

Graffiti pits authorities against taggers

Local authorities cite graffiti as a problem, causing \$3000 of damage to the University since last summer

Caron Alarab

Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

It sits on benches, marks fences and adorns empty wall space throughout Eugene, only to be cleaned or covered within hours. But the biggest problem with graffiti is not what it stains or where it appears: it is the cost and manpower required to clean it.

In response to the crime's continued prominence, the Department of Public Safety and the Eugene Police Department cross-reference graffiti reports during ongoing investigations and use a task force, a hot line and new cleaning supplies to handle Eugene's two graffiti "hot spots" — the campus and Downtown areas.

"About one percent of cases involve gang members from other states," EPD Detective Julie Smith said. "But for the most part, they're just straight taggers."

In 2002, EPD reported 1,391 instances of graffiti and the City of Eugene Public Works Department reported an average of 200 graffiti abatement calls a month. Since the first of the year, DPS has received more than 38 graffiti reports on and around campus, which Smith said is most likely due to drier weather conditions.

"We see more incidents when paint is less likely to run due to rain," she said.

Since July, University Facilities Services has spent approximately \$3,031 on graffiti clean-up out of about \$13,000 in total vandalism costs.

"It's a very expensive problem," University Facilities Services

spokesman Tim King said.

University junior Tom Harder said he appreciates artistic efforts made by taggers, but he agrees with officials when it comes to those who just want to get their names out there.

"It's dirty, and it pollutes the city everywhere," he said.

Harder did say, however, that he is aware of the beauty that graffiti can bring to cities, having had a friend who got paid to paint murals on buildings in Colorado.

"I consider it an extreme sport — a leisurely activity," he added.

Though typically associated with spray paint, Smith said graffiti consists of markings made with anything from permanent markers and bingo pens to acid etching techniques. And although local stores sell spray paint for only a couple of dollars a can, Smith said young shoplifters are occasionally caught with such tagging essentials.

In response to local concerns and related crimes, EPD established the Graffiti Task Force a year ago to help reduce incidents citywide. The task force — which includes active reporting and prevention from the city of Eugene, the Public Works department, business owners and community members — works with correction offices and the courts to determine more appropriate sentences for suspects who are apprehended as well as restitution for victims, Smith said. One of the biggest motivations for immediate response is to prevent other individuals from adding to the initial artwork.

"Before we know it, the whole wall is covered," Smith said of past incidents.

In order to provide more incentive for community members to report graffiti, EPD offers a 24-hour hotline and a possible cash reward — typi-

cally about \$50 — for tips that lead to arrests, Smith said. Although they don't offer money, DPS and Facilities Services have purchased newer, more efficient cleaning materials to handle campus graffiti.

And for Dale Fish, a Facilities Services employee hired to quickly respond to campus maintenance calls, the environmentally safe cleaning solutions make his day more breathable.

"We've seen a small rise in incidents since Christmas, and this product makes my job a lot easier," he said.

To help the city and local businesses with the costs of graffiti abatement, Forrest Paint Company donates buckets of paint — in universal "battleship gray" — to the cause. Despite local generosity toward covering up the problem, Graffiti Task Force member and Downtown property owner John Brown said he would rather see more untainted wall-space as opposed to unattractive gray spots on buildings citywide.

As part of a Rotary Club of Eugene project implemented three years ago, the Public Works department used a grant to create graffiti art walls in Eugene to provide designated outlets for artists. Brown, a Rotary Club member, said the walls are no longer implemented because they drew more graffiti to adjacent buildings than to the walls.

"To taggers, it's a form of expression," he added. "But to the community, it's a game."

University junior Jake Haworth said he remembers using the walls but doesn't recall there being an excessive amount of art on neighboring buildings. Having been perfecting his graffiti skills since he was 14, Haworth said it takes dedication and a lot of practice to become impressive, which he said explains the large



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Although graffiti, seen here in Eugene's industrial district, is sometimes viewed as artistic expression, clean-up efforts have cost the city thousands of dollars.

number of hurried or sloppy tags made by amateurs.

"Graffiti means a lot to the people who do it," he said. "It's not done to fuck society over — they're just

walls. And sometimes it's really nice to look at."

Contact the reporter at caronalarab@dailyemerald.com.

Flight

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North American Harvard T-6, a World War II-era combat training plane.

The professor's love of flight was ingrained in him as a child in Oostende, Belgium. His father served in the Belgian Army Air Corps, and many of his friends followed suit. In 1960, when he was 22 years old, Lamon left his native country to pursue flight training in the Canadian Air Force.

Now, Lamon flies in the Civil Air Patrol, a search and rescue auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, and at airshows. In 1990, he founded the "Heritage Flight" to honor pilots who have trained in Canada. His plane represents NATO in the group, and two others represent Canada and the British Commonwealth.

Next term will mark Lamon's last

after 31 years at the University. He said he is looking forward to full retirement because he will have more time to fly. Lamon said when he finally got his wings in 1963, it was one of the biggest thrills of his life.

"It was emotionally more satisfying than getting a Ph.D.," he said. "It was easier, too."

However, his thrills were over by the year's end. Lamon was barred from flying in the Canadian Air Force because of developing eye problems. With the advise of a mentor in the Belgian Air Force, he moved to the United States to continue his education. During the next decade, he attended school in California and eventually earned a doctorate in mathematics education from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1963, Lamon was married in San Francisco, which gave

him a chance to remain in the United States and become a citizen four years later. He was not able to fly again until 1978, when he passed civilian pilot vision examinations.

Lamon then taught math at San Francisco high schools and at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

The teacher came to Eugene in 1972, and became an assistant professor at the University's College of Education. However, he had no close friends in the department.

Lamon said his strongest friendships have been with his second wife, Mary Ann Lamon, to whom he has been married for almost 20 years; fellow Eugene pilot Ron Bowker and his German shepherd Precious, whom he refers to as his "best four-legged friend."

William Lamon and Bowker met more than 20 years ago because the

two rented adjacent airplane hangars at the Eugene Airport.

"It's the love of aviation that put us together," Bowker said. "It's a brotherhood of people."

The two have breakfast every morning at a bagel and coffee shop, and William Lamon said Bowker is the only friend besides his wife who he can always count on.

"Everyday we sit here and bullshit — if I don't, I miss it," Lamon said.

William Lamon said his wife is his best friend because she has always supported him — his flying included.

Mary Ann Loman said the same, adding that while she sometimes worries about bad weather or a plane malfunction, she never worries about his flying capabilities.

While life was smooth sailing in the sky, his career changed course on the ground. In 1992, the College

of Education dropped its teacher education program and let go most of the program's staff, William Lamon included.

The flier became an assistant to the University vice provost, and held the position — where he traveled around the country recruiting students — until he retired in 1998. Since then, he has taught several courses on the history of flight.

"I have an enormous affinity for aviation," he said.

Contact the reporter at romangokhman@dailyemerald.com.

See more online

Aerial photographs of several Eugene highlights from William Lamon's WWII-era airplane.

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