

Responsibility law good move for city

A small Oregon town set a precedent earlier this year when it demanded that parents be accountable for the conduct of their children — and threatened fines if they weren't.

The law took effect Jan. 1 in Silverton, a small town near Salem. Just over two weeks later, one parent, Anita Beck, was charged for failing to supervise her son under the ordinance because her son shoplifted.

Beck and the American Civil Liberties Union contested the law, arguing that it invaded the lives of parents. The court rejected the argument and upheld the ordinance.

The Silverton law is a positive step toward ensuring that parents are more proactive in raising their children. While there are many parents who raise their children excellently, others take no responsibility for the upbringing of their children. They need to know that they are required — legally, if not morally — to take care of their children.

One of Beck's charges was that the ordinance infringed on her right to raise her children free of intrusion by the state. This argument is a fallacy. The community should be able to expect that a parent will teach his or her child proper conduct and that some things, such as stealing, are wrong. While parents don't always know exactly where their children are, they should be held accountable for their actions.

Parents are responsible for many things in the life of a child. A parent must consent before most medical procedures are performed on a child. Parents can be held financially liable for the actions of their children. Logically, therefore, parents should be held liable for the criminal actions of their children.

The Silverton ordinance doesn't take away punishments for children convicted of crimes. Children should be held accountable for their actions as well, just like everyone else. The Silverton law only adds penalties for parents.

The environment in which a child grows up often reflects on the minor. A child may resort to stealing or joining a gang as a response to problems at home. The Silverton ordinance will help children by ensuring that they grow up in an atmosphere in which parents take a role in teaching children the difference between right and wrong — under threat of law.

No law will take the place of unprodded communication between parent and child. Perhaps, one day, an ordinance like Silverton's will be unnecessary and juvenile crime a nonissue. However, the parental responsibility ordinance is a good first step toward addressing society's problem of juvenile crime. Parents, more than anyone, can help to solve the problem by teaching their children that crime is wrong.

Silverton is moving the right way in working to help children who commit crimes. More cities should follow Silverton's example.



OPINION

Frog, Pinkman improve campus life



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

Life in Eugene is, to say the very least, quite interesting. More than anything else, what makes it so is the cast of characters we see around our campus.

Two such people, who I would like to salute today, are Pinkman and Frog.

Now, all of us know Frog, but Pinkman may need a bit of introduction. I saw him for the first time last week as I was walking down East 13th Avenue toward Gilbert Hall.

As I was trudging to my class, I noticed someone riding a unicycle down the street, which although rare, was not startling in itself. Then, upon closer inspection, I noticed the rider, a little guy who probably weighed about 150 pounds, was wearing a neon pink, full-body spandex suit that covered all of his body, including his head.

As he zipped in and out of the bicyclists and on and off of the sidewalk through the pedestrians, he caused quite a commotion.

He made "zooming" noises as he pattered about and made sure to quip with all of those who gazed at him as he passed.

To one young woman with purple hair, he pulled up alongside and said: "Great hair! Pinkman loves purple."

It was obvious that he was having a ball, and so was everyone who saw him. Students, hippies and professors alike stopped for a moment to have a laugh with him.

Even Frank Anderson, who was my professor for Math 315, stopped for a chuckle. I haven't seen him laugh that hard since

he graded my final last fall.

Everyone was impressed. One friend of mine, who stood alongside me as we watched in awe, summed it up perfectly: "I want to know what he's smoking, and how I can get some of it."

Pinkman was awesome for a number of reasons.

First, riding a unicycle as well as he did is quite an accomplishment in itself.

Second, anyone with the guts to wear that outfit publicly should either be feared, respected or both.

Third, he was more entertaining than anything I've seen on television since *The Jeffersons* and *All in the Family* went off of the air.

For all of us, as we moved through the motions of our day-to-day routine, Pinkman gave us a chance to giggle for just a minute and take a break from the frenetic pace of our lives. In this age of rough times and fears about the future, that's worth a lot.

Another person who performs such a public service is that permanent fixture of 13th and Kincaid, Frog. The world's greatest joke-book seller has been there for years, probably longer than any student currently enrolled.

I remember my first encounter with Frog. It was about three weeks into my freshman year, and I had just dropped a friend off at her house off-campus. As I walked alone through the dark, I was startled by a little bearded man on a bike who stopped at a light alongside of me.

"Have you had a chance to read the world's funniest joke books?" he asked in the voice that by now is familiar to all of us.

"Well, uh, no, I don't think so." I responded, still shocked at the prospect of discussing books at a stoplight with a total stranger during the small hours of the morning.

"Come and see me in front of the Bookstore this week if you'd

like to take a look."

Eventually, I did see Frog in front of the store, and out of sheer curiosity I bought one of his books. I hate to say I was surprised, but it really was funny.

After that, I started to see him as most of us do, a facet of life at the University. A fellow *Emerald* staffer once told me: "I think that Frog is the only stable thing in Eugene." In a town where Kevin Hornbuckle could get elected, that's probably true.

While students are walking to class or going to buy something at the Bookstore, Frog is there smiling, books in hand, with one of his witty sales lines:

"Buy one of these joke books and Jesus will love you."

"These make great Mother's Day gifts."

And, of course, the oft-repeated classic, "Have you seen the world's funniest joke books?"

On a rough day, walking toward a midterm or a final, it's always nice to see him there. Without fail, we crack a smile as he banters with us, even if we don't want to — it simply can't be helped. His enjoyment of what he does is contagious and it makes pushing through school just a little easier.

As some of us prepare to graduate and leave not only this town but our youth behind us, we should think about Frog and Pinkman. They don't play it by the book; they don't wear suits and ties, at least not that I've seen; they don't fit the image of what we're taught is "successful," but both of them bring something valuable to all of us.

Life is hard, and we all know this. No matter how tough it gets though, there is always time to sit back for just a minute and realize how silly all of our worries and preoccupations are.

This is the gift that Frog and Pinkman give us. When we laugh with them, we can laugh at ourselves.

Primo A. J. Fontana is a columnist for the *Emerald*.

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