interesting thing is watching the whole process," Brown said. "Watching someone who is basically silent and doesn't talk, to watch them spell out a sentence was very moving for me."

Brimmer was born in 1947 to a Jewish family that immigrated from Europe.



Gaby Brimmer

Tri-Star Pictures released a movie about her life titled *Gaby - A True Story*. It documents Brimmer's life from her parents' immigration to Mexico from Austria to escape the Third Reich and ends with Gaby's life as of 1979.

Brimmer said she was enjoying her stay in Eugene.

"The people have been real warm, and we've been touring night clubs, the campus and newspapers," she said.

Brimmer said she especially enjoyed the helpful people at Carson Hall, and thanked the people of Eugene for their hospitality during her stay.

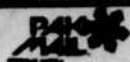
Brimmer will return home Sunday, June 7.

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