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March: Local groups participated in protest

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lent educational march designed to raise community awareness of the Eugene Police Department's behavior, according to Ellen Klowden of Copwatch. Klowden said "copwatchers" are individuals who document, review and report the behavior of local police.

Jan Power, a spokeswoman for the Eugene Police Department, said Wednesday's protest march was relatively calm and officers tried to keep the marchers within "lawful means."

Protesters began the march at Scobert Park and left shortly after noon for City Hall, where music and an additional demonstration against local incidents of police brutality were held, Klowden said.

"We want to end the decriminalization of things that are used specifically to oppress the poor, homeless and activists," said Klowden, who helped organize the Eugene march. These include pedestrian traffic violations and sleeping in public spaces.

Klowden said she wanted the march to increase the number of people that are engaged in "copwatching."

"We would also like to encourage the community to file formal complaints against officers who have mistreated them," she added.

The Eugene Police Department



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

As part of the protest, marchers perform a skit reenacting scenes of police and protester conflict.

has made efforts to help activists such as those who participated in Wednesday's protest march.

Power said the police have tried to help the public better understand police actions through recent community policing forums and Allegation Inquiry Accommodations (AIAs), or what she referred to as "Tell Us About It" brochures. Citizens can use them as a way to request information about how the department handles incidents.

But citizens who marched in

the protest wanted to send a broader message out to the community.

One 25-year-old demonstrator from Eugene, who calls herself "Hazel," marched in protest to "send a message out to Eugene that [police brutality] not only happens everywhere else, but in Eugene, too."

"People's constitutional rights are getting ignored, and it is completely unacceptable to me," she added.

Hazel said the march included

representatives from the Cultural Defense League, Earth First, Peace Works and the Homeless Action Coalition among other groups.

Harry Huggs, a homeless Eugene man, said he wanted the march's message to reach not only Eugene but all over the United States.

"The message is that we're going to stand together, and we do care about what happens in our community — no matter where your community is," he said.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Man murders friend to marry his widow

MONTROSE, Pa. — A doctor, who for 21 years claimed his friend was killed in a trapshooting accident, was convicted Wednesday of murdering the man so that he could marry his widow.

Dr. Stephen Scher sat with his hands folded as he heard the first-degree murder verdict that brought an immediate sentence of life in prison without parole. Outside the courthouse, people could be heard cheering.

"God bless this jury for doing justice," said prosecutor Robert Campolongo. "This is the time for reckoning."

Scher, a 56-year-old allergist, had maintained that his friend, lawyer Martin Dillon, tripped and shot himself during the 1976 outing while chasing a porcupine.

The death initially was ruled an accident, but the case was reopened at the insistence of Dillon's father.

During the month-long trial, Scher changed his story, admitting the gun went off in a struggle that started when Scher told the 30-year-old Dillon he was sleeping with his wife.

Scher said he lied about the shooting for more than two decades to protect Dillon's widow, Patricia, whom Scher later married, and the dead man's

two children, whom Scher raised.

He also said he made up the porcupine story because he didn't feel, as a relative newcomer and the only Jew in town, that he would be believed if he told the truth.

Speaking to the court before Judge Kenneth Seamans imposed the life sentence Wednesday, Scher maintained his innocence.

"I understand the workings of the court and the jury's verdict," he said. "I would like to say the testimony I gave was truthful. I did not kill the father of my children. This was an accident."

Prosecutors contended Scher shot Dillon so he could marry his widow, with whom the doctor was carrying on a public affair.

Parts of Scher's porcupine tale began to unravel early in the trial. Scher's claim that he was 100 yards from Dillon when the gun went off was challenged by prosecution testimony that Scher's boots had blood splattered on them and that a tiny piece of Dillon's flesh was found on Scher's pants leg.

The revelation wasn't the first lie Scher has admitted in the trial.

He and the former Mrs. Dillon, married two years after Dillon's death, repeatedly denied having been romantically involved before the shooting. On the first day of the trial, Scher's

attorney admitted the pair had an adulterous affair.

Witnesses later testified Scher would caress and fondle the former Mrs. Dillon, a nurse, in the town hospital.

After the verdict, prosecutor Campolongo walked over to the victim's father, Lawrence Dillon, and kissed him on the cheek.

Outside the courthouse, Josephine Dillon, the victim's mother, said it was a bittersweet victory.

"I prayed this day would come," she said. "I am going to start enjoying my retirement. I'm so relieved it's over, but I don't have any joy because we've lost our grandchildren."

She and her husband then stepped into their car, and a crowd of about 40 people cheered them as they drove away.

Men start gunfight in funeral chapel

MIAMI — Strangers burst into a funeral chapel before dawn Wednesday, ejecting mourners, performing rituals on a body and then starting a gunfight among themselves.

One man was in critical condition with a gunshot wound to the chest.

Three women were holding a vigil for a dead relative at the funeral home in the Little Havana

section when about 10 men entered. Police would not identify the dead man.

"These men started performing Santeria acts to the body of the deceased," said police Lt. Bill Schwartz. "They put some ash in the sign of a cross on his forehead, they took a bottle of rum and stuck it in his right hand, they lit candles, then they ordered the family members out."

Santeria is an Afro-Caribbean religion that melds Catholic saints and rituals with animal sacrifices, hexes and blessings.

Schwartz was unable to say if the men had mistaken the dead man for someone they knew, but said they may have been drinking.

Minutes after the women were ousted, shots were fired inside.

"There was a major gunfight going on. There's furniture tipped over, and bullet holes in walls, blood on the floor," Schwartz said.

Police stopped a man who was running away with a gun, and discovered he had been shot in the chest. Jerry Arturo Spencer, 42, of Homestead, underwent surgery at Jackson Memorial Hospital. No charges had been filed against him.

Police rounded up six other men, but "they're also playing ignorant," Schwartz said. All were released without charges.

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