

# Passing the tongs

by Nicolette Ong  
for the Emerald

Everyday people walk past it. Some step over it without realizing it's there, while others notice it and wonder who she is.

Placed in the pavement at the corner of East 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street, a gold-rimmed plaque sits quietly near the newsstands in memory of Cookie Szakacs, the hot dog lady.

The plaque lists the date of her death — May 28, 1994 — and the words, "She cared."

Eight years ago, Szakacs was the hot dog vendor on campus. She was a well-known personality who was both a merchant and a friend. After she passed away, Tim Nally took on her role and carried on her tradition.

"I wanted to fill the void that Cookie left — and keep the students fed," Nally said.

Szakacs had been selling hot dogs for about 15 years when she suffered from an aneurysm at her home at the age of 52. She died instantly. Still, her legacy continued.

After her death, Cookie's husband, Robert Szakacs, 64, tried to carry on her business. He gave it a try, but things didn't work out because he was also working at the physical plant at the University.

Nally had restaurant experience and knew the couple. He understood what Robert was going through and took over the hot dog business five years ago.

## Getting a taste for it

Cookie, who was from Hammond, Ind., first came to Oregon with Robert in 1973. During the first few years, Cookie spent most of her time taking care of their three children. As her children grew older, Cookie decided to work and found a job at Roadway Inn as a waitress.

When Cookie was later laid off by Roadway Inn, she went out looking for a job again. Then, while she and her husband were patronizing a hot dog stall in Salem, Cookie decided to sell hot dogs, and Robert made a cart for his wife.

Cookie chose the campus location because the street was always crowded with people

walking by, Robert said. In addition, the University of Oregon Bookstore was just opposite her stall, which helped bring in more customers.

"It was an ideal location, where business should be good," he said.

At first, Cookie didn't have a taste for selling hot dogs, but once she got connected with the students, she really liked it, Robert said.

## Maintaining the connection

Nally, too, said it's easy to get tired of selling hot dogs, but if there is a connection between the customers and the vendor, it can be a lot of fun.

"It's more than selling hot dogs," Nally said. "It's more like a public relations thing."

"If you didn't like people, you wouldn't like the job. People also won't like coming to an unfriendly place to buy food."

Cookie was very connected to her customers, especially the students, Robert said.

"She sold hot dogs, pop and advice," Robert said. "But that was free, of course."

"The kids would come to her when they had problems and needed a listening ear."

Like Cookie, Nally has a good rapport with his customers. Standing under the shade of the umbrella attached to his cart, there is never really a dull moment, as friends and customers stop by to talk.

People of all ages, nationalities, professions, genders and races come to talk to Nally. Some buy hot dogs, while others are simply passing by or basking in the sun. Like Cookie, Nally has become a familiar face as well as a friend.

