

Tonya's new life: service for seniors!

□ Skater faces harsh sentence with 'enthusiasm'

By JOE HARAN

For the Oregon Spectator

OREGON CITY — Tonya Harding is making a positive impression upon local agencies and probation officials as she begins 500 hours of court-ordered community service work.

"She's been very pleasant, enthusiastic, cooperative and has a good attitude," according to Darcy Baker, Community Service Coordinator for the Clackamas County Community Corrections office.

Baker, who is scheduling Harding for work with at least three agencies, said reports indicate the world-famous figure skater left senior center officials with the same impression: pleasant, cooperative and enthusiastic about her work.

Harding's probation officer, Pat Foley, reflects that point of view: "My contacts with Tonya have been great," she said. "She's been very pleasant and there are no problems."

These laudatory comments square with those of Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist Michael Skube of *The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution*. Skube, who spent several days in the Portland metropolitan area observing and speaking with Harding both before and after the recent Olympic Games, expressed concern the public had been denied a fair and accurate picture of the Clackamas County resident.

"As a writer, I was quite taken by the effect she has on people: a combination of vulnerability, toughness and sweetness," Skube told the *Oregon Spectator*. "That comes out of her when you see her in person. People outside the media see this."

"She's the least phony person I've ever seen. The media deal in caricatures — and she's been caricatured as someone she really isn't. She was unquestionably beaten up on by the media. It's clear to me, just from observing, that a lot of the press was out to nail her."

John Arne Markussen — who as chief United States correspondent for the Oslo, Norway daily newspaper *Dagbladet* spent several days covering Harding's saga — said "Norwegians really like" the 23-year-old skater.

"She was judged pretty tough by the court," Markussen told the *Oregon Spectator*, "compared to what else is going on in America."



TONYA HARDING'S brave smile and enthusiasm remain even after rough treatment by the hometown press and an unusually harsh sentence by Judge Donald H. Londer.

In fact, Harding's \$100,000 fine — part of her sentence for pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit hindering prosecution — is the maximum fine allowed by law.

In addition, she was required to resign from the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA), thus ending her competitive career. Some criminal lawyers

consider that part of the sentence unusual, as the USFSA is a "collateral organization" having no bearing upon the charge Harding faced in court.

The charge to which Harding pleaded guilty is an after-the-fact "victimless" crime against the State of Oregon, which took place after her return home from

the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, rather than a premeditated person-to-person crime against figure skater Nancy Kerrigan as is the case with the other defendants.

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Another unusual aspect of Harding's sentencing was the requirement to make a \$50,000 charitable contribution to a so-called "eleemosynary organization": Oregon Special Olympics. Harding had already pledged \$35,000 to Oregon Special Olympics prior to the Olympic Games in February.

Further, she must pay \$10,000 to the Multnomah County District Attorney's office for unspecified "special costs."

Moreover, the 500 hours of community service work Harding must perform is more than twice the average seen in service to community organizations.

"That's a lot of hours," said Fran Ames, referral coordinator for the Volunteer Center in Portland.

Ames pointed out the average yearly commitment to community service is 210 hours. Harding must pay all her fines and complete her

500 hours by April 1, 1995.

In addition, state law requires Harding hold down a full-time job, which she is doing by working for a landscaper who is reportedly "delighted to have her," according to confidential sources who tell the *Oregon Spectator*. Harding enjoys the work, is experiencing fewer asthma attacks and is much happier now that much of the stress she was experiencing has been relieved and the so-called "media circus" has diminished.

On top of the 40 hours per week of full time work and the 12 hours per week of community service work, Harding will continue to spend several hours each week practicing figure skating.

She fully intends to keep figure skating an integral part of her life through teaching, professional appearances and perhaps even competition again at some point in the future when her legal obligations have been fulfilled.

Officials all agree Harding will be very busy juggling everything to fulfill her legal requirements and live a private life as well. But in summing up the situation, journalist Skube reflected on the trials the two-time national champion, world silver medalist, two-time Olympian and champion of several major international tournaments has faced.

"I've never seen an athlete undergo this kind of pressure. I think she's remarkable," he concluded.