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# For whom the machine tolls

*Students are surprised that the campus chimes are produced by a programmed machine*

By Kristina Rudinkas  
Student Activities Reporter

On a sunny day in Eugene, you can hear the birds chirping and students laughing with their friends, but blending into the background the sound of bells ringing can be faintly heard.

The Carollonic bells that have helped students keep time on campus since 1951 are often ignored today. Located in the EMU, the Westminster bells sound out from four amplifiers on top of the building every 15 minutes.

The bells are actually digitally produced in a programmed machine made by Schulmerich Carillons Inc. and maintained by Mike Kraiman, the technical services manager.

The Student Senate purchased the first set of bells for \$3,500 in 1954 along with private donors from the classes of 1943 and 1953. The bells were originally intended to become a part of the University tradition and were going to be moved to the campus chapel that was supposed to be built at a later date.

Many students in 1954 worried the bells would break their concentration and distract them while working. One student sued the board of regents for \$1,000 for "mental damages" when a similar bell system was installed at the University of Colorado.

An Associated Press story cited in an Emerald editorial from Jan. 20, 1954, said the student tore up his report upon hearing the bells chime "Hold that Tiger" and the student rated the experience as extremely disagreeable.

The 1954 system wore out in 1990 and the EMU Board of Directors, with the help of private donors, purchased the current system in 1995 for \$20,000.

The system has 37-note carillon bells digitally sampled from actual Westminster bells and programmed to ring every 15 minutes.

The bells start at 7:30 a.m. and continue to sound until 11 p.m. every weekday. The trick to telling time using the bells is to listen for the number of tones. Fifteen minutes past the hour, the bells sound out four distinct notes; 30 minutes past there are eight notes; 45 minutes after the bells ring 12 notes; and at the hour the full segment sounds. At 12 noon and 6 p.m. the bells

sound out the University fight song.

During special events like graduation, the bells will ring out the song "Pomp and Circumstance," Kraiman said.

The bells can be programmed through a special keyboard that transfers the notes to a digital card. The card can be inserted into the Carollonic bell machine and echoed across campus through a 200-watt amplifier.

The machine came with several pre-programmed songs and sequences, including several Beatles songs, Kraiman said.

It can be confusing for some to determine the EMU bells from another set of bells that chime from a church near 18th Street and University Avenue, Kraiman said. It can sound like stereo bells when students walk near Mac Court, he explained.

The location of the bells has been confusing for many students who don't know where the chimes are coming from, Kraiman said. When he takes students on tours of the EMU, most are surprised to discover that the bells are located in a closet.

"You open the closet and show them and say 'Here's what it is,'" Kraiman said. "You can watch their jaws drop."

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