

Anarchist guilty of arson, attempted arson **By Bill Bishop, *Register Guard*, June 6, 2001**

A judge on Tuesday convicted self-proclaimed anarchist Jeffrey Michael Luers on 10 felony charges for an arson at a truck dealership and an attempted arson at an oil company in Eugene last year. Luers, 22, faces at least 7 1/2 years in prison - and perhaps much longer - when he's sentenced Friday. Lane County Circuit Judge Lyle Velure emphasized that Luers' political beliefs played no role in his deliberations.

Luers, wearing a dark sports coat and pants with a blue button-down shirt and a chain locked to his ankles, didn't react visibly. Nearly three dozen spectators - including his friends and relatives, and Eugene police and firefighters - attended the hearing. Lawyers for both sides declined to discuss the verdict. Luers' parents left the courthouse without comment. Luers said that he took steps to avoid possible injury to any employees or passers-by during the early morning fire at the Romania Truck Center off Franklin Boulevard last June 16. Because the fire didn't endanger people or occupied buildings, Luers' lawyer sought conviction on a less serious charge of criminal mischief.

Luers also contended that evidence was insufficient to link him to an attempted arson of fuel trucks at Tyree Oil Inc. in the Whiteaker neighborhood last May 27. But the judge said it's impossible to ensure that no one will be injured by a fire such as the one at the truck lot. He credited the awareness of the night watchman and "heroic efforts" by Eugene firefighters for containing the blaze before it spread to more than the three trucks that were damaged.

"The defendant exhibited no care or concern for the people who may have discovered or fought this fire," Velure said. The fire could have injured a passer-by from the nearby University of Oregon, a motel in the vicinity or homes in the surrounding neighborhood, he said. He convicted Luers on three counts of first-degree arson.

Each charge carries a 7 1/2 -year prison term that cannot be reduced for any reason under Measure 11, the state's mandatory sentencing law. The judge will decide Friday whether the sentences will be served back-to-back. Velure also convicted Luers of criminal mischief and manufacturing and possessing a destructive device. In the Tyree incident, only fate precluded a potentially catastrophic explosion and fire when a gallon jug of gasoline failed to ignite a large fume-filled tanker truck. A fire could have spread rapidly through the wood-frame structures of the neighborhood and possibly to a nearby fuel storage area, Velure said. Evidence of Luers' involvement was circumstantial but convincing, the judge said. Three weeks after the Tyree incident, with a search warrant at a rented warehouse where Luers lived, police found matches, incense sticks, a prototype for an improved ignition system similar to the device found at Tyree Oil and thread with fiber count and adhesive coating identical to thread found on the device at Tyree, the judge said.

Any one of the bits of evidence would point to Luers, but Velure said the conclusive object was a set of bolt cutters found in Luers' belongings. An expert testified that the

tool made blade marks that matched those on the chain-link fence at Tyree Oil that someone cut on the night of the arson attempt. Velure convicted Luers on two counts of attempted first-degree arson, attempted criminal mischief and manufacturing and possessing a destructive device.

He earlier acquitted Luers on two counts of conspiracy to commit arson at Tyree Oil, ruling not enough evidence existed to show more than one person was involved. A co-defendant with Luers, Craig Andrew Marshall, 28, earlier entered a plea bargain in which he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit arson and possession of a destructive device in the Romania case. Charges related to Tyree Oil were dropped. Marshall was sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison, with a possible reduction to two years if he qualifies for the state's boot camp program.