

Students deserve housing rights

Living conditions for University students leave much to be desired, so what can be done to improve the situation?

In elementary school we learned that the four fundamental needs of human beings are air, water, food and shelter.

While Top Ramen noodles, crisp Oregon wind and plenty of rain — daily rain — satisfy most of the basic necessities, University students can run into plenty of obstacles trying to find a place to live.

Often coming from the cushy space of parents' houses, we accept that our living arrangements will be different. We can deal with small kitchens, transportation costs and brown carpet. We can stuff ourselves into dorm rooms. We can move across town just to be comfortable. But what we should demand in return for our economically life-giving rent money are realistic prices, service and respect.

For many freshmen, residence halls are the "obvious" option. But with rising prices (\$4,342 in 1996-97 to \$5,350 this year) and student dissatisfaction with limiting meal-plan options, students have to think about the cost-efficacy of University Housing. For that \$5,350, students get nine months of living and only 16 meals per week. That is about \$600 per month.

Students living in inexpensive campus-area apartments can easily beat that number if they have a roommate and split bills. When residence hall prices were raised in 1996-97, students understood that the money was going to the installation of cable and Ethernet lines. When prices rose this year, students were given no reason why. The extra money from increases should go to specific improvements in the residence halls.

Upsides to the residence halls are all-you-can-eat food and bill consolidation. But if you're eating all-you-can-eat every meal and not walking that far to class, it's easy to see how the "Freshman 15" can add up fast. For the price students pay, they are offered accessibility to school, the chance to meet new people and maybe more support than other living arrangements offer. The flipside is lack of privacy, small spaces, roommates screaming at 2 a.m., buildings that are in need of updating and most importantly, a Housing organization that

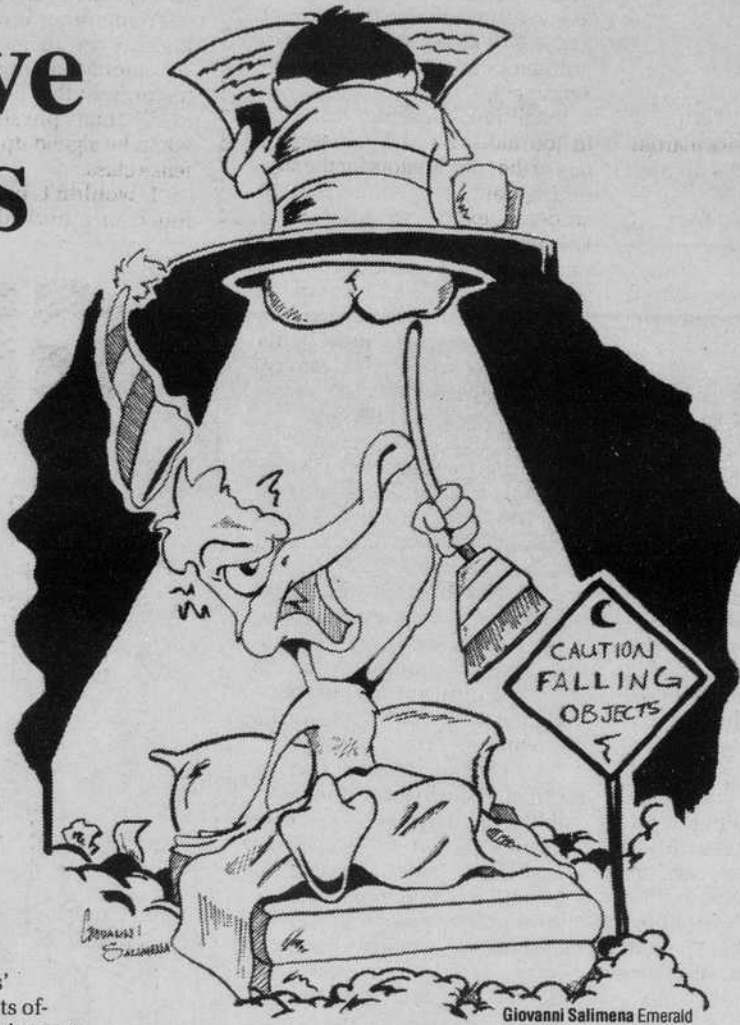
doesn't seem to respond to specific student needs. If students have issues with the meal plans or want residence halls that offer comfort to gays and lesbians, then they should be heard.

The same is true for students living in campus-area apartments. In the 1997-98 school year the ASUO did studies on how students feel about their landlords and their renters' rights. No surprise, students often felt negative toward their apartment managers or landlords and had problems getting help or repairs offered them in their rental agreements. Without a group of fellow renters to back them up or put pressure on landlords to respect realistic student demands, most renters complained but took little action.

Crime has been an ever-present issue as well in West University. Even though the addition of a police mini-station has helped lower crime statistics, this neighborhood has a stigma attached to it. And some students feel the new police station means cops will focus on or target students.

