

Law school graduate gives talk on civil rights service

Oregon Innocence Network, a journalism and law student group, hosted the public defender who spoke

BY AMANDA BOLSINGER
NEWS REPORTER

With a practiced air and a gravelly voice, Lawrence Aschenbrenner shared stories from his 45-year law career Thursday afternoon.

Aschenbrenner is a 1957 University law school graduate who devoted his career to fighting civil rights cases and defending innocent people wrongly placed behind bars. Oregon Innocence Network, a group comprising law and journalism students, hosted the discussion and is lobbying the University to support a clinic dedicated to working on behalf of innocent people in jail in Oregon.

Aschenbrenner was appointed as Oregon's first public defender in 1964.

"I was the only public defender and I always claimed I was the best one," Aschenbrenner said.

When Aschenbrenner became the public defender he began receiving hundreds of letters from inmates requesting review. One of his earlier cases involved Teddy Jordan, a young black man from Klamath Falls who was convicted of first degree murder of a white man and sentenced to hang. Jordan was convicted by an all-white jury, and it was discovered later that racial

prejudice may have played a role in his conviction.

"Southern Oregon was a hot bed of racism, believe it or not," Aschenbrenner said.

Jordan told Aschenbrenner that another man had admitted to the murder as a deathbed confession, but when Aschenbrenner went to find the witness, he learned that the woman had died months earlier. Because that avenue was closed, Aschenbrenner pursued the case on the grounds that Jordan had been denied the right to counsel.

"He walked out the gate as a free man, and I walked out with him," Aschenbrenner said. "He later became a teacher at Rouge Community College in Grants Pass and was unquestionably innocent."

Aschenbrenner also talked about his work in Mississippi as a volunteer lawyer for civil rights workers during the late 1960s.

"A favorite tactic of the white power structure was to arrest civil rights protesters and leaders and convict them with all-white juries," Aschenbrenner said. "Lawyers would refuse to represent any civil rights workers, black or white."

During that time, hundreds of volunteer lawyers offered their

assistance. The volunteer lawyers were never denied admittance into court at the state level, but were denied admission in federal courts once the lawyers began winning cases by forcing courts to put black people on the jury.

"After they were forced to put blacks on jury we didn't lose a case," Aschenbrenner said. "I had 14 hung juries in a row, but they were never re-tried, so that's the same as a victory."

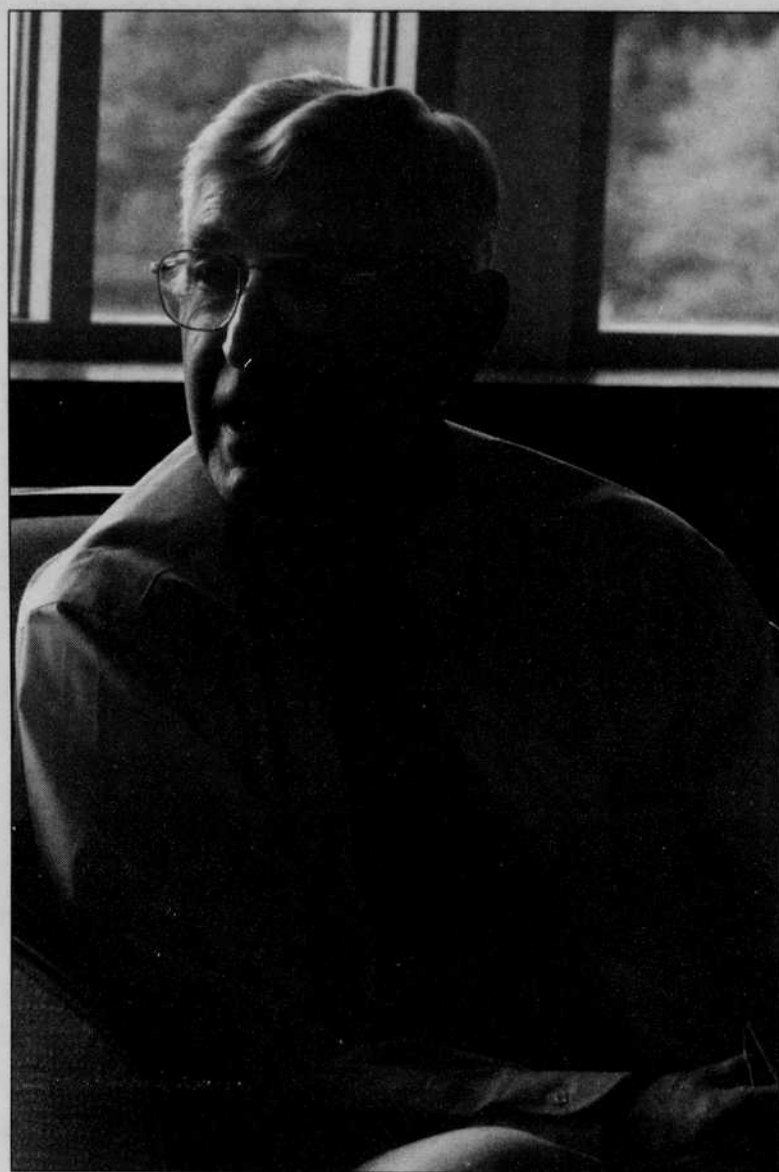
Aschenbrenner also shared stories about cases against the Ku Klux Klan and a victory in a civil case that ended with a \$1 million award.

