Frat members charged with Christmas tree heist

Dave Humphreys
Copy Editor

Eight individuals associated with the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity have been charged with cutting down the Cheney community Christmas Tree, located in front of the city library on the night of Dec. 7. The Spokane County prosecutor’s office has filed first degree theft charges against the eight students. First degree theft is a class B felony for which they could serve up to 10 years in prison and up to $20,000 in fines.

According to Cheney Police, emergency dispatch received a call from a citizen using a cell phone who believed they saw several people stealing lights from the tree in front of the Cheney Library. The call was relayed to the Cheney Police, who dispatched officers to the scene. The officers were able to track the subjects to the intersection of 3rd and D Streets, whereby the group fled. Two suspects were detained by members of both Cheney and Eastern police departments and the tree was recovered. According to police records, the suspects involved were:


“[They] did something that was pretty irresponsible and illegal,” said Cheney Police Chief Greg Lopes.

As to the involvement of the fraternity in the incident, Lopes thinks “fraternity systems are like any other system. You have good people, you have bad people,” adding “I think what we’re seeing is some irresponsible behavior by a group of people at this point.”

Sigma Phi Epsilon released a press release on December 8 stating that the fraternity is “currently investigating the matter and will be imposing disciplinary actions upon any members involved.”

The fraternity denied organizational responsibility for the event, stating “This is in no way a Sigma Phi Epsilon sponsored or organized event. We take full responsibility for the actions of our members however and will be imposing disciplinary action upon any members involved.”

Sigma Phi Epsilon President Steve Larsen said that punitively, members face the possible punishments of suspension, fines and community service. As to the prospect of complete fraternal expulsion, Larsen said that expulsion “is ‘possible, but not likely’.”

All members involved were listed as recently joining the fraternity.

“This was in no way any form of hazing,” said Larsen. “They acted of their own accord.”

Adviser for Student Organizations Department of Student Life Deena Ratezky called the incident “one of the most stupid things they could do. It was a dumb prank.”

ASTWU President Danny Caldwell called the incident “ludicrous, saying that he thought it was “the action of a few that should not be held against the Greek system.”

“They’ve been busting their hump trying to get a good reputation back,” Caldwell also said he thinks alcohol must have been involved.

“It had to be alcohol-induced because I don’t think anyone using their heads would’ve done it,” said Caldwell. Larsen flatly denied this, saying, “it wasn’t alcohol-related at all.”

See Christmas Tree, Pg. 2

In an attempt at apologizing to the citizens of Cheney, members of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity erected a replacement Christmas tree in front of the community library. Some residents feel the old tree was a city landmark. The stump can be seen poking through the snow on the left of the tree in the photo above.

Eagles name Wulff as new football coach

Paul Wulff, a member of the Eastern Washington University football coaching staff for the past seven seasons, has been selected as the new Eagle head football coach.

Wulff, 32, will assume his new duties immediately. The 1990 graduate of Washington State University has served the past two seasons as offensive coordinator and the six years before that as offensive line coach.

“I hope to enhance what Eastern has accomplished in the last 15 years,” Wulff said. “Hopefully we can take a step forward and continue to grow.”

This is an exciting occasion for me and my family,” he added. “My family has been my biggest supporter.”

Eastern Director of Athletics Scott Barnes has interviewed three candidates since Dec. 3 when former head coach Mike Kramer announced he was taking the head coaching position at Montana University.

“We conducted an expedient but thorough search,” Barnes said. “In Michigan we found somebody who has all the attributes we’re looking for Paul has great character and integrity, vast experience recruiting the State of Washington and great relationships with coaches statewide. And he has proven ability in developing student-athletes on and off the field. All of these attributes add up to helping us move the program forward and win more Big Sky Conference championships.”

Eastern President Dr. Stephen Jordan assisted Barnes during the interview process.

“What has impressed me the most about Paul is the high integrity he brings to the position, and the broad-based support he has in the community, particularly among the young men on the team,” Jordan said. “We are very happy that he will be leading the Eastern Eagles football team.”

Barnes said he was impressed at the number of people who called on behalf of Wulff.

“I was inundated by coaches, donors and alumni from all over the country,” Barnes said. “But the most impressive references came from the student-athletes themselves. It wasn’t just about liking Paul, it was the trust and respect they have in him that stood out.”

“The internal and external support has been overwhelming,” Wulff said. “I’m very grateful, and happy that I’ve been able to impress other people. Now I hope to add to it.”

