

Gibson's daughter takes stand



ROSEBURG (AP) — Holding a teddy bear in her arms, eight-year-old Karen Gibson testified Wednesday she watched from a bedroom window as her father hit her little brother four times in the face the

day the boy disappeared.

Only four years old at the time, the girl said she was so scared by what she saw that she hid in a bedroom closet.

Afterwards, Karen said her father told her never to speak of what she saw.

"He told me if I ever told the truth I would be in trouble for the rest of my life," Karen said.

A former Douglas County sheriff's deputy, Larry Gibson is on trial on murder charges in the March 18, 1991 disappearance of his son, two-year-old Tommy Gibson, from the front yard of their home outside the small town of Glendale in southern Oregon.

The boy's body has never been found.

Though investigators suspected Gibson in his son's death almost from the start, he wasn't charged until last year, after Gibson's wife took their children and left him, and Karen told authorities what she saw the day her brother disappeared.

Gibson smiled when Karen entered the courtroom, but showed no emotion during her testimony.

Under questioning by District Attorney Ted Zach-

er, Karen said she stayed inside looking for a shoe in her closet when Tommy went outside and her father followed soon afterward.

Tommy called her name and she looked out the window, where she saw her father tell her brother to pick up the pieces of a broken bottle, Karen said.

Her father pushed Tommy and hit him across the cheeks while he held the boy's hands behind his back, she said. Then her father hit Tommy four times and the boy fell down, rolling over onto his back.

Afterward, Gibson picked up Tommy and put him in the back seat of the sheriff's department patrol car, she said.

Karen said her father grabbed a "big white bag" and put it in the trunk. Karen later said that she thought she saw a "black, gray" gun in the bag.

Gibson drove away, and Karen said she could see Tommy waving to her as the car left the house.

When her father came back, he broke a branch off a tree and swept away his tracks in the dirt, then went jogging, Karen said.

She said her father told her to tell police that she saw strangers take her brother.

Under cross-examination, defense attorney Alan Scott questioned Karen about discrepancies between her testimony and her statements to police.

In her testimony, Karen said her father was quiet when he was hitting Tommy. Karen said she didn't remember telling police that Gibson was yelling during the incident.

Voters will determine street's fate in May

Suzanne Marta

Oregon Daily Emerald

The Eugene City Council voted Wednesday to place a preliminary design plan for the reopening of Willamette Street before voters in the May primary.

The plan, which would transform Willamette Street into a street with wide sidewalks and a few parking bays, closely resembles Olive Street, which was reopened in October 1992.

The council plans to fund the \$1.3 million project with urban renewal funds, private sector contributions and the Lane County roads fund.

The county has offered to pay for half of the project, or \$650,000, but the council is pushing for a \$900,000 contribution from the county's road fund.

Councilman Tim Laue suggested that the council put more pressure on the county commissioners to fund the project.

"They routinely spend \$40-50 million a year on projects that use 10 percent of the traffic that we have on Willamette Street," he said.

Councilman Jim Torrey said reopening the street was significant for the city's economy.

"The best thing we can do for the businesses downtown is to open Willamette Street," he said.

Councilman Shawn Boles said the street's reopening is needed despite conflicts in securing funding.

Myrlie Evers-Williams' husband dies at home

BEND (AP) — Walter Williams, the second husband of newly elected NAACP chairwoman Myrlie Evers-Williams, died of cancer this morning in the arms of his wife. He was 76.

Evers-Williams rushed home from Washington, D.C., Tuesday night to be with her ailing husband. Her first husband, civil rights activist Medgar Evers, was shot to death in Mississippi in 1963.

Williams' death came just four days after his wife was narrowly elected chairwoman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

She said this morning that her husband had urged her to seek the office despite his failing health.

"I kept telling him, 'I need to be with you,' and he kept saying, 'This is something you've got to do,'" she said.

After Evers-Williams announced her candidacy for the NAACP office two weeks ago, she said she made her husband promise that he wouldn't die while she was away from their home in central Oregon.

