

Benton Bulletin

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Proudly she flies



A new flag appeared atop the Benton County Courthouse last Thursday, thanks to the instigation of Judge Richard Mengler and Commissioner Dale Schrock. Gary Feuerstein, who has been in charge of courthouse renovation, reported that the first flag pole, placed on the roof when the tower was completed in 1889, even-

tually rotted and had to be replaced in 1954.

At that time, according to Schrock, a new flagpole was also donated to the county and placed in the courthouse yard and the new pole high on the roof of the courthouse was abandoned until last week.

Photo by Richard Olson

Disorder at the court

Driver rams van into courthouse in judicial protest

By George Wisner

of the Gazette-Times

A Corvallis man drove a van through the lawn of the Benton County Courthouse Tuesday morning, smashed it into the main entrance steps and then stormed into District Court complaining about the U.S. legal system.

Benton County sheriff's deputies arrested Ali Reza Khashabi, 41, of 2540 N.W. Lincoln Ave., shortly after the episode began at about 9:40 a.m. He was taken to Oregon State Hospital in Salem with a suspected mental problem, authorities said.

Corvallis Municipal Court records show that an Ali Reza Khashabi, same age and address, pleaded guilty last December to a charge of endangering a child passenger in a vehicle by not ensuring the child was wearing a seatbelt as required by state law. He was fined \$35.

Although people were walking around the courthouse at the time, no one was injured in Tuesday's incident, according to sheriff's Sgt. Bernard Altishin. However, it took several officers to subdue Khashabi in a hallway outside District Court.

Altishin said no criminal charges were filed, but that reports of the episode will be sent to District Attorney

Peter F. Sandrock Jr. Charges of criminal mischief and endangering the lives of other persons are being considered, Altishin said.

No significant damage was done to the courthouse, according to Allan Kitzman, county parks superintendent. Officials have not determined the cost of repairing the courthouse grounds.

Kitzman said a small red maple tree was damaged and probably would have to be replaced. Four rose bushes were damaged, two of which probably will need to be replaced. And there was moderate turf damage, including 4-inch deep tire tracks in the lawn.

Madelynn "Sue" Mariner from the Corvallis city manager's office said she was standing at the entrance of the Benton Plaza Hotel taking a smoke break when a van heading south on 5th Street jumped a curb onto the lawn about 20 feet from the courthouse's 5th Street entrance.

"I saw this white van come onto the grounds real fast," she said "It hit a small tree (along Monroe Avenue) ... something popped off the vehicle ... it stopped, revved up and then shot off again (to the east). That's when I



Paul VanDevelde/Gazette-Times

Dan Burke, Benton County clerk to the commissioners, leads school-children off the front steps of the Benton County Courthouse on Tuesday morning after a man drove across the courthouse lawn and into the steps. Police said the man disrupted Judge Henry Dickerson's court proceedings and was subsequently taken to the Oregon State Hospital in Salem for treatment.

stepped back inside and asked someone to call 911.

"This is not the sort of thing I usually see out there," Mariner said. "It's just not the sort of thing you see in Corvallis."

Meanwhile, Altishin said, the van careened through several rosebushes, skidded onto the east sidewalk and roared onto the courthouse steps. It stopped when it slammed into a concrete post on the north side of the entrance steps.

The van also broke a metal handrail down the center of the stairs.

The driver got out and ran into the courthouse, Altisbin said.

He stopped in two offices — Veterans' Affairs and District Court — before charging into the courtroom of Henry R. Dickerson, who was handling routine traffic cases.

"He just burst in and began to shout that he was unhappy with the court system and the judges," Dickerson said. "He mentioned some problems he had in California, but as far as I know, he has never been in this court before."

Meanwhile, people in the courtroom hurried outside.

He just wanted someone to talk with, said Dickerson, who added he agreed to speak with the man when he made an appointment.

Almost immediately, about 10 lawmen entered the courtroom while Khashabi was gesturing and yelling at Judge Dickerson. They followed Khashabi outside, handcuffed him during a brief struggle and took him away.