Wulff expects to make an announcement in the next two weeks regarding his assistants, including the status of Eastern’s current coaches. Besides Wulff, Eastern’s other full-time assistants in 1999 were defensive coordinator/cornerbacks coach Steve Kizer, quarterbacks coach/academic coordinator Dave Befford, secondary coach Randy Hanson, defensive line coach Pete Kazmierack, wide receivers coach Jason Anderson, and running backs coach Terry Smith. Smith has already joined Kramer at MSU.

The first thing is to take care of the assistants who choose to remain here, and get them back on the road recruiting,” said Wulff. “We need to resume recruiting and talking to players.

“We have to get involved in the community and let the public know we have an outstanding product here,” Wulff said. “We have a lot of quality players in our program, and put a pretty impressive product on the field.”
INBC looks to students for new blood

Cheney Mayor Amy Jo Sooy said she thought it was a "very unfortunate incident."

Sooy said that though the fraternity has made great strides in replacing a tree, it has caused some discussion among the citizens of the city, adding that she was upset and concerned that it may undo some advances we’ve made with the Greek community.

Sooy also said that the fraternity has announced plans to replace a more permanent tree in the Spring.

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Christmas Tree: Greek community finds felony charge extreme

Rataezyk said another implication of the theft will be the students going before the University Disciplinary Committee, whereby they face the possibility of expulsion.

For the most part, Rataezyk and Larsen agree that they think the charges are severe.

"I think that the charges are severe," said Rataezyk. "I don’t think they warrant a felony charge," said Rataezyk.

"I hope this will not ruin the rest of their life," said Larsen. "They’re good people."

"I hope this will not ruin the rest of their life," said Larsen. "They’re good people."

Larsen agreed, saying "it was a poor prank, but not one that justifies the legal consequences these individuals are facing. Cutting down a tree doesn’t warrant being charged with a felony."

Larsen also said he expects the students will try to plea bargain down to a lesser charge. Caldwell was less sympathetic.

"They did it. They need to take responsibility for it. It’s theft. In my mind it can be considered a destruction of personal property," said Caldwell.

"The law states that $2,000 is a felony and if that’s how the court sees it, then that’s how they should be charged. I doubt whether the tree was worth two grand, but if the court finds it was worth that much, then it should be tried as such."

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Insert was “distasteful, rude and crude”

Dear Editor,

I have looked forward to picking up The Easterner and reading about issues concerning our institution. In the past, there have been articles that were entertaining, informative and related the good things that were going on within the campus. However, the December 2 issue of The Easterner contained some articles that were truly inappropriate.

I found the “Special Pullout Section” to be distasteful, rude, crude and socially unacceptable. Especially since it was published representing Eastern Washington University. I don’t know how this paper is financially supported, but other school papers receive funding from a portion of the student’s “tuition.” I certainly hope my money isn’t spent on this type of writing. I wonder how and why this tameless issue was okayed for publication. Is this the type of journalism that Eastern Washington University produces?

People who want to write turtle tableaux?

The publication was a huge disappointment for me. This was the last printing of the quarter since finals were the following week and Christmas break after that. I wonder how many students would take that last issue home for their parents to read. How many visitors were here touring the campus and picked up this issue.

In conclusion, I hope you will apologize for the issue, and I hope you do a better job, in the future, editing the articles and advertisements so they are a positive representation of the school.

Sincerely,

Brenda Dixon

Dear Reader,

I would like to tell you how much I enjoyed The Easterner Enquirer special you did in the December 2nd issue. Was there a little too much squirrel humor? You bet. Some of those articles were damnably tasteless?

Looking forward to more sacred cow slaughter

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Brotherhood can’t cover idiocy

David Bey
Cheney Free Press

The jagged stump that once was Cheney's community Christmas tree still rests in the ground, serving as a painful reminder of the act of community terrorism done by a group that the city had grudgingly come to believe had been reformed. The city got a big slap in the face for being so naive. The story gets played out in college communities throughout the country. Greeks running amok. It’s always the same old story that gets followed by the same old excuses. Blame it on dumb pledges, blame it on alcohol-impaired justifications, blame it on a community that just doesn’t understand what Greek organizations stand for and are trying to do.

Look at all of the philanthropy. Look at all of the great people that were once fraternity and sorority members. Look at the opportunities we give our members.

