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UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE



Brian Hoop, who was arrested on charges of felony vandalism, spent two months at a prison camp.

HOOP

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on Hoop in the University magazine, the *Oregon Voice*.

In the magazine, he was quoted as saying that after he graduated he would "probably get involved with a political group and blow up buildings."

Soon after, police arrested Car-

los Arias on the same charges as Hoop — felony vandalism of federal property. Arias, a former University student, was also an activist.

Hoop was sentenced to the Sheridan Federal Prison Camp for two months and was released in August.

In a letter to the *Emerald* dated Aug. 4, Hoop explained that he and Arias admitted guilt, while another student arrested for vandalism, Efreem Mehretab, was granted a diversion and did not have to admit guilt.

"Personally, viewing the incident as an act of civil disobedience," Hoop wrote, "I had intended on accepting responsibility all along. It was comical when they used the *Voice* article along with my other political activities to characterize me as a 'terrorist, anarchist' and threat to the community."

Hoop received his degree in architecture with minors in peace studies and environmental studies in June 1992, before he went to prison.

"There were no surprises waiting for us at Sheridan Federal Prison Camp," which was less a prison and "more like summer vacation at taxpayer expense — wasted money that would have been better spent funding education," Hoop wrote.

"The irony is that the accommodations and meals are better than I could afford as a starving student," wrote Hoop, who spent time reading, writing letters, running, sun tanning on the lawn and working in the dish room. "Overall, it's just the rest and relaxation I needed after a crazy school year."

"But," Hoop wrote, "there is a more serious side to our incarceration." He then discussed the experience he termed "humbling" of serving time along with individuals who will be serving

sentences much longer than his, "a majority of whom are nonviolent first-time drug offenders."

Hoop wrote that his experience with other inmates told him that most of them do not fit a stereotype of hardened criminal. Rather, "many are guilty of crimes numerous college students are complacent in — mailing LSD, growing pot, overhearing drug sales, distributing drugs to friends."

Hoop said in his letter that the criminal justice system is wasting taxpayer money by sending these drug offenders to federal prison. As an example, he wrote that since 1980, the federal prison population has tripled and that currently 60 percent of those sentences are for drug offenses.

"I think the critical question is why are we a society prioritizing funding a war on crime and drugs leading to an Orwellian police state, while slashing funding for education?" Hoop wrote. "I've always advocated legalizing most drugs as a far more humane drug policy rather than using prisons to warehouse people. Simply warehousing the casual user and small-time seller is a short-sighted policy that does not address the root causes of why we are a drug-dependent society."

Hoop quoted the *Chicago Tribune* as saying the mandatory minimum drug laws have failed to make us safer, while creating more bureaucracy at taxpayers' expense.

Hoop concluded his letter with the thought, "My time here at Camp Sheridan has not rehabilitated me. Indeed, it has only further opened my eyes to the insidious nature of the U.S. government's war on drugs ... it has only strengthened my resolve to speak out against injustice wherever I see it. And I smell a rat. It is our own government's war on drugs."



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- and -

Join the Pegasus Crew for coffee at International Student Coffee Hour, Friday, October 8th at 5:00-5:30 p.m. in the International Student Lounge, EMU.

For more information call the Health Education Office at 346-2728. Sponsored by the Student Health Center, U of O Housing, & Interfraternity Council.