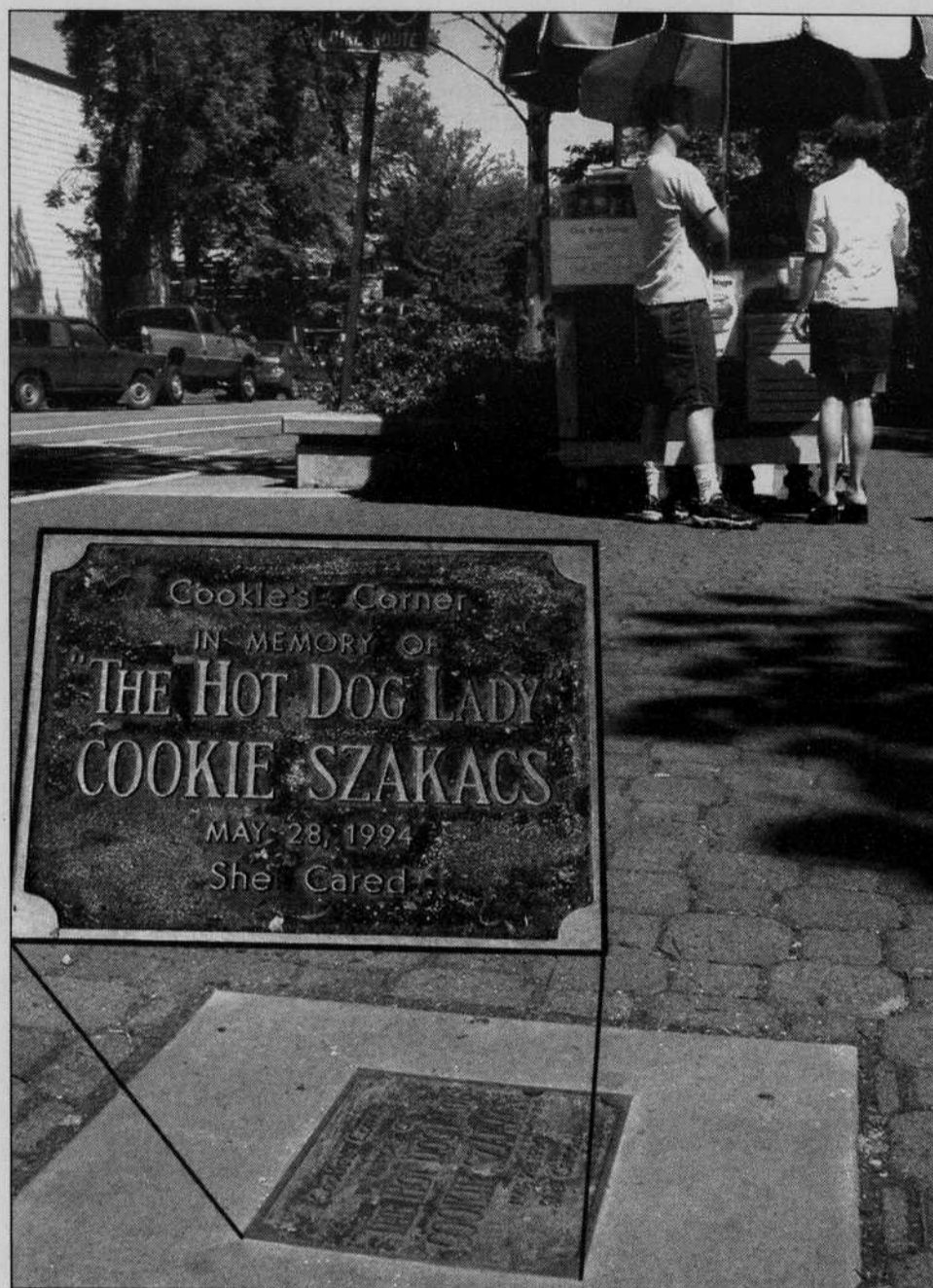
Regular customer Matthew Yeow said Nally has that personal touch.

"He doesn't just sell hot dogs," Yeow said. "He takes the time to get to know you, too."

At the age of 62, Nally is lively and young at heart.

"I'm like a full-time student," he said. "I never get out of here. I'll probably still be here 10 years from now and become an old hot dog man."

Nicolette Ong is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



Adam Jones Emerald

The corner of East 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street would not be the same without the aroma of hot dogs.

# 'Crank Yankers' should be yanked off small screen

Every once in a while, I think television can't go any deeper in the pit than it already has. Then, somebody hands down a shovel. From the minds of Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Carolla, the two perpetual adolescents behind the much more clever and entertaining "The Man Show," comes the latest excavation device.

"Crank Yankers" (10:30 p.m. Sunday, Comedy Central) is a sad exercise in "We do it because we can." The show revolves around the denizens of "Yankerville," a community of puppets whose sole

## GUEST COMMENTARY

Pat  
Payne

purpose in life is to harass innocent people over the telephone. What fun.

One episode featured Tracy Morgan as the character "Spoony Luv," calling up a prestigious country club to get a tee time, and then accusing the (understandably) flummoxed and distressed manager of racism when he's told he has to be a member of the club

to play there.

It was a painful exercise to watch as the unsuspecting man on the other end was brought to his wits end by Morgan.

Another skit had Jim Florentine as "Special Ed." Yep, he's the stereotypical learning-disabled child, as if you couldn't tell by the oh-so-subtle name. His appearance was grating, annoying and about as funny as watching one's own fingernails get pulled out. Calling a travel agency, all he could say was, "I wanna go to Hawayee — yaaaaay!"

At least this poor mark realized

it was a joke and played along, making it only marginally less like watching an unprovoked case of verbal assault and battery.

