

Police News

Homicide Investigation

The Dalles Police Department

In cooperation with Crime Stoppers, is asking for your help in solving a homicide.

On Sunday, October 25, 1998, Wanda Eichinger, a 94-year-old widow was found murdered in her neatly kept home, in the 600 block of Liberty, in a residential part of The Dalles near downtown. Close friends discovered her body after she failed to show up for church services that morning.

Wanda Eichinger was a person who cherished her independence. Even at 94-years-of-age, she lived alone in her home and required only minimal outside assistance from others.

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information that leads to an arrest in this case and you need not give your name. Call either the Dalles Police Department at (541) 296-2613, or Crime Stoppers at (503) 823-HELP.



Pedestrian - Auto Accident Leaves Portland Man Seriously Injured

Portland Police Seeking Help In Identifying Hit and Run Driver

On November 18, 1998, Wednesday, Donald S. Hess, age 40, was struck by a passing motorist after he walked into the vehicle's path on SE Foster Rd., at SE 102nd Ave., Mr. Hess and an acquaintance, Ernest R. Graddy, age 40, were walking north-

bound across SE Foster Rd. and stopped momentarily on the center divider before Mr. Hess stepped in front of an orange or red colored "wedgeshaped" compact size vehicle which was traveling westbound. The vehicle failed to stop at the scene and was last seen continuing westbound.

Mr. Hess, who resides at 10016 SE Ellis St., was transported to Oregon Health Sciences University, OHSU.

It is not known if he will survive his injuries.

Police are seeking information which would help in identifying the orange or red "edge shaped" compact vehicle with damage to the windshield and or front headlights.

Any information regarding this case would be referred to Officer John Sedra, Portland Police Traffic Division, at (503) 823-2207.

Courts Are Different Here

Legal headlines from Washington, D.C., California and elsewhere in the nation obscure the day-to-day work of Oregon's courts. Although we hear criticisms and problems elsewhere in the country, Oregon courts efficiently administer justice, hold wrongdoers accountable and enforce business agreements.

There is a widespread misperception that courts have an abundance of frivolous legal proceedings. But virtually any Oregon Circuit Court judge will tell you that our state is different. Whatever may be going on in the rest of the nation, frivolous legal proceedings are unusual in Oregon. Oregon has a court rule that punishes an attorney or party who makes a frivolous claim or defense. And in Oregon, if the facts are clear, the issue may be disposed of by a judge, without the need to assemble a jury.

The mere fact that one party loses a case does not mean that its position was frivolous. For example, most district attorneys have an enviable record of winning criminal prosecutions, but when the DA loses a case, it does not mean that the prosecution was frivolous. Similarly, private person and businesses often have good faith, legitimate disputes that need to be resolved. One party or the other will

prevail and the other will lose. That does not make the losing claim or defense frivolous.

There is also a common misperception that our courts are clogged with personal injury lawsuits that are causing delay. Not so in Oregon. A substantial majority of Oregon court cases are criminal prosecutions. The bulk of the remainder consist of domestic problems, contract disputes and juvenile proceedings. Personal injury, wrongful death and other tort cases make up less than two percent of Oregon's court cases, according to data from the Oregon State Court Administrator.

Oregon courts are a national model for efficiency. The Oregon Supreme Court has time guidelines for cases. Even with the more complicated civil cases, about 98 percent are resolved less than one year after the case is filed with the court.

Another stubborn myth is that Americans are overly litigious. Scholars have analyzed historic court records and have found that the average contemporary American uses the courts less than Colonial Americans. United States citizens now go to court about as often as citizens in other nations that trace their legal heritage back to England. Adjusted for populations, the frequency of high profile cases such as

personal injury and wrongful death cases has actually been declining for a number of years.

Yet another persistent myth is that jury verdicts have skyrocketed and are out of control. Not so in Oregon. In Lane County, for instance, the average (median) jury verdict in a Circuit Court personal injury case, when the injured person prevails, has been around \$9,000. Given the amount of medical bills, the impairments to a person's life and the cost of enforcing one's rights in court, this amount is quite low. Oregon, along with South Carolina, is ranked at the bottom of the country in the civil enforcement of individual rights.

Oregon will soon start another legislative session and predictably there will be cries for legal reforms, typically based on stories or headlines from other states. Although any human institution can be improved, what is not broken does not need to be fixed. In Oregon, things are different and Oregonians can be proud of their court system.

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Two Killed In Fatal Traffic Accident With Reckless Driver

Portland Police Officer Pulls Suspect Out Of Burning Vehicle

On November 17, 1998, Tuesday, at 2:34 A.M.

A vehicle driven by Kenneth Otis Hamilton, age 23, failed to stop for a stop sign at the intersection of N. Houghton St. and N. Portsmouth Ave. and collided with another vehicle at a high rate of speed killing both the driver and the passenger.

