

# Television Market National trends bypass Eugene

by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Eugene's television market seems strange to the outsider. It's as if the changes in the last decade or so have not touched this city. No one in the area seems to have heard of low-power television or the battle of the independents. Indeed, Eugene is struggling to keep public television from becoming a luxury (although it is to those who can't afford cable) and the city seems to be content with its three network affiliates.

## National TV Market

Over the next several months in this column, I'll be looking at some of these issues more in depth. But for now, I'll do a quick overview of the changes occurring in television nationally.

Television as a *concept* is changing. People no longer think of TV as ABC, NBC, CBS and sometimes PBS. Now television includes CNN, ESPN, MTV, movies at all hours of the day, and used car commercials from far-away markets like Chicago. Cable has brought in a lot of changes, made the choices wider, and brought back popular programs from the past. Some network affiliates have refused to buy some network programming and have instead replaced it with old movies and old standbys like *Star Trek* and *The Brady Bunch*. Local television stations have always competed with each other, especially for local time slots, but there was a gentleman's agreement between those stations that no station would do anything to undercut the other.

In many midwestern and eastern markets, that agreement has broken down. And the reason is commonly called The Battle of The Independents. What has happened in these areas is that an independent station

has entered the market. Changes in FCC regulations have made owning and operating an independent easier. There are several groups that travel around the country, starting independents and then selling them after a few years in the business. It seems, although the figures aren't completely available, that such an operation is extremely profitable.

## Competition on the Rise

The arrival of an independent into the market means tough competition for the affiliates. The independent is usually available to all television viewers, not just those with cable. The new station tries to take four to six percent of the market share, which, in a tightly divided market, is a lot. Independents offer cheap advertising and popular, alternative programming, like certain sporting events. And suddenly, the gentleman's agreement is gone, because the affiliates are scrambling to retain their portion of the advertising revenue.

The result is a bonanza for the viewers. Not only do they get to choose between standard network fare, but they can also watch programming they didn't get before. People who can't afford cable really appreciate the independents, but even people with cable find themselves tuning to the local independent instead of one out of Chicago or Atlanta. Local affiliates think twice about the network programming they buy and will sometimes substitute if they believe that what the network is running will not compete in the local market. In areas with new independents, television wars are common—as in gas wars, it's the consumer that wins.

## Low-power TV

The other exciting thing that is happening in local programming across the country is low-power television. Low-power television is simply that—television stations with very low reach. The idea was originated for bigger cities so that neighborhoods would have their very own stations, but the owners and operators of low-power TV seem to have different agendas in mind. In a midwestern city very similar in size to Eugene, two low-power stations have started. Both have an eye on local programming and both seem to think they'll survive. Low-power stations don't make a dent in the advertising revenue of other stations; instead, they bring in advertisers who wouldn't normally consider television. Low-power ad rates are cheap because the audience is small.

But Eugene seems isolated from the changes going on nationwide in television. It is surprising to me, a midwestern transplant, that PBS is unavailable to viewers without cable. Never have I lived in a market where that has happened. And it's especially tragic now that PBS is doing some of the most innovative programming on television.

## Eugene Situation

A quick overview of the Eugene television picture shows that it is a unique combination of local problems (like the public television/cable controversy) and old ways of business. The market hasn't had its shake-up yet; it may not have one during this decade. And perhaps one isn't needed. As long as the viewers believe that they're getting good programming, the market can stay the same. But are local viewers satisfied with the local TV scene? That's a question that will have to be answered in later columns.

# KLCC airs "Voices in Exile"

"... I had nightmares that I was in my country and that the Guardia was following me, that all the doors were closed." Jorge is one of half a million Salvadorans who, fleeing the brutal war in their country, came to the United States. In February, National Public Radio presents *Voices in Exile*, the award-winning four-part documentary that examines the war that has displaced a quarter of the Salvadoran population, the problems they face as refugees in the United States, and the sanctuary movement that shelters Salvadorans from deportation to their violent homeland. The half-hour programs can be heard on NPR member station KLCC 89.7 FM every Sunday in February at 9 pm.

