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Ex-coach withdraws complaint, to file suit

Former UO track coach Sally Harmon alleges she was wrongly dismissed in 2003

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

Former University women's track and field coach Sally Harmon has withdrawn a 2003 complaint against the athletic department alleging she was discharged because of her gender and says she plans to file a lawsuit.

Harmon said that two weeks ago she withdrew her complaint, which was filed with the civil rights division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, because the agency was overwrought with cases. She said she intends to file a lawsuit to reach a resolution quicker.

Harmon's attorney Suzanne Chanti said the lawsuit will be filed within the next 60 days, but she didn't know who would be named in the suit.

"We think Sally was discriminated against," Chanti said. "We haven't received any response from the University to discuss the matter, so we plan to file a suit."

Harmon, a University graduate who coached women's throws events for 18 years, was fired in spring 2003 without a severance package. The University's athletic department replaced her with Olympic hammer thrower Lance Deal, which prompted her to file a sex discrimination complaint with the civil rights division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries in October 2003.

Harmon, twice inducted into the University's hall of fame for coaching and individual athletic accomplishments, said her 18 years of coaching experience made her the most qualified applicant to coach the men's and women's throws programs, which merged in 2003. The position overseeing the javelin, discus, shot put and hammer events was instead filled by Deal, hired as a volunteer men's throws coach in 2002.

"When you have somebody with the experience, the authority and the accomplishments I've had, and you replace me with someone who does not have any comparable experience whatsoever, things are starting to smell," Harmon said. "And you bet it's based on a preference, and I can't think of anything besides gender that's playing into this."

Athletic Director Bill Moos did not return the Emerald's phone calls.

University General Counsel Melinda Grier, who is handling all phone calls to the University related to the complaint, said she felt the department's hiring decision was probably justified.

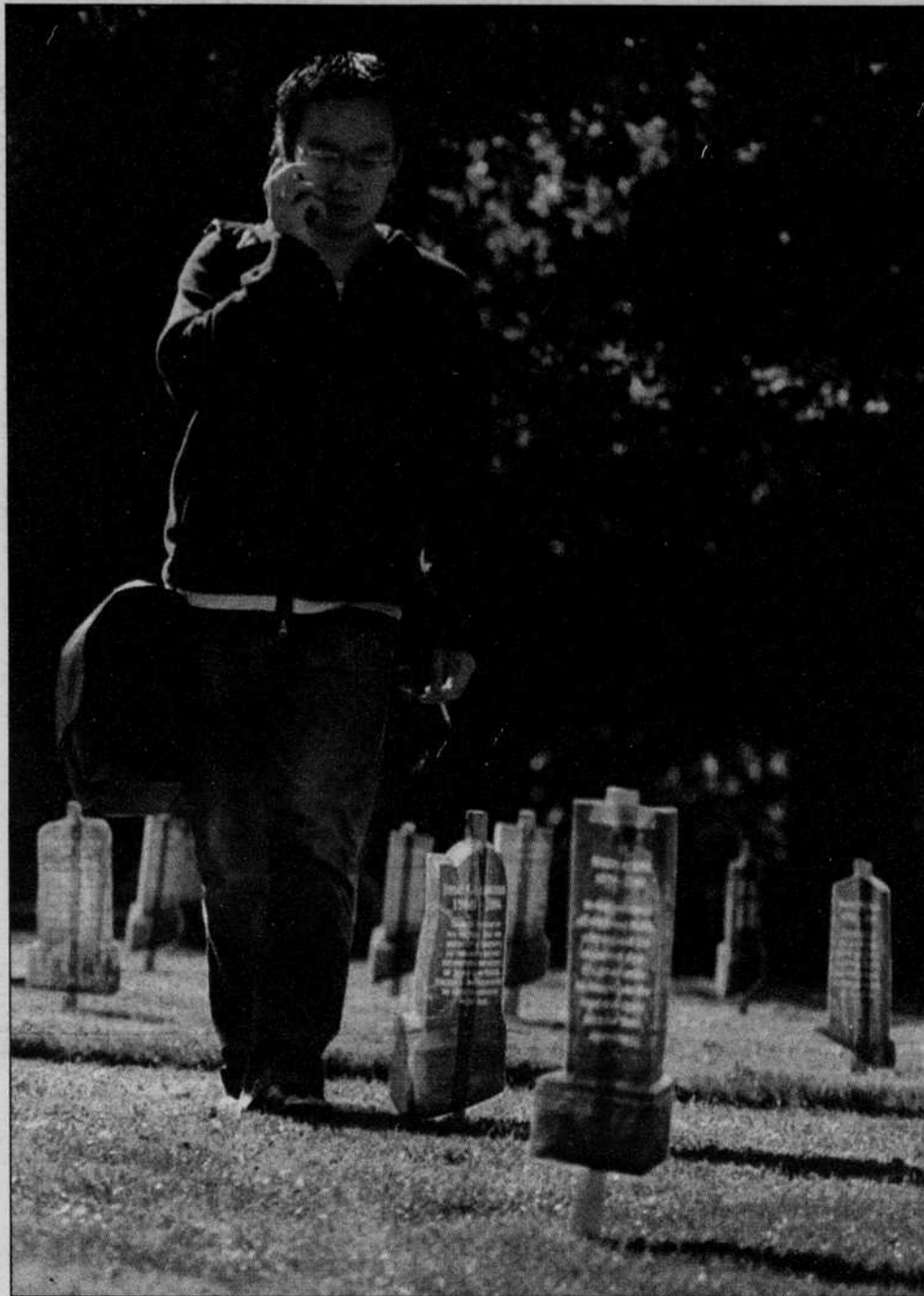
"The reason you choose one person over another is you select the one you believe is most qualified based on what your criteria are," Grier said. "That's what happened here."