Even worse, well-known comedians like David Alan Grier, Dennis Leary and Sarah Silverman squander their considerable talents on this slightly (but only slightly) more sophisticated version of "do you have Prince Albert in a can?"

The only redeeming part I could find was that at the end of one show, there was a musical performance by Kyle Gass and Jack Black, otherwise known as "Tena-

cius D." But even that was painful, as displayed on the tube was full frontal puppet nudity of two men who should be forbidden by law to disrobe.

This show is a morass of sophomoric humor. Even though I like low laughs, I don't like them below the belt. The TV wasteland may be strictly "giving the public what it wants," but the public should soon come to its senses and hang up on "Crank Yankers."

Pat Payne is a freelance columnist. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## Kerns

continued from page 5

from 1896 to 1899, Kerns later became the head of art education at the University in 1921.

"Kerns was a painter who worked with materials such as oil, print and watercolor. She also experimented with pigments, fabric and sculpture," said her grandniece, Leslie Brockelbank, 78, who is a volunteer at the Maude Kerns Art Center.

Unlike other women during the early 20th century who taught art instead of being an artist, Kerns was ahead of her time, said Brockelbank.

Kerns was one of the first women in Pacific Northwest to paint non-objectively, and she used art to express moods, emotions and spirituality, Pavelec said.

"Non-objective or non-representational art has no recognizable subject matter," Pavelec said.

"Often choosing to paint themes like war and peace, violence, poverty and depression, Kerns was always sensitive about her sur-

roundings," Brockelbank said.

Although Kerns painted classic subjects such as portraits and landscapes, she also did abstract art that expressed her concerns about what was going on around her.

"She painted typical things

*"Kerns was a painter who worked with materials such as oil, print and watercolor. She also experimented with pigments, fabric and sculpture."*

Leslie Brockelbank  
Kerns' grandniece

like street scenes, railroad stations, circuses and things that expressed life," Brockelbank said.

"New Works on Paper by Kerns" is the current theme for Kerns' display in the Salon Gallery, and it will be on exhibit

through November 15. The display features 23 small-scale colorful paintings hung at varied lengths on the walls of the Salon Gallery.

Some of the pieces include "Form and Color of Freedom," "Approach of Winter," and "Strange Bird With Fruit and Two Crosses." These paintings are also available for purchase.

Brockelbank said that these non-objective paintings were done toward the last two decades of Kerns' life.

"The displays show expressions of where we are going," Brockelbank said. "They are abstract pieces that expresses her spiritual thinking."

The Maude Kerns Art Center is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and noon to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday when there are exhibits on display.

For more information, check out the Maude Kerns Art Center Web site at [www.mkartcenter.org](http://www.mkartcenter.org) or call 345-1571.

Nicolette Ong is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

## Mayer

continued from page 5

efforts, saying "That's fucking teamwork."

And while Mayer displayed an intensity on stage — from his high-lifting leg movements to a self-proclaimed "stupid" head-bob — he never seemed to tire.

Mayer sang his video hit, "No Such Thing," which crafts feelings of conformity with lines such as "So the good boys and girls take the so-called right track / Faded white hats, grabbing credits, maybe transfers / They read all the books but they can't find the answers."

On Friday, fans craved tunes like "83," where Mayer yearns for the simplicity of his youth with lyrics like "Oh, if only my life was more like 1983, all these things would be more like they were at the start of me."

After nearly a three-minute standing ovation following "83," Mayer returned to the stage to finish the night with his electrifying "Neon."

Compared at times to Dave Matthews for his lyrical content and voice, the newcomer greatly differs.

Mayer looks at the world in a micro sense, compared to Matthews' macro sense. And while both don't follow a lyrical formula and relegate themselves into a "trite" rhyme scheme that lacks "bite," Mayer's verses are thoughtful and concise. While Matthews is often vague, Mayer has the knack to somehow provide deep lyrical meaning that can be deciphered.

Ultimately, it's Mayer's ability to capture feelings of angst and uncertainty within semi-sugarcoated pop tunes that makes him unique.

On Friday, Mayer sang the lyrics "Everybody is just a stranger / But that's the danger in going my own way / I guess it's the price I have to pay."

Fear not, John. You're on the right path.

And your fans are grateful you're taking them along the way.

Contact the sports editor at [bradschmidt@dailyemerald.com](mailto:bradschmidt@dailyemerald.com).