What it boils down to is that the strength of the fraternity system is also its greatest weakness. That great intangible - brotherhood. It’s brotherhood that inspires fraternities to sweep clean city streets, to deliver food and clothing to community shelters and help out youth sports programs. It’s this same brotherhood that can also lead to mass idiocy, lead to a mass suspension of community sense and lead to the false feeling of “us against the world.” Curious how sororities seldom if ever are involved cutting down Christmas trees, stealing lawn furnishings, trash ing in the street or urinating on their neighbor’s property. Apparently sisterhood carries with it a better understanding of acceptable behavior.

Look, fraternities are here to stay. We’re stuck with “boys being boys” — this isn’t the last time something stupid is going to originate out of the cousin fraternities of our Greek letter friends.

But, if they want us to treat them civilly after this latest fiasco, they need to insist that Sigma Phi Epsilon deal with the eight amateur lumber-jacks with a heavy hand.

Cleaning the floor of the upperclassmen’s bathroom with a toothbrush and having to miss a few hours of work is not going to cut it.

For willfully and wantonly destroying and attempting to steal property that not only wasn’t theirs but also carried an intangible value that a dollar figure can’t be placed upon, those eight deserve to be cut loose by the Sig Eps.

It’s time to take that intoxication of brotherhood away from those young men, who proved conclusively they can’t handle it. Sigma Phi Epsilon will be a better place for it and regain a sliver of the trust and respect that the pranksters flushed down the toilet.

I don’t expect that to happen, however. What will happen is that the fraternity will wrap their arms around them and claim they can be reformed. Expelling them would go against their mission of brotherhood, they’ll say — everybody deserves a second chance.

Great. It’s like it’s going to run their lives.

I’m gonna do the right thing + pass the little Chan boy to his dad... but we’ve gotta make it look like an intersection...
Winter is the time of year for all the big prestigious Oscar-troll ing films to fill the screens of multi-plexes everywhere. I thought in time was right for my take on two of the biggest.


The year is 1935. Paul Edgecomb (Tom Hanks) is a guard in the Louisiana infamous "Green Mile", the state prison's death row. Edgecomb is a decent man in a bad job, and this year has been his worse. Not only does he have to suffer through a painted urinary infection, he has to put up with Dean (Barry Pepper) a sadistic guard under Edgecomb's supervision who has high connections.

Enter John Coffey, a builing, simple minded black man with no past or outside connections. Coffey has been convicted and condemned for the murder of two white girls. Edgecomb can't believe that this gentle man who has gutted the supernatural mixed into all this.

No, the magical realism in this story is rather labored (Garcia-Marquez has nothing to worry about) and the religious metaphor is very unsuitable (John Coffey is saint?). But the movie still works as a character drama and isn't half as manipulative and sappy as it could have been. I shudder to think what would happen if Spielberg got his hands on this material.

Hanks is as noble as ever. All though I am not as impressed with Tom Hanks as most people are, I am sure that his performance in this film will earn him yet another Oscar nomination.

The best part of this movie is watching a solid cast of character actors play quirky characters. The stand-out is Barry Pepper playing the unflappable Dean. His performance manages to upset such veteran hams as Harry Dean Stanton and James Cromwell.

Although it is not the master piece it is hyped as, and it could have lost about a half-hour from it's running time, "The Green Mile" is one of the few highlights in an otherwise dreary movie year.

"The Talented Mr. Ripley": Dreary is the most succinct term I can come up with when it comes to this film. Visually pretty, but ultimately shallow and uninteresting. Ripley is one of the most disappointing book to film transfers I can think of in a long time.

Based on the classic crime novel by Patricia Highsmith and adapted by Anthony Minghella (The English Patient), the story concerns the Twins Ripley and his adventures amongst the jet-set American expatriates in Europe circa 1939.

Ripley is sent to Europe by a rich shipping magnate to try persuade the rich man's son (Dicky Greenleaf, the rich boy character.) In an attempt to make the rich man's son to return to New York to take over the family business, Ripley then begins the whole process and begins to envy the lifestyle of the idle rich. He then becomes determined to take his place among this crowd, by any means necessary. To give away any more would be unfair.

Highsmith's original story is one of the best genre novels ever written. Maddingingly cynical and unjudgemental, the author forces the reader to identify with the sociopathic Ripley and his schemes.

This is one of the only stories where you are forced to root for the bad guy. And what a bad guy he is.

