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# City manager announces resignation

■ City Council says it may wait until 2003 to appoint a new person to the position

By Brook Reinhard  
Oregon Daily Emerald

After 26 years of working in different government jobs, Eugene City Manager Jim Johnson is ready to try something new.

Johnson, city manager since 1998, announced his resignation at a press conference Friday at City Hall. His announcement comes within days of a similar announcement by Eugene Police Chief Jim Hill. Johnson will continue serving Eugene until the end of February. "It's been an honor and a privi-

lege to work in this job," Johnson said. "If I've had any success at all (it's because) I've worked with some awfully good people."

Elected officials praised Johnson's work, ethics and integrity.

"He keeps employee morale very high," City Councilor Scott Meisner said. "I trust him implicitly."

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey also spoke highly of the manager.

"You can talk to him about issues," Torrey said. "Once he makes a commitment, he lives by it."

Johnson said that he's been thinking about resigning for some time and feels this is the best point in his life to do it.

"It's a time in my life rather than a time in the job," he said.

Johnson has recommended that Torrey appoint Jim Carlson as interim city manager until the City Council can hire a new manager. He further suggested that the current City Council wait until 2003 to appoint a new manager, as four seats will be up for re-election next year.

Meisner said that there's a certain advantage to having a new council hire the city manager. He added that if he were a candidate for city manager, "I'd want to be hired by a council that would be there for a while."

Torrey agreed that waiting to select a new manager would result in a better choice.

"I do not want the council to

rush out and select a new city manager," Torrey said.

While Friday's press conference focused on Johnson, he used most of his time to talk about his employees. Working with teams, carrying out group projects and encouraging staff to leave a legacy were all focuses of Johnson's announcement. He also repeatedly acknowledged the importance of city staff in general.

"The average person out there in the community," Johnson said, "probably doesn't understand the quality of city employees."

Brook Reinhard is a community reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com.

## Kesey

continued from page 1

hospital — found himself the object of national acclaim.

But his fame came with a price. Between 1965 and 1967, Kesey was arrested several times for possession of marijuana, and his ranch in La Honda, Calif., became a routine tar-

get for local police looking to curb the growth of the counterculture movement that Kesey was helping to shape. In 1968, after touring the country and pulling off all manner of mad stunts with his band of Merry Pranksters — as chronicled in such books as Tom Wolfe's "Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" and Hunter S. Thompson's "Hell's Angels" — Kesey returned to Oregon. With his wife Faye, he bought a farm in Pleasant Hill, settled into the community and raised four children.

In 1987, Kesey returned to the University to work as an instructor in the Master of Fine Arts creative writing program. By June of 1988, he and 13 graduate students in his class had completed the novel "Caverns," which was published in 1989 under the pseudonym O. U. Levon.

George Wickes, emeritus professor of English, who first met Kesey in the mid 1970s, said that his time as a teacher typified the way Kesey

dealt with his status as a University alumnus.

"Kesey always had an ambiguous relationship with the University," Wickes said. "He didn't have much to do with the University in the last few years, but I can still remember some of the hoo-hahs he put on."

The 1990s were a time of renewed creativity for Kesey. He published "The Further Inquiry," a screenplay, in 1990; two children's books, "Little Tricker the Squirrel meets Big Double the Bear" in 1990 and "The Sea Lion" in 1991; and two novels, "Sailor Song" and "Last Go Round" — the latter with author Ken Babbs — in 1992 and 1994, respectively. In 1997, he suffered a small stroke, but continued his involvement in the community. On Halloween 2000, Kesey and the Merry Pranksters headlined a Green Party benefit in Agate Hall. Wickes, who worked as an advisor to the University's literary magazine, the

Northwest Review, in 1977, called Kesey a "great showman." But he was quick to add that, in his opinion, Kesey will be remembered more for his landmark early novels than for his free-wheeling days as a prankster.

"He kind of personified the '60s — which was mostly Tom Wolfe's doing," Wickes said. "But in the long run, I think he'll be remembered most for 'Cuckoo's Nest.' It's one of the great books of the second half of the 20th century, and I think it will continue to be taught in literature courses." For her part, Sunshine Kesey said she hopes the message behind the novels is what people remember about her father.

"He beat the drum of freedom, pretty much all the time," she said. "His message was to be as big as you have it in you to be."

Leon Tovey is a higher education reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at leontovey@dailyemerald.com.

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