

ALAMO RESIDENTS GET THE BOOT

Residents at the house known as The Alamo, at 426 E. 12th Ave., have been evicted in what they feel is a move to gentrify their west university neighborhood. The Alamo is one of several rental properties owned by the late Fred Rankin, who died in February. The properties, part of Rankin's estate, are now managed by Sterling Management Group, Inc.

Speidel and his roommates had hoped to sign a lease with Sterling. However, after inspections, Sterling deemed the residence too great a liability and felt the safest move was to vacate the property. Sterling owner Jami Sterling-Counard explains that because of its rundown condition, the residence is difficult to insure and is "just too great a liability ... we don't want to see anyone get hurt." (The properties, says Sterling-Counard, were left by Rankin to be sold, with the profits going to charitable trusts.) Alamo residents were given 30 days notice with what Sterling-Counard hoped would be enough time to finish out the school year. Rent was due within those 30 days, and after failing to pay, residents were evicted June 22 with 72 hours notice.

Speidel says that under Rankin, maintenance had definitely been "let go." But, at \$750 a month rent, the house, with its central location and space for roommates, was a bargain. "The plumbing is bad," concedes Speidel, noting a drainpipe in the basement that needs regular attention to prevent sewage backup into the house.

The Alamo highlights, once again, Eugene's affordable housing issues. Speidel says, "There are no housing standards in Eugene. Landlords can come in and do what they want to us. Feels like they're really shafting us."

At the urging of Eugene Citizens for Housing Standards, the Eugene City Council is working on an ordinance based on a Corvallis program that works with tenants and landlords to explore all options for complaint resolution before using the court system. Councilor David Kelly says that on May 24, the council voted unanimously to draft the ordinance, which they will review by Aug. 11, and prepare for public hearing in the fall when students — a major part of the 54,000 renters in Eugene — will be back to voice their opinions.

This, however, does little to ease pressing situations for Alamo residents. Neva Gruber, 23, an artist who was hoping to be added to the lease, says, "I'm going to be homeless and living in my van. The plan? Get the tire on my van fixed and maybe go camping or something."

— Bobbie Willis

LUERS SUPPORT GROUP OBJECTS TO COVERAGE

The local prisoner support collective Break The Chains is distributing a letter protesting what the group sees as unfair and biased media coverage of an International Day of Solidarity for prisoner Jeffrey "Free" Luers, who is serving a 23-year sentence for burning three SUVs at a Romania dealership. The month of June marks the fourth year of his imprisonment.

The Day of Solidarity June 12 included a WOW Hall gathering and benefit to support Luers' legal fund. But Break the Chains says local mainstream media didn't question "the FBI's attempts to portray this public event as an 'eco-terrorist' gathering sponsored by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF)."

"In the lead-up to the Day of Solidarity the FBI put out a press release to media outlets, police departments, car dealerships, construction companies, and logging companies saying that they should be on high alert for 'eco-terrorist' groups using the event as a jumping off point. The press release went on to say that Jeff is a 'convicted eco-terrorist and member of the ELF.' This was faithfully reproduced in *The Register-Guard* and other corporate media outlets."

The statement says "none of the groups connected with the International Day of Solidarity has any connection to the ELF. That is a completely baseless and absurd charge. Break The Chains is a prisoner support collective dedicated to providing help to a class in this society that is often powerless and voiceless: the two million people in American jails and prisons. The FBI attempted to connect Break The Chains to the ELF in order to discredit our collective and limit the effectiveness of the June 12 event. By not engaging in independent corroboration, the *R-G* collaborated in this attempt." The *R-G* editorial management did not respond to an *EW* request for comment by press time.

The group says the purpose of the Day of Solidarity was to "demonstrate our frustration with [Luers'] sentence of 22 years and eight months in prison, when no physical harm was done to anyone." — *TJT*

MCGOWAN RECOVERING FROM ASSAULT, SURGERY

Ashland political theater activist Joanie McGowan is back on her feet doing stand-up comedy and her alleged assailant Coleman Nelson has been arraigned on a charge of second-



Joanie McGowan
ASHLAND DAILY TRIBUNE

degree assault.

McGowan, a regular on Eugene stages, was attacked by a drunk young man on the streets of Ashland the night of June 2 and sustained a fractured skull, requiring reconstructive surgery (see *Slant* 6/10). Ironically, her alleged attacker graduated last week from SOU with a degree in criminal justice. McGowan says Nelson has "no memory" of the incident.

Friends and supporters have raised more than \$6,000 to help McGowan with her out-of-pocket medical expenses. Any leftover funds will go toward establishing a hotline for attack victims in Ashland. McGowan is also reaching out to other women in the area who have been assaulted and have been afraid to report it.

— *TJT*

HEMPFEST MAY NEED TO FIND NEW LOCATION

Leave it to hemp to generate controversy. The second annual Emerald Empire Hempfest was meant to be a gathering to raise awareness about the positive — and legal — uses of hemp at the Washington-Jefferson Street Park July 17-18. Instead, after Eugene officials denied the Hempfest's organizers a permit, saying drug

use and dealing at last year's festival posed an "unreasonable danger" to the community, the celebration may turn into a legal battle involving the ACLU and the city.

Hempfest Executive Director Dan Koozer called the threat the celebration poses "preposterous" and said that he met with ACLU lawyers on June 21 and that he plans to appeal the city's decision. "Our argument is: How many other public events generate the same kind of 'activity'?" Koozer said. "It shows how ridiculous things are; all of these problems over the use of a plant."