Minghella takes the book's amoral, scary protagonist and defangs him. The movie's Ripley is a hulking, whiny bore with a crush on Dickey Greenleaf, the rich boy character. In an attempt to make the character and story more "audience friendly", he has gutted the main attraction of the story in the first place: everyone loves a good bad guy. Without that premise, we are left with a two and-a-half hour Italian travel brochure and '50s fashion show backed by some great be-bop jazz. Yawn.

UPCOMING EVENTS
FRIDAY- Women's Basketball vs. Idaho State, 7 pm @ Reese Court
SATURDAY- Women's Basketball vs. Portland State, 7 pm @ Reese Court
MONDAY- INBC Blood Drive, 12:5-3:30 p.m. @ Cheney Fire Station
TUESDAY- ASEWU Council meeting, 3:30 pm @ PUB 323
WEDNESDAY- WYSIWYG: Alcohol Awareness, 7 pm @ PUB MPR
THURSDAY- Men's Basketball vs. Northern Arizona, 7:05 pm @ Reese Court

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Black History Month Essay Contest seeks entries

Eastern Washington University's Black History Month Essay Contest is seeking entries from students in Spokane County schools, colleges and universities.

Each year the essay contest, sponsored by the EWU African American Education Program, focuses on themes related to Dr. Martin Luther King and offers cash prizes to winners in four categories.

Faxes must be postmarked no later than January 28, with prizes awarded at the Black History Month Banquet February 19. For more information, please call the EWU African American Education Program at (509) 359-2205.

This year's major theme is: Although we are still pursuing a more just and diverse society, Dr. King's dream has become a reality in various areas of American life.

These are the categories:
Elementary Division (grades 4-6)
Topic: Dr. King wanted to create a society where equality for all races existed. What did he do to make that dream real for you today? 200 words. Winning prize: $75 and a certificate.

Junior High Division (grades 7-9)
Topic: How has the reality of Dr. King's dream made your life better? Please give some examples. 300 words. Winning prize: $100 and a certificate.

High School Division (grades 10-12)
Topic: How would your life be affected without the changes brought in by Dr. King and others? What other changes do you hope to see in your lifetime? 500 words. Winning prize: $150 and a certificate.

College/University Division

Essays are to be submitted as your life. Whoops! Perhaps you should reconsider any long-lasting engagements. Learn from a Taurus. Quit being naughty. It's just not cute anymore!

Libra: Eat a steak, indulge in some ice cream, and then watch Dr. Zhivago till you drool, or pass out whichever comes first. Just don't forget to set the alarm! Darn, you missed class. Guess you'll just have to sleep 'til tomorrow. Good idea. Buy a Cadillac.

Scorpio: Try a different musical taste: Roy Orbison, Elvis Presley, and Eric Clapton are highly recommended. NSYNC or the Backstreet Boys will work, but only after extreme inhibition. I do, however, highly recommend Britney Spears, even if you're sober. Don't forget to fluff, and remember—soap is your friend.

Capricorn: Don't eat pop corn for a while. Make some new friends, see what they're doing on Wednesdays. A little strange at first perhaps, but maybe there's something there you should look into. Just as long as they aren't associated with The Easterner. Then just walk away. Slowly.

These readings are from the reknowned psychic "Bill." He's odd, and he'd love to do so because he has cancer... well, nothing, really. Just heard the

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So go ahead, just walk right in. You don't even have to knock.
Eagles begin Big Sky conference play tonight

The Eastern Washington University men's basketball team enjoyed the luxury of being able to concentrate on its Big Sky Conference competition with just one game this week. The opponent, however, isn't so luxurious anymore, as the Eagles travel to Idaho State to begin the 2000 conference schedule. Tip-off Thursday (Jan. 6) between the Eagles and the Bengals at Holt Arena in Pocatello, Idaho, is 6:35 p.m. Mountain Time.

Idaho State has been the league's eighth-place finisher each of the past two years, while the Eagles have finished third and sixth those two seasons. The Bengals have lost to the Eagles in four of the past five meetings between the two teams, but are much-improved in 1999-2000. Idaho State's victories have included a 67-55 drubbing of Santa Clara and a 78-66 road win at Portland. The Bengals lost to San Diego 64-61 on a neutral court, while the Bears lost at San Diego by the same three-point margin, 62-59.

Eagle Head Coach Steve Aggers on This Week's Game: "I've been very impressed. Of any team in this league, they've made the most improvement from last year to this year. I think it was dramatic improvement."

