

Exhibit conveys roommate woes

A UO STUDENT TELLS THE TALE OF NINE ROOMMATES AND ONE TRASHED HOUSE

Matt Partney
for the Emerald

This is the story of nine Hawaii natives picked to live in a house and have their lives exhibited to see what happens when people stop acting polite — and start getting real.

This may sound like an episode of "Real World," but it's actually the story of a living situation gone out of control. Tom Hirashima, a senior majoring in fine arts, lived through the ordeal and survived to tell the story — in a unique fashion.

Hirashima created an art exhibit as part of the final project for his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, telling the story of his experience. The exhibit, which mixes photography with prose and props, documents the lives of nine people and their lack of respect for each other and their living situation.

Photographs, letters from the leasing office and roommate testimonials reverberate with the chaos these nine people endured and what went wrong. The empty bottles of beer and cigarette butts that litter the floor around the exhibit only begin to convey the environment of this plot.

In the fall of 1997, nine acquaintances from Maui, Hawaii, found themselves in Eugene and looking for a place to live. They found a newly remodeled eight-bedroom house on 18th Avenue and Willamette Street and moved in immediately.

diately.

Hirashima admits that the thought of nine folks living together was novel and exciting — at first. Uninvited long-term guests, constant partying, dwindling rent payments and a lack of unity within the house created an unbearable, even hostile, environment.

"The house was out of control. With nine people in the house, there was always somebody partying," he said.

Hirashima's house was the sight of many a crime and resulting prosecution. His art exhibit displays a complete list of infractions brought against the roommates, ranging from drug possession of nearly every substance imaginable to illegal gambling, theft and software piracy.

Did we mention prostitution yet?

After eight months, Hirashima had had enough and moved out of the house, accepting the penalty for breaking his lease agreement.

"This sort of thing happens in smaller houses, but with a larger group, things just get out of hand," he said.

One by one, each roommate jumped ship, leaving the house and the owners with \$2,056.24 in owed rent and repairs.

"We destroyed the house, we trashed it," Hirashima said.

Today, only two of the three University students remain in the house, while the rest have dispersed. One former roommate is still missing in action after a fight with another roommate.

But there are lessons to be learned from Hirashima's experience.

"The house was out of control. With nine people in the house, there was always somebody partying..."

Most of my roommates either had a job or did nothing. They just slept until two then got up to buy beer so they could do it all over again."

Tom Hirashima
Senior

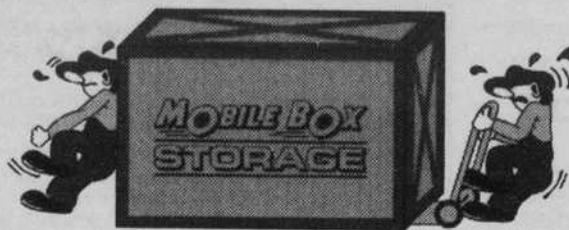
"Next time, I wouldn't make snap decisions like that on who to live with," he said. "I would recommend that you all have something in common, like you're going to school at the same time."

"Most of my roommates either had a job or did nothing. They just slept until two then got up to buy beer so they could do it all over again."

Hirashima also stressed the importance of setting house rules and even having a chore schedule to avoid any problems.

It's true, chances are you won't be in a living situation as crazy as Hirashima's, but careful planning and thoughtful decision making will avoid many of the problems he had to go through. After all, it may only start with dirty dishes and loud music, but who's to say how close prostitution and deadbeat roomies follow?

Tom Hirashima's exhibit was in the Laverne Krause Gallery at Lawrence Hall until April 28.



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