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Tree removal provokes student criticism

University officials say the action was necessary for safety purposes

By Amy Jennaro
Oregon Daily Emerald

Students awoke on Friday morning to find the large tree in front of Gilbert Hall cut in half.

"I was surprised to find this tree cut up because all of the other trees around it seemed just fine," said business major Kent Neal.

According to Tim King, exterior supervisor of the University grounds, the tree wasn't fine.

King received a phone call Thursday night from the Office of Public Safety informing him that a large crack was found at the base of the tree. He concluded the crack would continue getting wider and would be a threat to pedestrians.

"There was no doubt that the tree was an immediate hazard," King said.

Grounds crews worked Friday morning to clear away the branches of the tree. The rest of the tree was cut down early Saturday.

The tree's branches will be turned into wood kiln and the rest of the tree will be shipped to the

Skipworth Juvenile Detention Center to be cut up and distributed.

The tree's removal has sparked a reaction on campus. Many students are not happy with the decision to uproot the tree.

"It's pretty sad that they had to cut it down," said journalism major Haley Campbell.

Other students doubt the action was necessary.

"I think they could have trimmed the tree without having to take its whole top off," said pre-education major Heather Cunningham.

But King said the tree was beyond saving.

"There was such a severe fissure," he said. "That tree was gone."

According to King, the Office of Public Safety and the grounds crews will focus their attention on informing the public through postings about the reason for the tree's removal.

"Our problem right now is that a lot of people don't know why it was cut down," he said.

King said he takes an ambivalent view to the negative reaction the tree's uprooting has received.

"I think the criticism is unfair," he said. "But I can certainly understand it."

High schoolers dominate University chess tourney

The top three positions are taken by members of the South Eugene High School team

By Erin Snelgrove
Oregon Daily Emerald

Madly banging on the timer after each move he makes, Oleg Zaikov sees his opportunity. Trapping his opponent's king in the corner of the board, he victoriously ends the game.

"Checkmate," Zaikov said.

Zaikov was one of 24 players at the University chess tournament Saturday. He entered the competition to prepare for the upcoming state chess championships.

The tournament was coordinated by the University Chess Club. The club opened the tournament to all interested community members to promote community interest in chess.

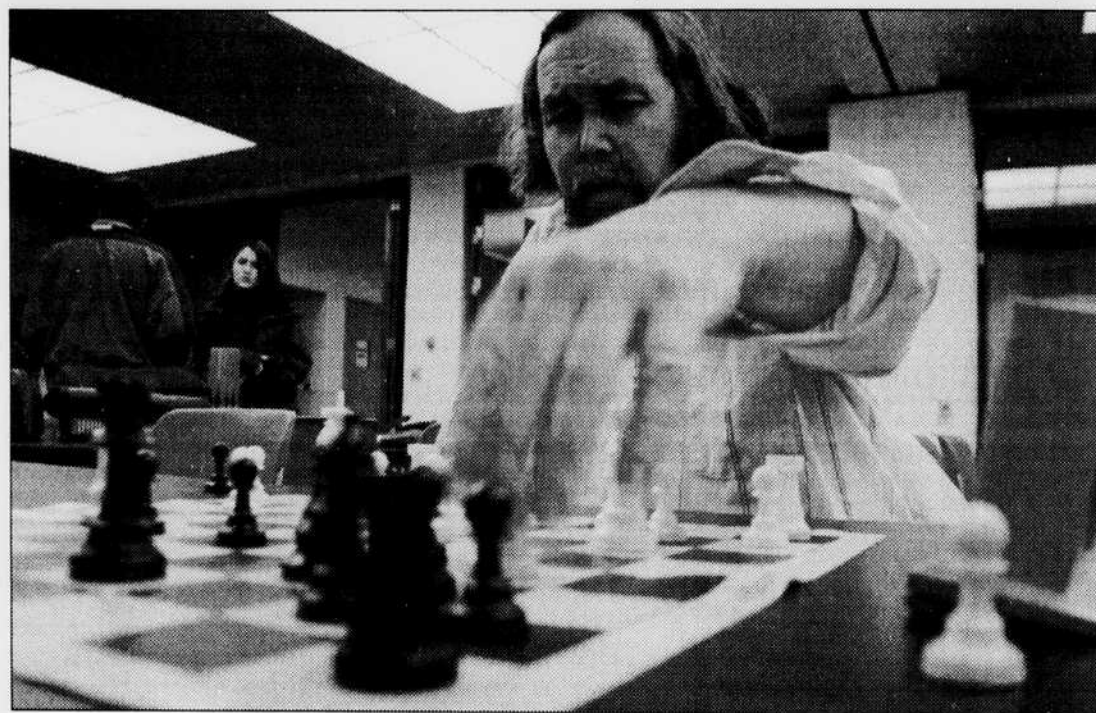
Although he is a fifth grader, Zaikov plays for the South Eugene High School Chess Team. He said the tournament helped sharpen his chess skills.

