Bahá'í sacred day remembered with festivities

In two Eugene locations, members and non-members celebrated the birth of their messenger, Bahá'u'lláh

BY JARED PABEN NEWS EDITOR

Friday's holiday wasn't marked with gift giving or grandiose parades, but for members of the campus Bahá'í community, it marked one of the most sacred days of the year. On Friday, campus Bahá'ís celebrated the anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, who was a messenger from God and the founder of their religion.

Locally, University Bahá'ís observed the holiday with celebrations at the Eugene Veterans Memorial Building and at Lane Community College. At the veterans club, members of the University's Bahá'í Campus Association enjoyed Persian dancing, food and music to celebrate the birth of their religion's founder.

Adviser for the Bahá'í Campus Association Don Addison — who played piano at one of the celebrations and spoke at the other said the holiday is one of the most central for followers of the international faith.

"(It was) one of the most important holidays in the whole year because it celebrated the birthday of the founder of the Bahá'í faith," said Addison, an instructor and student at the University. "And we don't look up on him as just some nice guy — although people automatically felt a great spirit from him — but we believe that he was God's latest messenger to humanity, exactly along the same order as Jesus or Moses or Abraham.

"That celebration night there ... meant that we are thrilled to be part of this thing that's so international,"

University student Brett Wartchow, who played at the event with his friends and family, said the escape from commercialization and materialism helped him reconnect with his religion and his beliefs.

"For the Bahá'ís, it's a time for celebrating. ... It's a time to celebrate his

life and the message he brought to the world," Wartchow said.

The Bahá'í faith is a clergyless faith with members around the world who believe in the unity of humanity. Members come from many different religions and believe in the major figures of most of those faiths. Bahá'u'lláh claimed he was God's messenger and the teacher who fulfills the promises of other religions.

Bahá'u'lláh, which means "glory of God," was born in 1817, died in 1892 and was the founder of the independent religion, Addison said.

Addison said that the Bahá'í Campus Association is open to everybody, but has about 30 to 50 regular members. The association's house, located at 1458 Alder St., is the same house that belonged to Gordon Jackson, who became the first Bahá'í in the area when he moved to Eugene in the 1940s, Addison said.

The association has activities every Sunday and is also open to those who don't follow the religion, Addison said

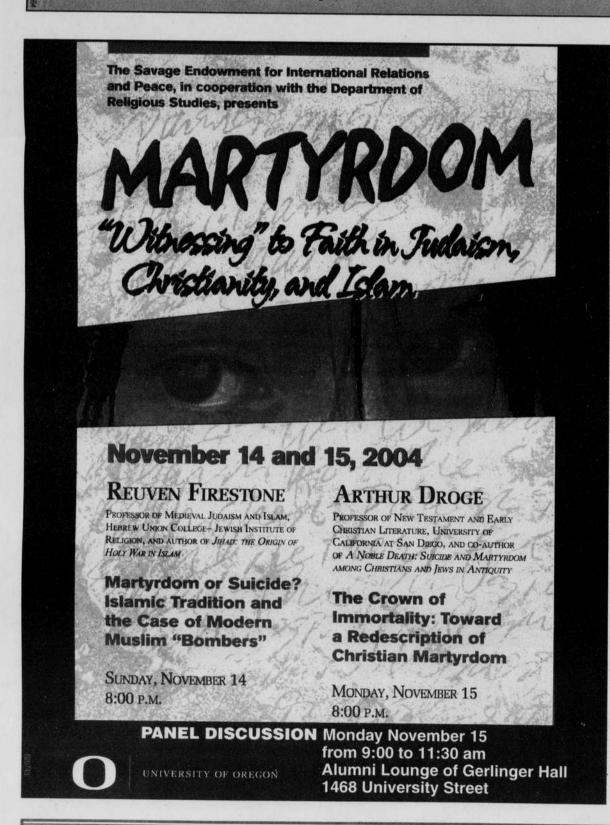
Wartchow said he didn't even know many of those who attended the Friday festivities because many of them weren't Bahá'ís.

"It means different things for everybody. ... It's really nice for me, at least, to really spend some time reflecting on what exactly my faith means to me," Wartchow said. "I really appreciate how in this faith things aren't commercialized. For me, it's a purely spiritual experience."

jaredpaben@dailyemerald.com

Winter Recreation Preview

On stands Tuesday, November 23rd



International: 'Ridiculous' process frustrates students

Continued from page 1

"I'm European, so it wasn't that difficult," he said.

Now, the process is "more complicated," and requires fingerprinting, biometric measurements and an interview, he said. When he left the United States, Garcia said he had to go through some of these steps on his return trip.

"When I was entering the country, it was just incredible," he said. "(US-CIS) took me to an office and made me wait for two hours. They checked everything."

Shirzadegan said the process can leave some students, particularly those from Muslim countries, humiliated and has discouraged students from coming to the United States at all.

Unardi said he felt the process was "ridiculous" and added that it frustrates many people.

Attiah, who had to go to Portland to get fingerprinted after Sept. 11, said he is similarly frustrated with the increased scrutiny on international students. But he added that he understood why the process had to be so difficult and lengthy.

"The government has to work to make sure that the people are safe," he said. "But that doesn't mean I wasn't humiliated."

moriahbalingit@dailyemerald.com

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

This week, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education are hosting International Education Week, a chance to celebrate the benefits of an international education. Events will take place on campuses across the country, including the University. For a full listing of events at this University and others, visit exchanges.state.gov.

Nov. 17: The Office of International Programs will host a Study Abroad Fair from

11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the EMU Fir Room. A University Peace Corps representative will be present to answer questions.

Nov. 21: The President's Reception for International Students will be held from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Gerlinger Hall and is a formal event open to new and returning international students. University President Dave Frohnmayer and Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey will speak

Source: exchanges.state.gov