"They did a great job recruiting, they have some big bodies and some great guards. They have a combination of inside and outside scoring ability they rebound really well and they block a lot of shots," said Aggers. "We're going to have to play our best game of the season to beat them in Pocatello. I don't think there's any question about that."

Series History: Eastern has won four of the past five meetings against the Bengals, including a 4:12 record in Pocatello. Eastern lost eight-straight games to ISU from 1993 to 1997.

Aggers on Olson & Jones: "Aaron had a great night and really scored well. He did a super job taking the ball to the hole. He had a lot of trips, and usually he's a three-point shooting threat," Aggers said.

"Making 15-of-18 shots from the field is awesome. He got a lot of looks in the paint and Jamal made some great passes. Jamal did a good job running the team and had a great night assist-wise. It was just an incredible night offensively."

Eagle Injury Report: In the month of December, all three Eastern's point guards have suffered injuries. Deon Williams is the latest after suffering what is feared to be a broken toe in practice on Dec. 27. His status is day-to-day, depending on his pain threshold and time needed to heal. Earlier in the month, Ryan Hansen and Jamal Jones were injured but used the Christmas break to fully heal. After turning in an impressive offensive performance against Northwest College on Dec. 11, Hansen suffered a sprained knee while being fouled with just 2:34 left in the game. Although listed as doubtful for the Oregon State game on Dec. 15, he started at guard and scored 13 points in 25 minutes of action. Jones sprained his ankle versus NWC, but played 20 minutes in Monday's game against Idaho State and just five minutes versus Colorado. Small forward Aaron Olson missed the Northwest College game with strep throat, then played just seven off the bench against Idaho State and just five minutes versus Colorado. He also had a wrist injury earlier in the season, but apparently is back to health as evidenced by his solid output versus Cascade.

Aggers on Williams: "Deon's situation really concerns us. They think it might be a broken toe; it's swollen and he can't move. We're hoping he'll be ready for the offensive end, Eastern's 66-53 win over Idaho snapped a 22-game losing streak in the series."

Sources: UI Sports Information; The Easterner

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Sources: UI Sports Information; The Easterner
Women's squad opens league play at home

Two weeks after leading the Lady Bears to a 62-51 win over Cleveland State and Cal Poly, and she leads the conference averaging 11 points and seven rebounds. Allie Bailey, a senior, has recorded double-doubles in points and rebounds this season. She has already exceeded her double-double season total from last year of three. In addition, she has recorded double-digit totals in rebounds on seven occasions, including a career high 19 boards Nov. 20 versus Northwest College. That performance against Northwest College in her conference high this year. Bailey leads the conference averaging 11 rebounds a game and averages 8.5 points a game. Super Senior: Tracy Ford-Phelps has scored 20 or more points in four games this season. Ford-Phelps scored a season-high 25 against Portland, 21 in the season opening win over Northwest College and tallied 20 points against Cleveland State and Cal Poly in Big Sky action. Ford-Phelps leads the team in fourth in the Big Sky in scoring.

Last week's Turnover Improvement: "Our turnovers have been a lot better. It has been an emphasis in practice. The kids have taken it upon themselves to take care of the basketball. They understand that every possession counts. We need to get a shot off rather than a turnover." - Coach Joceelyn Pfeifer on the Team's Turnover Improvement:

"It's nice that we are going to be home or a week. We have had 22 points, 15 rebounds, five blocked shots and five assists as Baylor defeated Eastern Washington 69-48 Dec. 30 in Waco, Texas. Tracy Ford-Phelps led Eastern with 12 points and seven rebounds. Allie Bailey added 10 points and a game-high 16 rebounds. Eastern made just 25 percent from the field, but Baylor wasn't much better at 35 percent. The Eagles missed 61 shots, including 11 of 12 three-point attempts, and Baylor missed 43. The result was a total of 133 rebounds as the Lady Bears held a 62-51 edge. Baylor took a 14-point lead at halftime, and led by as many as 27 points in the second half. Pfeifer on Last Week: "It was a very tough shooting performance. We got a lot of shot and some good looks but they just didn't fall for us."

Turnover Turnaround: Only two occasions this season have the Eagles committed more turnovers than their opponents. Despite the advantage, the Eagles are only 2-3 when committing fewer turnovers than their opponents. Eastern has averaged 16 turnovers in 10 games this season while its opponents have averaged 20.4 turnovers a contest. Last year, Eastern averaged 20 turnovers a game while its opponents averaged 17.4 a contest.

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