After the talk, Aschenbrenner accepted questions from listeners about his work as well as asking for advice and input on the Innocence Network.

"I don't know how to explain how my work in Mississippi is relevant to the Innocence project," Aschenbrenner said. "But I think there are patterns of wrongly convicted people. One, people who plead guilty without counsel is a danger sign. Second, they maybe didn't realize that they weren't guilty. Third is people convicted on circumstantial evidence or allegedly voluntary confessions."

"I was interested in the issue of exonerated," second-year law student Joy Nair said. "I thought it was great. He totally lived an amazing life and it's good to know that there are people like him in Oregon."

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NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Civil rights lawyer Lawrence Aschenbrenner spoke at the Knight Law Center on behalf of the Oregon Innocence Network on Monday night.

University places 2nd in RecycleMania competition

Defending champion Miami University of Ohio took first place, narrowly beating the UO residence halls

BY EVA SYLWESTER
NEWS REPORTER

University residence hall students took second place in RecycleMania, a national intercollegiate recycling competition that ended April 9.

Despite the loss, event organizers are still optimistic about the increased recycling awareness the competition brought to campus.

"Second place is not second rate, in terms of our performance," University Housing Recycling Coordinator Robyn Hathcock said. "I'm really proud of the U of O."

Defending champion Miami University of Ohio took first place, collecting 66.19 pounds of recyclable materials per residence hall resident during the 10-week competition. The

University placed a close second, with 65.1 pounds. There are 3,131 students in the residence halls.

According to a RecycleMania press release, the University actually held first place by a slim margin through the first six weeks of the competition.

"The final week was an unprecedented effort," Hathcock said. The weekend before the competition ended, volunteers from the Residence Hall Association went door-to-door in the residence halls and offered to take out students' recycling for them. The effort netted an average of

10.12 pounds of recyclables per student that week, compared with approximately six pounds per student other weeks.

Hathcock emphasized that the University's performance improved since its last RecycleMania appearance in 2003, when the residence halls collected 51.4 pounds of recyclables per student.

"We're excited because we really raised the bar," she said.

RHA President Todd Mann said the competition drew attention from students.

"Seeing resident after resident checking the scores day after day was inspiring to me," Mann wrote in an e-mail. "By mixing competition, community service and leadership, I believe we really increased a sense of responsibility to the community in the residence halls." Mann described the competition as a way to get students interested in recycling.

"RecycleMania serves as reminder to those in the residence halls and throughout Housing that recycling really does make a difference," Mann

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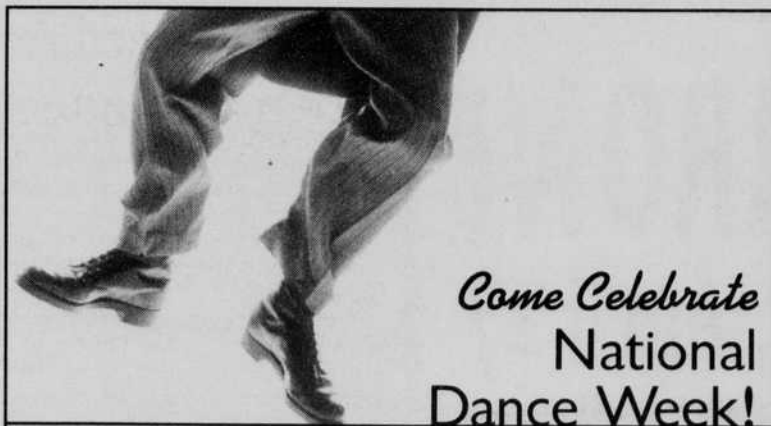
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-Saint Augustine 354 A.D.

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