Swastikas painted on campus cars

By Jill Kritzler
Lantern staff writer

While members of one OSU fraternity are still performing community service for defacing the AEPI house with swastikas, another Jewish member of the greek community has fallen victim to racist graffiti.

Members of Alpha Omega Delta, a Jewish dental fraternity on 1430 Neil Ave., reported that swastikas had been painted on three of their cars Saturday night.

The incident came almost a year after anti-Semitic graffiti was smeared in red paint on the exterior of Alpha Epsilon Pi, another Jewish fraternity on campus, last November.

Members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, another campus fraternity, pleaded "in violation" to the vandalism before a university board and were sentenced to 800 hours of community service and put on probation for a year.

Alpha Omega Delta members were puzzled by the incident because they said few people outside of the dental school knew they were a Jewish fraternity.

House member Chuck Schlesinger said the fraternity moved to its present location, outside of the dental school, two months ago, he was unaware of anyone else who knew they were a Jewish fraternity.

Schlesinger said fraternity members were surprised the house was not also damaged.

Schlesinger, an OSU second-year dental student, owns one of the three vehicles that was damaged. Schlesinger's car, a brown Saab, had a white swastika painted on the hood and on the rear.

Another second-year dental student, who asked to remain anonymous, owns one of the other cars damaged. The car had a white swastika painted on the hood. The student said the damage occurred after the student returned home around 11 p.m. Saturday.

The third vehicle was owned by the fiancee of a fraternity member who was out of town at the time of the incident. His truck was found with two swastikas painted on it.

Chris Holland, a first-year dental student, arrived home from out-of-town about 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, and was the first to see the damage.

"I'm sure my car would have been done too if I'd have been here this weekend," Holland said.

Members called the police, who took statements from the car owners. There was no damage to the house or grounds.

Schlesinger called the other fraternities and sororities on campus to see if they had been vandalized, and he said no one else had reported anything.

The vandalism occurred sometime when it was raining, or when the cars were wet because the paint was running, Schlesinger said.

"I am shocked that this happened again after what we went through last year," said AEPI President Harris Levinson.

"I sympathize with the fraternity. The community obviously has not learned its lesson."

Levinson said this incident shows that anti-semitism is an issue the university should deal with.

"A Campus of Difference" on Nov. 7 is a forum that two members of every campus fraternity and sorority will attend. The forum will explore the issues of anti-semitism and other forms of bigotry, Levinson said.

Levinson hopes the program, after it is piloted in November, will be adopted into the university as it has been at many other major universities.

Schlesinger said nothing like this had happened to their fraternity before.

Robert Dickey, a second-year law student and neighbor of the fraternity said this type of crime was unusual in the area.
Cars vandalized at Jewish fraternity

By Alan D. Miller
Dispatch Higher Education Reporter

Vandals painted swastikas on three cars parked at a Jewish fraternity near the Ohio State University campus — the third such incident in that area in less than a year.

"I was shocked at first that something like this would happen here," said Chuck Schlesinger, 25, a second-year dental student. "Now, I'm appalled. It's something not to be taken lightly."

The incident happened between 11 p.m. Saturday and noon Sunday at the Alpha Omega house, a fraternity on Neil Avenue for Jewish dental students, said Schlesinger, whose car was vandalized. Columbus police are investigating, he said.

"This made me aware there are people like this on this campus," he said. "It makes me more aware of my surroundings and people like that around me."

Schlesinger said fraternity members spent hours with rubbing compound to remove the Nazi symbols from the cars' hoods, doors, and trunks. Their house was not damaged.

The house is not identified as a Jewish fraternity,

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said Schlesinger, from Newport Beach, Calif.

"It says Alpha Omega on front, but no one outside the dental school knows really what that is," he said.

In December, anti-Semitic graffiti was scrawled on the front doors of the Hillel Foundation, 46 E. 16th Ave., which was demolished in August to make way for a new Jewish center. A few days earlier, the Jewish fraternity house Alpha Epsilon Pi at 1945 Indiana Ave. was spray-painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic epithets.

The Alpha Epsilon Pi house was damaged by another fraternity in retaliation for damage done earlier in the week by Alpha Epsilon pledges.

The OSU Judicial Panel placed Sigma Alpha Epsilon on probation for three quarters and sentenced its members to about 800 hours of community service to be performed by Nov. 30.

Alpha Epsilon Pi members admitted to university officials that their pledges poured paint on statues of lions outside the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house at 1934 Indiana Ave.

For that, Alpha Epsilon Pi was ordered to perform 260 hours of community service by Nov. 1 and to review its pledge program.
Graffiti not hate crime, police say

By Jill Kritzler, Rick McVicar and Megan O'Connor
Lantern staff writers

Police investigating the painting of swastikas on cars at an OSU Jewish dental fraternity two weeks ago say they do not consider it a hate crime.

Three vehicles at the Alpha Omega House, 1430 Neil Ave., were painted with white swastikas on Oct. 17. Fraternity members were surprised because they said few people outside the dental school knew it was a Jewish fraternity.

Sgt. Mike Dailey of the Columbus Police Investigations Bureau said there are no suspects in the investigation.

The vandalism was probably targeted at individuals rather than the entire fraternity, Dailey said. The vandalism was probably the result of "disgruntled students," he said.

Dailey said one reason it is not believed to be a hate crime related is because other Jewish fraternities were unharmed, and it seems to be an isolated case.

Another reason is the lack of damage done to the area.

"The vandals were careful not to destroy any property other than the cars," he said.

Furthermore, sources from local, right-wing hate groups are not bragging about the incident, Dailey said.

"Normally a right-wing group would take credit for it," he said.

"It's hard to say who it was directed to," said Chuck Schlesinger, an Alpha Omega member whose car was vandalized. "But I am not willing to say it definitely was a hate crime."

Schlesinger said the fraternity has no idea who is responsible for the crime, but they're keeping their ears open, and they think it was a one-time incident.

Members say the incident has not had a large, negative impact on the fraternity.

"We are continuing as usual," Schlesinger said, adding that the paint came off the cars after two hours of scrubbing with rubbing compound.

But one student, who owned one of the cars and asked to remain anonymous, said he is upset about the incident.

"Whoever did this didn't know what the swastika means to us," the student said. The student said he visited the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C., and he said more people should visit it. After seeing the exhibits, the student said there is no way someone could do something like this.

Roger Jay Kaplan, an OSU professor in the Department of Near Eastern, Judaic and Hellenic Languages and Literatures, said he is not surprised by the swastika painting. He said anti-Semitism is alive and well in America. He was surprised to see it so close to campus, though.

"We need to educate people about the cultures, about the history of the symbols," he said. "We need to learn how they effect people, and how they are used."

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— Roger Jay Kaplan