

Law professors create comic

Tiffany Smith

Oregon Daily Emerald

It's all University President Dave Frohnmayer's fault.

It's his fault that the *Oregon Law Review* is the first in the country to publish a comic strip. But that's not a bad thing, since the response has been so positive, the creators say.

University assistant law professors, Keith Aoki and Garret Epps, created "Dead Lines, Break Downs & Troubling the Legal Subject" or, "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Meta."

Epps said he wanted to get a guy on the cover of the review with a big "BIFF!" but that the publishers wouldn't go for it.

"We went to my kitchen, lit up a couple of cigars" and got to work, Epps said. Aoki provides the cartoon's graphics and together with Epps, writes the dialogue.

The two got together early last fall, after Aoki was hired to teach at the law school.

It all started when Aoki was job hunting for a teaching position at law schools. He took along his collection of the comics he created for the Harvard Law School's newspaper from 1987 to 1990. He said he wanted to work in an environment that didn't take itself too seriously.

Frohnmayer, who was then the dean of the law school, saw Aoki's comics during his job interview. He suggested publishing some of them in the *Oregon Law Review*.

"I turned to my colleague Garrett and said, 'Let's do a cartoon strip.'"

Aoki said that Epps was one of the reasons he chose to come

to the University.

"A school that hires people like that is the kind of school I want to work for," Aoki said.

"Keith and I are really on the same wavelength," Epps said. "We work really well together."

He said that he enjoyed working on the comic because, "You get to do some non-linear thinking. Law is very linear."

"So much of legal thought lends itself to caricature, depressingly," Epps said.

The comic strip's two main characters are Mr. Positive, whose animated facial expressions bear a striking resemblance to Epps, and Normative Chameleon, a skeleton with eyes in a v-neck sweater and tie who Aoki v-represents himself.

It is "intended to poke fun at the law, law professors and law students," Epps said.

Mr. Positive and Normative Chameleon start out with something to say but start to get really bogged down in the footnotes that slowly take up more and more space on each page.

The strip pokes fun at students with two more characters, Lisa Lawreview and Lester. These two end up getting lost in all the footnotes and seem to enjoy it. "They are prepared to go on talking about talking about things," Epps said.

A second year law student depicted as a stick figure with a question mark over his head is the only character who tries to cut through all the footnotes and empty talk. "I know I'm only 2L — But will someone please tell me what the hell this piece is about anyway? — in a NUT-SHELL, so to speak?" He is promptly shot down by Lisa and

Lester.

By the time Mr. Positive and Normative Chameleon get to the end, they've run out of room and their point is never made.

Epps said he hopes to change the face of legal reviews.

"The only people who are going to read a law review are other scholars and practitioners," he said. "It ought to be something an educated person would want to pick up and be able to read."

The two have been approached by a "fairly significant university press" to make a book, Epps said. And there are plans to continue the story in upcoming reviews which come out four times a year.

Epps received his bachelor's degree from Harvard College in 1972 and his master's degree from Hollins College in 1975. He went back to school and received a doctor of jurisprudence degree in 1991 and a master of law degree in 1994 from Duke University. He came to the University in 1992.

Aoki received his bachelor of fine arts degree in 1978 for painting and a master's degree in 1986 for sculpture and film. Then he went to New York City, where he worked briefly at Marvel Comics as an inker.

"I got married. [I was] living an interesting but impoverished life," he said. So he presented himself with three choices: go to law school, become a chef or be a comic book writer. He received a doctor of law degree from Harvard College in 1990 and a master of law degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1993. He came to the University in 1993.

■ ET ALS

MEETINGS

Student Health Advisory Committee will meet today at 3 p.m. in the Student Health Medical Library. For more information, call 346-4447.

MISCELLANEOUS

Office of Multicultural Affairs will sponsor "Rondalla Mexicana de Baja California," today at 10:45 a.m. in the EMU

Fir Room. For more information, call 346-3479 or 346-5946.

Newman Center will sponsor a movie tonight at 7:30 at the Newman Center, 1850 Emerald St. For more information, call 346-4468.

Central Presbyterian Church will sponsor a service to remember those who have died in clinic shootings. The service will take place today at 12:15 p.m. at the Central Presbyterian Church, 1475 Ferry St. For more information, call 344-2632.

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