"The games were fun," Zaikov said. "I'm glad I played."

The chess tournament was conducted in a Swiss style format. With this method, people had the opportunity to play five one-hour games against contenders who are of the same level of skill. Following the first round, players compete against contenders who have won an equal number of games.

However, because of a three-way tie for the second and third ranking this weekend, additional rounds of games were played.

The contenders held a round-robin style tournament to vie for



Chess player Larry Rude makes his move. The UO Chess Club met in the EMU this past Saturday and played with others in the community.

the last two trophies. Each player competed in two additional 10 minute matches.

"The round robin is almost never used because it takes the most number of rounds to complete," said Victor Runyan, a member of the University chess club. "However, it's also the fairest method since everyone gets to play everyone else."

The top three winners of the tournament have all been members of the South Eugene team.

David Nesser, a high school senior, won first place; Danny DeMoss, a recent high school graduate, placed second and Oleg Zaikov, a fifth grader, placed third. These

contenders each won a trophy as a token of their accomplishments.

"I almost feel bad having my kids compete," said Jerry Raimy, the chess coach for the South Eugene team. "They're making the big guys look bad."

David Hall, the president of the University Chess Club, coordinated the tournament. Since the chess team is less than a year old, Hall said the games allowed people to become aware of the club's existence.

"The purpose of the tournament was to have fun and to have a little bit of competition as well," Hall said. "We had wanted to interact

with the rest of the community of Eugene as well as giving University students an opportunity to play."

Despite initial difficulties in getting the games coordinated, Hall said everything turned out beautifully.

"I think the tournament went exceptionally well," Hall said. "It got off to a rocky start because the director didn't show up until the 10 minutes before the games began, but once he arrived, everything began rolling smoothly."

For more information about the University Chess Club and upcoming games, contact David Hall at 684-0035.

Professor to deliver lecture on beginning of political fiction

By Dan Strieff
for the Emerald

Nationally renowned literary critic and biblical scholar, Robert Alter, is speaking to selected classes this week and delivering a free lecture Tuesday as the 1998-99 Kritikos Professor of the Humanities.

Alter, professor of comparative literature and Near Eastern studies at the University of California at Berkeley, will speak Tuesday on "The David Story and the Beginnings of Political Fiction." The speech is intended for an academic audience.

The annual Kritikos professorship, organized by the Oregon Humanities Center, is designed to

bring scholars to campus who have a commitment to intellectual freedom and honesty. Scholars who go against conventional wisdom are often given special consideration.

Alter's campus lecture will be in Gerlinger Lounge at 4 p.m. Tuesday. He will also speak at Portland's Benson Hotel at 5:45 p.m. Thursday on "Reading Biblical Narrative."

Alter, in his 1989 book, "The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age," criticizes a popular academic approach to the study of literature.

He writes that very often the scholarship of literature places too much emphasis upon the agenda

of the author and the contextual reference of the work rather than allowing the piece of work to stand for itself.

"The literature was beginning to be seen not so much for its content, but rather its context," Alter said in a recent interview. "They must be more evenly balanced."

But, he added, "I have never said that the interaction (between text and context) was irrelevant, but just that they must be more evenly balanced."

Alter also had some broader aims in the book.

"I didn't see that people cared all that much about the literature," he said. "One of my primary goals

was to present a recent argument as to why literature was a distinctive art form."

Alter also supports the practice of reading the Bible as literature, a common practice in most American universities.

"I do not mean to say that the Bible is not inherently a religious set of books," Alter said. "The vehicle used to write them is definitely a religious one."

The Albany, NY, native received both his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard and has published 18 books and more than 130 scholarly articles.

For more information, call 346-3934.

Oregon Emerald

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