

Labor woes bring interim closure to Mother Kali's

Board members decide to close the local feminist bookstore temporarily in the face of a worker strike

By Caron Alarab
Senior News Reporter

Mother Kali's Books has been temporarily "closed for rejuvenation" after its board of directors prematurely dismissed the store's four employees and locked them out Wednesday.

A "union-busting" strike last week, organized by employees to protest recent termination letters as "unfair labor practices," expedited the board members' decision to close the store.

Board members, who say the protest interrupted a board/staff meeting addressing the approaching layoffs, said the "rejuvenation" has been a long time coming. The employees, however, said the "tense" lock out and the termination letters, which were previously effective Feb. 6 and Feb. 13, were relatively unexpected.

The Board of Directors of Mother Kali's Books, one of the oldest feminist bookstores in the United States, delivered termination letters to each of its four staff members on Jan. 23. About three weeks prior to the letters, the board told staff members that they could no longer access health benefits and that they "might" be taking applications for a new management and staff, former co-manager Cheryl RiversHailey said.

RiversHailey said the board failed to inform the employees that they could apply for the new positions.

"They never told us anything about applying for new staff positions," she said. "They never even gave us job descriptions."

But Board President Kathleen Kendrick disputes that allegation.

"We informed them before we advertised for a permanent manager that they were welcome to apply; none did so," Kendrick said in a press release. "By then we realized that we could no longer afford to continue as we had."

The employees, who are members of Industrial Workers of the World Local 660, filed an unfair labor practices claim with the National Labor Relations Board Portland office Jan. 26 in response to their termination. The employees also held a community protest at the store Jan. 27, involving about 30 participants, including the store volunteer coordinator and IWW Local 660 representative Jeanine Malito. Malito carried a sign stating "Union busting is the patriarchy."

The next evening, at a board/staff meeting, the board demanded the staff member's keys and locked them out, even though their terminations were not due to start until Feb. 6, RiversHailey said.

"The board said that they were going to close for a couple of weeks to straighten things out, or something to that effect," she said.

Board members said Malito, who witnessed the lockout, used "unprofessional veiled threats" while talking to the board.

"We feel strongly that the employees were misinformed and misled by this union spokesperson," board member Daryl Moore said in a press release.

Malito, a local activist and community volunteer, said she thinks board members have taken the "low



Lauren Wimer Photographer

A sign in the window of Mother Kali's Books explains the recent closure of the store as they change management and staff.

road, morally" for personally attacking her via the press release.

"These two board members, who have been at the store for less time than the employees, were telling them they don't have jobs and asking me not to speak," Malito said. "Well, I may have called them patriarchal."

Malito said she has never misled or misinformed the former employees of Mother Kali's Books.

"(The employees) asked for my help but they have made their own decisions," she said.

According to a Mother Kali's press release, which is the only form of comment offered by the board, a combination of recent hard times and unauthorized employee expenditures caused the board members to re-assess the staff.

"We knew last year that we either needed to bring in a professional management team or close the doors," Kendrick said.

Moore added that "everyone knew every step of the way that reorganization of some kind was coming."

The board alleges that a series of "disturbing" employee expenditures, including an \$800 payment for massages to a new employee, led to several cost-cutting measures.

RiversHailey said she knows nothing of the payment.

When the employees responded with accusations of "unfair practices," the board agreed to "voluntarily recognize" the staff's desire for a union proposal. However, RiversHailey said the board has a long history of refusals to employee bargaining attempts due to "lack of time" for them.

The board has considered filing their own complaint with a labor board to defend the store's local reputation.

"It hasn't been fun to be so wildly misrepresented in our own community," Moore said in the press release. "We made sure the staff was always paid, and when it became clear that things couldn't continue as they were, we offered — and will honor — termination compensation."

After the lockout, RiversHailey

PHOTO SPECIALS

FEBRUARY 2 - 8

2ND SET FREE!

3 x 5 prints:
12 exp \$2.25
24 exp \$4.25
36 exp \$6.25

4 x 6 prints:
12 exp \$3.25
24 exp \$6.25
36 exp \$8.25

From 35mm C-41 full frame color film. (Panoramic, half-frame, and negatives excluded.)

20% OFF APS PROCESSING:

15 exp. (one set) \$4.40

25 exp. (one set) \$6.66

40 exp. (one set) \$9.40

Allow 1-2 days for APS processing. Glossy or matte finish.

FUJICOLOR PROCESSING INC.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON BOOKSTORE
www.uobookstore.com

Board Position Open

The Oregon Daily Emerald is seeking a volunteer to serve on its Board of Directors.

The Board meets monthly to oversee broad policy issues including financial, legal and personnel matters. It does not get involved in day-to-day operations, and it is not involved in content decisions.

This three-year term is open to any community member, student, faculty member, or employee of the UO.

To apply, send a cover letter and one-page resume to:

Board Search Committee
P.O. Box 3159
Eugene, OR 97403
or email to:
emerald@uoregon.edu

LAST DAY TO APPLY
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Oregon Daily Emerald

The campus newspaper for the University of Oregon community

FEBRUARY 7, 2004 STUDENT RECREATION CENTER - 3 COURT GYM
ENTRY DEADLINE FOR THIS FREE EVENT: FEBRUARY 5, 2004



You Still Have Time To Let 7 UP Be Your Ticket To The Pac 10 Championship, Where You Can Be Crowned The Conference Champ! Enter, Play And Have A Chance To Win A Trip To The Men's Or Women's Pac 10 Basketball Tournaments. Enter The 3rd Annual Pac 10 3 on 3 Shootout, Presented By 7 UP And The Pac 10 Conference, For Your Opportunity To Win The Battle For Campus Hardwood Supremacy At The University Of Oregon!

It is not too late for your opportunity to be recognized as the best in the Pac 10! You have a few more days to pull together your four person squad, and enter this **SINGLE ELIMINATION** tournament coming to the Oregon campus. You can enter your team in one of the three categories: Women's Open, Men's Open or Men's 6 Ft. & Under (The Men's Open Champ will play the Men's 6 Ft. & Under Champ to determine the Overall Men's Champion and the winner of the trip to the conference championship). Every participant will receive a free t-shirt, while also having the ability to win great prizes from 7 UP, the Pac 10 Conference, and many additional event sponsors. The shots you've made and the games you've played have prepared you for this moment! So get your crew together, sign up and enjoy the fun - and the chance to be the Pac 10 Conference 3 on 3 Champion! And remember, **IT'S FREE TO ENTER AND FREE FOR ALL SPECTATORS!** Bring your student ID as your eligibility is contingent upon you being a currently enrolled, full time student.

To pick up an entry form, stop by 102 Esslinger Hall or visit www.pac-10.org and click on the Pac 10 2004 3 on 3 Shootout logo! The website will also allow you to find some fun, additional ways to earn a trip to the Pac 10 Conference Championship while waiting for your first/next game or while watching your buddies, as well as information about two great products: 7 UP and dnL!

We've got sports

24/7

at www.dailyemerald.com