In the complaint — which Chanti said will provide the basis for the ensuing lawsuit — Harmon said there has been a long-standing disparity between men and women employed in the University's athletic department.

"Throughout my tenure at the University

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MESSAGE OF MORTALITY



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

On Monday, 225 headstones appeared on the lawn in front of the Knight Library. And in spite of the appearance of caskets last spring in the same area, Stephanie Young-Petersen, coordinator of Lane County Public Health's tobacco prevention program, maintained that there was still no one buried there.

The headstones were part of an exhibit to promote tobacco awareness, each representing one of the 225 people who died of tobacco-related illnesses every 30 minutes. Last spring, 105 coffins were placed on the lawn as a part of the Viewing Project, an exhibit meant to raise awareness on the Iraq War's human toll.

The headstones also featured the vignettes and ages of actual people, listed under fake names, who died of tobacco-related illnesses, some of them as young as nine.

The Campus Advisory Board and the Campus Health Action on Tobacco Study organized the exhibit to promote the tobacco cessation programs they offer. Student smokers who want to kick the habit can pick up nicotine replacement products for free from the University Health Center, according to Campus Advisory Board Director Paula Staigh.

Junior Jacqueline Fitzgerald, a self-described social smoker, said the exhibit had an impact on her.

"It definitely makes me think twice about lighting up a cigarette," she said.

But some students, such as senior Edwin Soenarya, pictured above, appeared unfazed by the exhibit, casually strolling between the headstones while smoking.

UO students travel north for volcano observation

Eight geology students study Mount St. Helens, erupting just 50 miles outside of Portland

BY ANTHONY LUCERO
NEWS REPORTER

Scientists are closely watching Mount St. Helens again after steam eruptions on Monday and Friday — the first in more than a decade — shot white clouds and ash into the air 10,000 feet above sea level.

The volcano, located in southwest Washington approximately 50 miles from Portland, continues to show strong signs of an eruption. It has led the United States Geological Survey to classify it a Level 3 — a high alert given to volcano activity — and to evacuate the Johnston Ridge Observatory five miles from the crater.

University graduate student Heather Wright, a geology major, traveled to Washington to see an eruption firsthand with seven other graduate students in the department.

"Most students are studying volcanoes, but not ones actively erupting," Wright said. "We were happy to see a smoke eruption."

Both observation points close to the volcanic site, Cascade Peaks Observatory and Coldwater Ridge, were packed with about 5,000 people, according to Wright.

Wright said she will return to the volcano today to await more eruptions and also try to gather an ash sample. Scientists studying volcanoes can typically get many clues from ash samples, including whether there is new magma underneath the volcano that may spew in later eruptions.

Wright's enthusiasm is matched by colleagues waiting to see how this eruption compares to the explosive activity on May 18, 1980, when a 5.1 magnitude earthquake near the summit sparked an eruption that killed 57 people. The eruption also flattened 230 square miles northeast of the summit, causing ecological damage still not fully repaired.

"A friend called me asking if there was going to be another eruption similar to the 1980s one," Wright said. "People in her town were cleaning the streets for days to remove all the ash."

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Gun owners reflect on rifle ban expiration

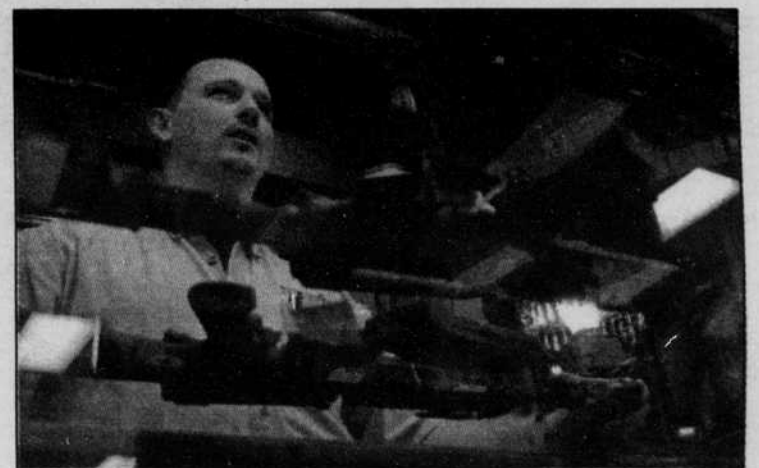
The end of a 10-year weapons ban has made several types of guns legal again, angering some students

BY PARKER HOWELL
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

The Baron's Den employee Raye Gunter pulls two semiautomatic rifles from a rack of firearms and sets them on the glass counter. At first glance, both rifles are similar. They're black, military-style firearms that fire a round as quickly as a shooter can pull the trigger. Yet one has a flash suppressor, bayonet mount and a collapsible stock, features that made the gun illegal to manufacture, sell or possess until just three weeks ago.

The Sept. 13 expiration of a 10-year federal ban on making and owning semiautomatic assault weapons has reopened a niche in the gun market, pleasing gun advocates and disturbing ban supporters.

Signed into law in 1994 by then-President Clinton, the ban outlawed specific firearms and several firearm features, such as pistol grips and ammunition magazines that held more than 10 rounds. A



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Baron's Den employee Raye Gunter discusses how semiautomatic AR-15 rifles were affected by the assault rifle ban, which expired Sept. 13.

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