

# Law student helps Guatemalan refugee gain asylum

Regina Brown  
Oregon Daily Emerald

A Guatemalan refugee running from government persecution has found asylum in the United States, thanks to University law student Geoff Hickox.

Hickox, who graduates this term, learned about Mario Zappett's case through the law school's human rights group, Monitor. Monitor provides legal services for people seeking justice for human and civil rights issues.

Zappett, a former engineering student from the University of Guatemala, left his native country last spring after receiving death threats for organizing and participating in an annual parade that satirizes the Guatemalan government, Hickox said.

Guatemala is infamous for its poor human rights record and for its alleged government-instigated murders and torture, said Gordi Albi, the founder of Los Amigos de los Sobrevivientes, a Eugene

based organization that provides support for Latin American torture victims and their families.

Anyone who speaks out against the Guatemalan government places himself in danger, Hickox said.

Zappett — who is currently living and working in Eugene — told Hickox he believes the death threats came from the government because he participated in the parade and because of his past involvement in workers rights issues. Before Zappett was in Guatemala City, he helped farmers organize for workers rights, Hickox said.

He stopped his work in the country and transferred to the University of Guatemala in Guatemala City after Guatemalan military members began harassing him, Hickox said. Zappett believed military members might harm him.

"Student leaders who do anything to

help with class issues are seen as insurgent," Hickox said.

The parade was staged at a delicate time for the Guatemalan government, which had just been overthrown by a coup headed by Guatemalan President Jose Serrano, Albi said.

When Zappett left Guatemala, he intended to go to Canada but decided to stay in Eugene and seek asylum in the United States after contacting Los Amigos de los Sobrevivientes. Amigos housed and supported Zappett, helping him contact Monitor, Albi said.

Hickox worked with Kathy Dolan from Legal Aid for Lane County to prepare the papers for Zappett's case, Dolan said.

All three attended Zappett's interview with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service at their office in Portland, Hickox said.

Dolan attributes the cases' success to Hickox, she told the News Bureau, but

Hickox said Zappett's conduct during the interview is what really sealed the fate of the case.

"Mario was very convincing," Hickox said. "He truly believed in everything he did in Guatemala."

On average, only 3 percent of the Guatemalans who apply for asylum in the U.S. are granted it, Albi said.

These cases have a low success rate because the U.S. government claims the political situation in Guatemala will improve, Albi said.

Albi disagrees. Her experience with Guatemalan human rights victims tells her that the Guatemalan government continues to torture, murder and abduct its citizens, she said.

But she hopes Zappett's case is a sign that things will change, she said.

"[The case] was important because it might help establish a precedence for the future," she said.

## ■ ET ALS

### MEETINGS

African Students Association will meet for elections today at 5 p.m. in EMU Cedar Room A. For more information, call 346-4379.

Asian/Pacific-American Student Union will meet for "Heritage Month Study Break" today from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Multicultural Center. For more information, call 346-4342.

Student Project Inc. will have a board meeting tonight from 8 to 9 in EMU Century Room A. For more information, call 346-2859.

### RELIGION

Newman Center will sponsor a Wednesday Night Student Mass tonight at 9 at the Newman Center. A social will follow. For more information, call 346-4468.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Educational Opportunities Program will offer a workshop titled "Motivation" today from 2 to 2:30 in Room 47 Columbia. For more information, call 346-3232.

## CAMP

Continued From Page 1

ago when the Eugene City Council decided to provide a legal site for homeless people to camp, said Susan Ban, executive director of Lane ShelterCare, the nonprofit organization that managed the car camp this year.

The car camp received a total of \$92,000 in funding for the six months of operation: \$20,000 from the city of Eugene, \$5,000 from Lane County; \$30,000 from the state of Oregon; \$19,000 in daily fees from campers and

\$18,000 from community donations.

Ban also said the City Council allocated \$10,000 for the transition to permanent housing for some of the car camp residents. This was the first year of funding for housing transitions.

Richie Weinman, housing and neighborhood development section manager for the city of Eugene, said the status of the camp for next year was uncertain at this point due to funding and location issues.

Weinman said the car camp, which is considered to be in the

same category as nonprofit social services, should be funded by the city in the same manner as other nonprofit social services.

"It's time for the car camp to go to the inter-governmental human services fund," Weinman said. "The city of Eugene is not in the business of delegating social services."

The inter-governmental human services fund is a collection of money from the city and state that allocates funding to social services based on need.

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## DOWNTOWN

Continued From Page 1

opposed the reopening of Willamette Street, said that measure was a perfect example of the city's shortsightedness.

"The city is failing to look

ahead at the consequences of their actions," he said. "That is what they failed to do when they put a mall in the downtown area in the first place.

"They tore down the historical buildings and shut off the streets without considering the

long term consequences of their actions," Hyatt said.

"The way this town works best is when citizens are part of the decision making process. The city needs to create citizen advisory committees to help decide what should happen to downtown."

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## STUDENT ADVISORS WANTED

Need committed and creative student volunteers to advise the Student Health Center regarding programs, services, finances and health insurance.

These students will spend an average of 1-2 hours per week as members of the evolving Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) helping to guide the Student Health Center in promoting a healthy campus through the storm of health care reform.

Successful participants will gain an in-depth understanding of health care delivery and its functioning, will learn about health issues of students, and will develop interpersonal skills and confidence.

Routine meetings are scheduled at 3pm Fridays, so members can plan their class schedules accordingly.

Applications can be picked up at the Student Health Center front desk or outside the ASUO office.

Applications should be submitted to the Student Health Center or ASUO office.

Review will begin June 2, 1995.



For any questions, please call 346-4447.

The ODE Classified section ... much more than a place for the crossword