Organizers have 15 days from June 16 to announce their intention to appeal, said Johnny Medlin, director of parks and open spaces in Eugene. Then, the Hempfest case would be argued before a hearing official within 30 days. But with less than a month to go before the Hempfest, Medlin said the process would be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Medlin said the parks division's decision to deny the permit came from a "judgment call" by the Eugene police that the festival was a danger to the community. While there were no arrests, plain-clothes police officers did document at least two cases of drug dealing, said police spokeswoman Pam Olshanski.

Koozer said the Hempfest may be relocated to private property, but "changing the venue at this late date isn't ideal." — *Andrea Damewood*

about his experiences as a man who happens to be gay in rural western Oregon. Thiemann's "Out in the Country" column has run in several small papers, most recently the *Port Orford News*. But *Port Orford* Editor Matt Hall tells us he was forced to drop Thiemann's column due to advertising pressure. Ad revenues are down and he "can't say exactly how much was the result of Scott's column," but he kept getting "friendly words of advice" and "concerned queries" from readers. "Our margin isn't strong enough that I can sink the ship over principal," he says. "If nothing else, we broke the ice. Small town, some folks just weren't ready for it."

- So Dr. John Kitzhaber has come out of political hibernation with a science-based plan to protect watersheds and perhaps end the Northwest's logging gridlock. Does that mean our popular former governor is back to fight for the environment, the Oregon Health Plan, and other causes close to his heart? Next question: If Gov. Ted decides this job is no fun and he doesn't want to run again, could Dr. John go for the governorship again? The secretary of state's office says he could.
- Our local District Attorney Doug Harclerod has a tough job, but if he can't handle stings he should abandon bee-keeping. Harclerod has shown some serious lapses in judgement over the years regarding selective prosecution and now he's "burned out" and wants six months off before he starts his next four-year term. Let's find somebody more worthy of the public trust.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

LEARNING CURVE

FIRST WE LEARN ABOUT THE ABUSES AT ABU GHRAIB. HARRUMPH! CLEARLY THE WORK OF A FEW BAD APPLES!

CERTAINLY NO WORSE THAN THE AVERAGE FRATERNITY PRANK!

THEN WE LEARN THAT DONALD RUMSFELD REQUESTED A REPORT ON THE LEGALITY OF TORTURE IN MARCH, 2003.

WELL, THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING!

MAYBE HE WAS SIMPLY DISCUSSING THE MOST RECENT SEASON OF "24" ON AN INTERNET CHAT BOARD SOMEWHERE!

THEN WE LEARN THAT IN JANUARY 2002, RUMSFELD APPROVED THE USE OF DOGS TO INTIMIDATE PRISONERS AT GUANTANAMO—A TACTIC LATER USED AT ABU GHRAIB.

ER--WOULD YOU BELIEVE I WAS REFERRING TO TRIUMPH, THE INSULT COMIC DOG?

HIS CLEVER BARBS CAN BE VERY INTIMIDATING, YOU KNOW!

WE LEARN MORE AND MORE, ALL OF IT CLEARLY INDICATING THAT THE TORTURE OF DETAINEES WAS AN OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED POLICY.

LOOK, EVERYONE STAYED WITHIN THE LAW!

OF COURSE, THE WAY RUMSFELD AND ASHCROFT FIGURE IT, THE LAW IS PRETTY MUCH WHAT WE SAY IT IS!

HEH, HEH! MAYBE I SHOULD DECLARE JOHN KERRY AN ENEMY COMBATANT!

OOPS! DID I SAY THAT OUT LOUD?

AND SOMEDAY, SOME AMERICAN P.O.W. SOMEWHERE WILL LEARN WHY THE ADMINISTRATION REALLY SHOULD HAVE TRIED TO SET A BETTER EXAMPLE.

TODAY WE WILL STRAP YOU TO A BOARD AND HOLD YOU UNDER WATER UNTIL YOU THINK YOU WILL DIE!*

DO NOT WORRY! YOUR OWN GOVERNMENT SAYS IT IS NOT TORTURE!

THINK OF IT AS A HARMLESS FRATERNITY PRANK!

BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE WRONG.

*ACTUAL INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE USED AT GUANTANAMO.

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SLANT

- For years we've been drumming out the tedious message that PeaceHealth's hospital development plans were ill-conceived, overly ambitious and legally flawed. Meanwhile, those plans had to be taken seriously since they were backed with many millions of dollars, eager Springfield city officials and a team of hot-shot lawyers. Rival McKenzie-Willamette/Triad had little choice but to react to the threat of a mega-hospital next door and advance a plan to move its hospital to Eugene. Now that the Oregon Court of Appeals has set back indefinitely PeaceHealth's plans, we're stuck with the absurd prospect of Eugene having two major hospitals, and Springfield none. Call us dreamers, but this would be an excellent time for the executive committees of the two hospital boards to sit down together, set aside all their pretty drawings, re-read their mission statements and ask some basic questions: What can we do *together* to best meet the short-term and long-term medical needs of our metropolitan area? How can we work *together* to make sure both cities have excellent facilities strategically located to serve their respective populations? At last resort, the two CEOs can flip a coin. The winner gets to build a big regional medical center in Glenwood, and each hospital maintains ER and basic care facilities in the two city centers. If PeaceHealth wins the toss, it can partner up with UO and OHSU to dedicate part of its Hilyard campus to medical training programs.
- Starting in *EW* this week is a new occasional columnist, Scott Thiemann, who writes