Finally, one of the most pressing issues is the lack of a housing code for the city of Eugene. Without a city code, the state housing code cannot be enforced here. Without any code, essential requirements for that basic human need for shelter are not agreed upon by renters and landlords and public officials. There are no standards.

Anyone who walks through the streets of campus or the West University neighborhood can see the life-blood that students pour into the area: economically, socially and politically. We populate but lack control over our environment. If students



want to change their say in housing, they must speak in one voice. The power of the dollar cannot be overestimated.

But it's hard to take business elsewhere when other options for housing are just as bad. Duck's Village, Chase Village and the new University Commons Apartments tout themselves as havens for students tired of dingy kitchens and small quarters. But the price one has to pay is higher rent and the cost of not being close to school. Not surprisingly, these student-centered living communities are not filled to capacity. Why then did University Commons, which is new to students this year, think it had a market?

Living in small apartments, eating macaroni and cheese for dinner and riding your bike to school are all rites of passage for college students. But there's no reason to pass on the tradition of being disrespected by people who think that just because you're only here for four years that you don't matter.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

QUOTED

"I wouldn't give Charles Barkley an apology at gun-point. He can never expect an apology from me. ... If anything, he owes me an apology for coming to play with his fat butt. ... I probably should've listened to Michael [Jordan] a year ago when he said that Charles will never win a championship because he doesn't show any dedication."

— **Scottie Pippen**, NBA player formerly with the Houston Rockets and of the Portland Trailblazers, on his ex-teammate. ESPN.com, Oct. 2.

"We're struggling. We're a team that is reeling, and we're having problems trying to find ways to get success. I've never been in this situation before — everything seems to be falling apart, and we're trying to put the pieces back together."

— **Cathy Nelson**, head coach of Oregon's volleyball team. Nelson's record at Oregon heading into Tuesday night's match with Portland is 41-93. Oregon Daily Emerald, Oct. 4.

"I like to be as naked as possible."

— **Melissa Joan Hart**, star of ABC's "Sabrina the Teenage Witch," who was recently honored by the Family Friendly Programming Forum. Maxim, October 1999.

"I always felt, you know, taller, bigger; I always wanted to help the smaller kid."

— **Bill Bradley**, democratic presidential hopeful and former NBA star. Time magazine, Oct. 4.

Letters to the editor

Toxic chemical accusations too presumptuous

In response to claims that the government sprays deadly chemicals in the air: Go back to sleep, people. I looked up "chemical trails" using Hotbot and Altavista. The "respected" Web site is called "GOVT-WATCH for Freedom." Doesn't sound like an unbiased news source. This Web site contains a letter stating, "They [contrails] exhibited a curious starting and stopping in the air. In my past experience, contrails usually extend from horizon to horizon." It is ridiculous to conclude that because contrails aren't continuous, they must contain pesticides. The occurrence and duration of contrails is related to the air temperature through which airplanes pass. "Lab samples have revealed the pesticide ethylene dibromide." Somebody needs to ex-

plain how one collects contrail samples in the first place and then where and by whom the samples were analyzed before this claim is believable. "If you or someone you know has had any of the following symptoms, it may be due to chem trails" The letter then lists 19 common ailments, most of them more likely due to over-caffieneation. Until we get more scientific, reliable proof, rest easily. Don't buy this conspiracy theory. Or, if you still believe, try this one: Did you know that the word "gullible" isn't in the dictionary.

Joe Ross
 Biochemistry

Advertising choices in poor taste

I'm an employee of the University. If I were to hang the Ralph Lauren poster that was included with the Emerald (ODE, Sept. 29), my co-workers would have reasonable grounds to file a sexual harassment complaint against me. How much did

you make for this one? I can hope that we can expect more tobacco ads, too (sigh). "You speak with a forked tongue."

Steve Shapiro
 Office of Research Services and Administration

Crosswords not what they used to be

I used to love doing the crosswords each day in my Emerald. Eugene Sheffer had difficult, yet clever and decipherable clues. And it was always a great source of joy for me and my friends to sit around wasting the time between class and often in class pinning over the little squares in the back of our papers. Now I find clues that even the more successful contestants on Jeopardy! would be hard pressed to pull answers out their butts for. Not only are the questions difficult, but the answer key is printed right next to the puzzle. It's like leaving a steak dinner within reach of your dog, leaving the room to take a

leak and expecting it to be there when you get back. Or actually believing the myth of a "dry" fraternity. C'mon we're college students; we can read upside down, and even if you put the answers on a different page, it would be next to impossible to fight the urge to look. Instead of doing a crossword today, I took my time to write this letter of complaint. I know there are many of us out here who miss Mr. Sheffer and long for the quality we once saw in the Emerald's crosswords.

Luke John MacSween
 Music

CORRECTION

The "University and GTFs come to terms on new contract," story (ODE Sept. 27), should have said under the proposed agreement, GTFs will receive a 1 percent pay increase in March and a 1.25 percent increase the following year. The Emerald regrets the error.