

Wheelchairs

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ally only use about seven seats if their companion is not in a wheelchair. She also said that four of those 14 seats are held for students using wheelchairs, even further reducing the number accessible seating to the general public.

Hays said Eugene is one of the most wheelchair-accessible communities in the nation, and Mac Court should be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The ADA requires 1 percent wheelchair seating, 1 percent seating for companions of wheelchair users and 1 percent seating availability for wheelchair users who transfer from their wheelchairs into regular seats for newly constructed or remodeled facilities. Based on these requirements, Mac Court should have about 90 seats for wheelchair users.

Protesters, however, claimed that when Mac Court was remodeled in 1997, changes such as the number of wheelchair seating or the installation of an elevator were not considered.

"They have had over a decade with the ADA and in terms of seating, they have done very, very little," said JuLeah Huckstep, a senior majoring in educational studies.

Huckstep said she has had enough and is now filing an affirmative action complaint with the University as well as a complaint with the Department of Justice. The protesters have also requested for the Oregon Disabilities Commission to review the University's plan for how to transition to a more wheelchair-accessible Mac Court.

The Athletic Department declined to comment and referred questions to Ken Lehrman, director of the Office of Affirmative Ac-

tion. Lehrman said his office will conduct a neutral fact-finding investigation as soon as Huckstep's grievance has been filed officially. The results of that investigation will then be passed on to an administrative body, which will rule on whether the seating at Mac Court constitutes discrimination.

He also said his office will work with the department of athletics to add wheelchair seating apart from Huckstep's grievance.

"I don't think it's simply for us a question of just providing the bare bones minimum," he said. "We want to do better than that."

Lehrman said that adding wheelchair seating and an elevator to Mac Court were in fact on the agenda when Mac Court was last remodeled. But plans to increase wheelchair seating to 20 could not become a reality because of fire safety requirements.

He also said the possibility of having an elevator in Mac Court will need to be investigated because of the building's old age. But improvements will be made no matter what the administrative body rules, he said.

"Changes would be made between now and next year, certainly before the start of the basketball season next year," Lehrman said.

Melissa Mueller said she came to not only protest the inconsistent way the available space is utilized.

"I just want to be able to see the games. It really feeds my soul being part of the community," Mueller said.

John Barrett was the only protester who had a spot at Friday night's Civil War game secured. Although he was looking forward to the game, he felt he was taking a seat from the other protesters.

"The unfortunate thing is that I shut other people out who are here today," he said.

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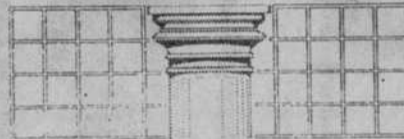
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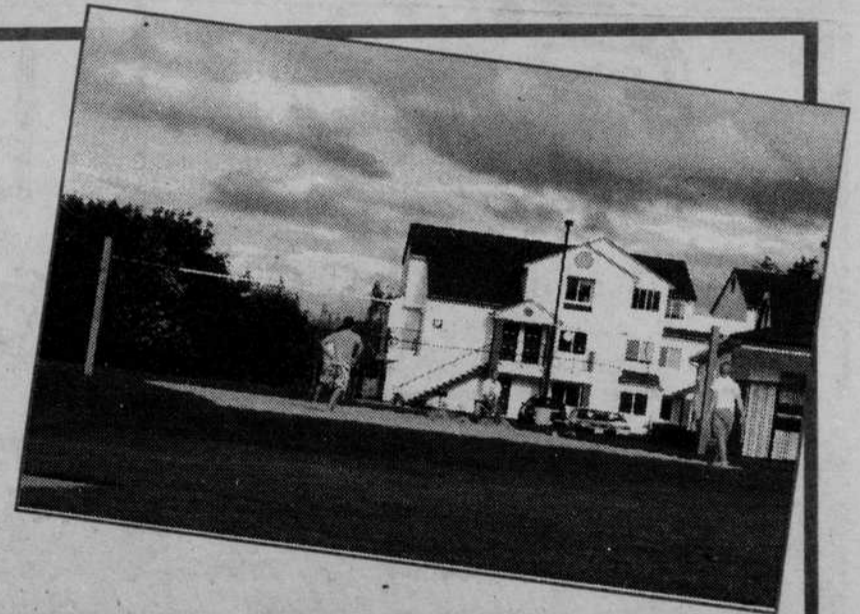
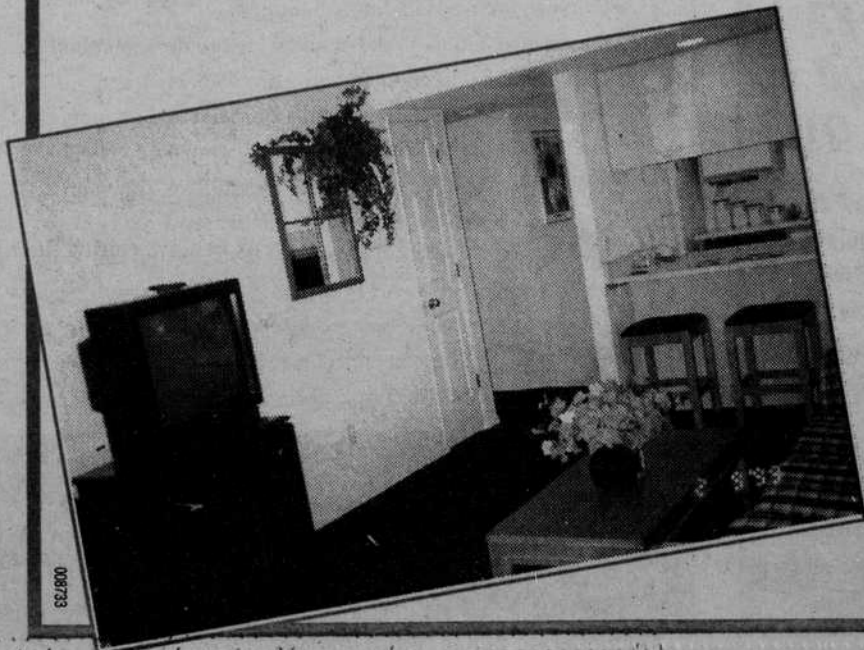
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