



EPD officers hold *Cascadia Alive!* reporter Charles Overbeck after taking away his video camera, shown on sidewalk.

Long Leash

Eugene Police bite alternative media.

"Am I legally bound to answer these questions?" I asked EPD Officer Casey B. Froehlich. I was a reporter for the *Eugene Weekly*, covering an April 10 anti-war protest march. I'd been observing, biking down the street when Froehlich stopped me.

My 20-square-inch press pass – laminated with a white background and signed as per the 2002 Eugene Police Commission specifications for media credentials designed to give better access to large-scale gatherings such as protests – was in my fingers and politely in the face of Officer Froehlich. He examined it. The protest – 33 (by my count) bullhorn-waving, fuck-war yelling, flag-burning, justice-then-peace-loving anarchists – had moved a few blocks away.

"Yes," Froehlich said, threatening a "failure to comply with an officer" charge.

"Name," he said. "I just want to write these things down." He smiled, as if my name wasn't on the press pass, and as if he hadn't just affirmed that he was holding me against my will.

"Address," he said. "Phone." And then his next command, even though I already knew I was being harassed: "Social Security number."

So I was forced to give Officer Froehlich, who never mentioned or intended to charge or arrest me with anything, who already knew I was with *EW*, my Social Security number.

And he'd given me a message: STAY AWAY.

For the past 20 minutes, near 11th and Van Buren, officers were giving the same message to Charles Overbeck, a reporter for *Cascadia Alive!* and videographer for Copwatch.

Overbeck had been videotaping officers citing a male protester for "diagonal crossing." Officer Derel Schulz arrived, and though Overbeck showed his press pass, Schulz still temporarily confiscated Overbeck's camera. Overbeck was told he was involved in an unlawful march, and a semi-circle of officers surrounded him. They intentionally interrupted while Overbeck tried to answer the officers' questions, a common and confusing intimidation technique. Then Overbeck was photographed.

"What file are you going to put that in?" Overbeck asked the EPD photographer.

"Oh, he's just a real photo nut," answered another officer, implying sarcastically that the photo was for the officer's private use.

What's happening to the Eugene police force?

"What's happened to the *Eugene Weekly* in this case," said Tim Lewis, a reporter for *Cascadia Alive!*, who has been cited over a dozen times for not crossing at a 90 degree angle, "is a continuation of what's been going on in Eugene for the past seven years. No mainstream media has ever been cited or arrested. *Cascadia Alive!* and Copwatch reporters and videographers have been arrested, cited or had their tapes taken over 30 times. When officers once confiscated a KEZI tape and found out who they'd taken it from, they apologized and gave it back."

As radical protest organizers continue to be unsatisfied with "passive" protests, the alternative media will continue to be caught in the middle. New "rules of engagement" need to be established and followed to reduce abuses of EPD power and hold police accountable.

I spoke with EPD spokesperson Pam Olshanski. "Can you think of any instances where I would be legally bound to give an officer my Social Security number?" I asked.

"I can't, off the top of my head," she said.

Ben Fogelson is Calendar editor and staff writer at EW. A meeting with the Eugene Human Rights and Police Commissions is at 7 pm April 24 in the EWEB Training Center. To contact the Police Commission, call 682-5852. For more information on Cascadia Alive! and Copwatch, see www.cascadiamedia.org and www.eugeneopwatch.org

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