"I said, 'You better not leave me while I'm gone, you better not leave,'" Evers-Williams said, "and he didn't. He never broke a promise to me, and he kept this one. I'm just so thankful I got home in time."

Williams, a retired longshoreman who had been married to Evers-Williams for 18 years, died at 8:30 a.m.

"He died right here in our bed," she said. "I got home just in time."

The couple moved to Bend from Los Angeles in 1989. Walter Williams loved to fish and hunt and had talked his wife into moving to central Oregon.

Department of Forestry fined for safety hazards

MEDFORD (AP) — The Oregon Department of Forestry has been fined \$21,500 for violating safety standards in the death of a bulldozer driver in a forest fire last summer.

The state Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited the department for an inadequate system of keeping track of firefighters, failing to prevent workers from becoming isolated, failing to furnish necessary equipment, and providing inadequate training.

The citations came because the Aug. 25 death of Sydney B. Maplesden, 25, of Sams Valley during the Hull Mountain fire. Blamed on arson, the fire burned 8,000 acres and destroyed eight homes and 36 outbuildings around the community of Sams Valley.

The citations, dated Feb. 14 were released to the public Wednesday.

"We look at these citations as a necessary learning process," said department spokesman Doug Decker. "We're going to work closely with OR-OSHA."

Decker said the department hasn't decided whether to appeal, but was concerned that the citations were issued under codes that may not apply to this situation.

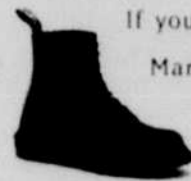
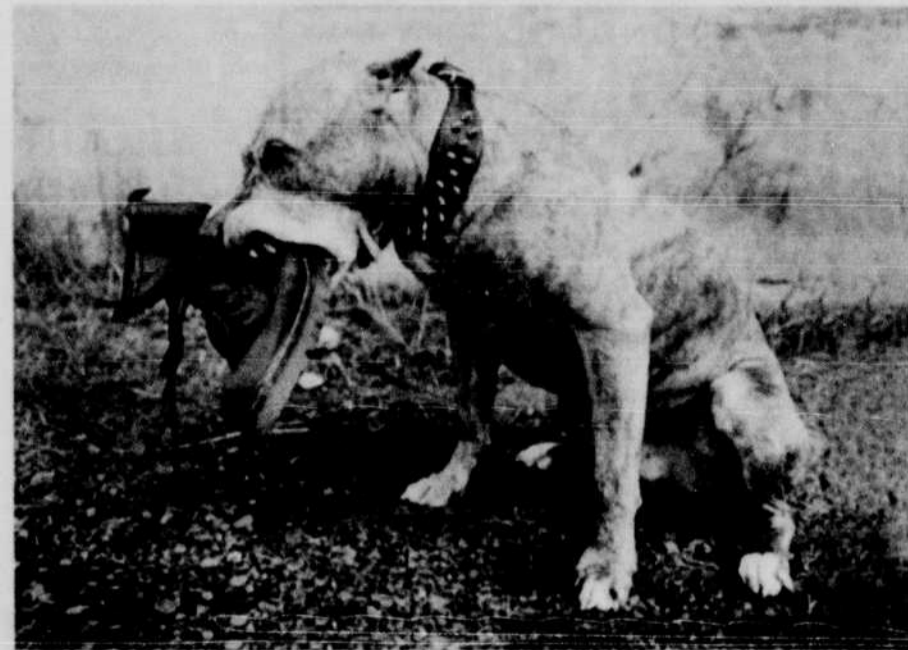
"For instance, some citations appear under professional firefighter codes, when these were not professional firefighters," Decker said.

Maplesden was hired locally to help another bulldozer driver. The department typically hires local people with bulldozers to help fight forest fires.

"We're not trying to walk away from our responsibilities," Decker said. "We just want to make sure that we learn from this and prevent it from ever happening again."

State Forester James Brown has named a task force to review an inter-agency investigation into Maplesden's death and recommend ways to improve safety before the start of this year's forest fire season.

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