Hamilton had drawn the attention of North Precinct Officer Robert Gorgone who had seen Hamilton disregard a stop light at N. Lombard and N. Woolsey Ave. While traveling at a high rate of speed which nearly caused a traffic accident with another vehicle which skidded to a stop to avoid colliding with Hamilton's vehicle. Officer Gorgone, who was parked, attempted to catch up to the older model Cadillac which Hamilton was driving and, in so doing, observed the Cadillac continue to be operated in a reckless manner by driving too fast and disobeying stop signs. Officer Gorgone attempted to catch up to the Cadillac without using his overhead lights and or siren. As the Cadillac traveled westbound on N. Houghton St. approaching N. Portsmouth Ave., Officer Gorgone was approximately three blocks be-

hind the Cadillac when he turned on his overhead lights in an effort to attempt to stop it. Approximately three to five seconds later the Cadillac failed to stop at the posted stop sign on Houghton St. at N. Portsmouth Ave. and collided with a Ford Mustang which was driven by Michelle L. Thiel, age 32, as it traveled northbound on N. Portsmouth. Both Ms. Thiel and her passenger, Gregory J. Hunter, age 30, died as a result of the collision.

Following the collision, the vehicle Hamilton was driving came to rest on a lawn of the residence located on the northwest corner of N. Portsmouth Ave. and N. Houghton St. Officer Gorgone rescued Hamilton, who was initially found unconscious, from the driver's seat of the Cadillac which had caught on fire and was eventually gutted by flames.

A female passenger in Hamilton's vehicle at the time of the accident has been identified as Heavony C. Lowe. Ms. Lowe was taken to Emanuel Hospital for medical treatment, however, it is not known if she was admitted as an in patient.

Hamilton was taken to Portland Adventist Hospital where blood was

drawn in furtherance of this investigation. The results of the blood testing will not immediately be known.

At the time of the accident, Hamilton's driver's license was revoked and he had an outstanding felony warrant on file charging him with Possession of a Controlled Substance. Hamilton was lodged at the Multnomah County Detention Center, MCDC, for the outstanding arrest warrant, Driving While Revoked (a felony) and two counts of First Degree Manslaughter stemming from the deaths of Michelle Thiel and Gregory Hunter.

Portland Police Bureau fatal traffic investigators are continuing this investigation in conjunction with the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office.

Investigators are attempting to identify potential witnesses to this incident. Of particular interest is the identity of the driver of the vehicle who narrowly avoided colliding with Hamilton's older model Cadillac at N. Lombard St. and N. Woolsey Ave. Skid marks indicate a collision was narrowly avoided. Any information should be referred to the Portland Police Traffic Division, fatal accident investigators, at (503) 823-2103.

Female Inmate Died While In The Justice Center

On November 14, 1998 at approximately 1:00 am

Multnomah County Correction deputies working in the intake area of the Justice Center noticed a female inmate who was in a very hyper and agitated state. She complained of feeling ill and expressed concern that she may be overdosing on drugs. Multnomah County medical staff immediately responded to the holding cell that the inmate was in. She

eventually lost consciousness as they attended to her.

Outside medical personnel were also called in, but all attempts to revive the inmate failed. She died at approximately 1:30 am.

Immediately after her death, the Multnomah County Medical Examiners Office and Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Detectives were called to the Justice Center and are investigating the incident. Preliminary findings have every indication

that the inmate died of a drug overdose as a result of drugs she ingested before entering the jail.

An autopsy performed this morning revealed four plastic bags with holes in them in the inmate's stomach, which may have contained drugs. A toxicology report from the Medical Examiners Office is pending.

The inmate's name is not being released pending notification of her family.

Southeast/Northeast "Cat" Burglaries

Southeast Precinct Detectives are investigating a series of night time burglaries which appear to be the work of one individual. Since January of this year, 15 or 20 cases have been reported in the area bounded by NE Broadway to SE Belmont, and 15th to 31st Avenue. The suspect enters during the night while the occupant, a single female living alone, is sleeping. In most cases the oc-

cupant was not awakened and discovers the burglary in the morning. In one case, however, the victim was awakened and was sexually assaulted.

The suspect is entering by removing or cutting screens from unlocked windows and doors, or removing a pane of glass from a door to reach inside and unlock it.

Items taken include purses, wal-

lets, CDs, computer and stereo equipment.

The suspect is described as a white male in his 20s or 30s, over 6'0 tall with a thin build.

Area residents are reminded to lock all doors and windows during night time hours.

Pleasephone Detective Yost, Sexual Assault Detail (823-0400) or Detective Nelson, Southeast Precinct Detectives (823-2143) for information.

Challenge me.

Two powerful words that kids are saying to their teachers, their schools, their parents.

Surprisingly, too many kids think school is too easy. They need, and want, to be challenged.

Need convincing?

- 74% of kids say schools should pass them to the next grade only when they've learned what's expected of them.
- 75% say they'd study harder if their schools gave them tougher tests.

Kids are curious and motivated when challenged in school. Now it's our challenge to challenge them. To educate them with rigorous academic standards and high expectations. To give them the skills and knowledge they'll need to succeed in school, the workplace and everyday life.

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