**Feb. 1—*Inside the Volcano***—A portrait of El Salvador, where seven years of civil war have taken the lives of 50,000 civilians.

**Feb. 8—*North of the Border***—The refugees' struggle to adapt to a new society—while preserving their traditions and avoiding deportation—is described in this program.

**Feb. 15—*In Search of Asylum***—Although the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 offers asylum to those who prove a "well-founded fear of persecution," the immigration courts deny asylum to 97% of the Salvadorans who apply. The vast majority of Salvadorans in the U.S. are here illegally rather than applying for asylum and risking deportation. The problem of their status as unrecognized refugees is the subject of this program.

**Feb. 22—*Sanctuary***—This final program chronicles a controversial movement in the United States which has arisen in response to this problem. In defiance of federal law, Americans have opened their churches, communities, and homes to Salvadorans in exile whom the U.S. Government refuses to recognize as refugees.

*Voices in Exile* provides a much-needed context for debating the issues of illegal immigration, the war in El Salvador, and civil disobedience. KLCC and National Public Radio are proud to facilitate a more informed national discussion on these issues.

If you like What's Happening,  
support our advertisers!

# Valentine's Day project visits nursing homes

Christmas Day visits to area nursing homes brought so much joy to so many people that the Eugene-Springfield Holiday Project is organizing Valentine's Day visits to people who are confined. Everyone of all ages is invited. Gather first at 12:30 pm on Saturday, Feb. 14 at the Celeste Campbell Senior Center, located at 155 High Street near Skinner Butte Park. More information is available by calling 344-1112.

The Holiday Project was established about 10 years ago when a group of friends decided they wanted to share the real joy of Christmas by visiting a hospital. They were so touched by the experience that they did it again the following year with more people participating. It has since grown into a thriving network of groups in many cities. Because ongoing contact with others is so important to nursing home residents, local Project leaders have decided this year to expand visits beyond the traditional Christmas and Easter.

Participants will divide into groups according to which one or two facilities they wish to visit. They will car-pool to the facilities, often bringing

holiday cards made by local school children. (Cards are provided.) Visitors should allow about three hours including travel time (12:30-3:30 pm). Debriefing after the visits is encouraged.

# Chinese New Year at Jade Island

Josephine and Bill Tom of Tom's Jade Island Restaurant are pleased to announce that they will share the Chinese New Year with their friends and customers by serving a special traditional Chinese New Year dinner on January 29 and 30. The foods will be selected for American tastes and will include such exotic traditional New Year food as shark fin soup and sweet red bean cake. These traditional foods have symbolic meaning in wishing different aspects of a good new year to those who eat them.

Tom's Jade Island Restaurant specializes in reasonably priced authentic Szechuan and Cantonese food and is located at 325 Blair Blvd. in Eugene. The restaurant is open for both lunch and dinner seven days a week.

Reservations are recommended for the New Year dinner.



- Quality women's resale clothing & accessories
- Consignments by appointment

941 Pearl St.  
11-5:30 Mon.-Sat.  
485-6631

What's Happening  
Office Hours  
Monday-Friday  
9-4

# What's HAPPENING

Guide to Local Arts,  
Entertainment and Events

Published Every Thursday

**Publishers**  
Elisabeth Lyman  
Lucia McKelvey  
Sonja Ungemach

**Editor/Business Manager**  
Lucia McKelvey

**Editor/Advertising Manager**  
Elisabeth Lyman

**Editor/Production Manager**  
Sonja Ungemach

**Office Manager/Production**  
Sheri Longobardo

**Cover Design**  
Melanie Pratt

**Advertising Representatives**  
Susan Brokaw  
Ken Hof  
Martha Wagner  
Garde Wells

**Contributing Writers**  
Deborah McGee  
Jim Stieh  
Michael Susman  
Lois Wadsworth  
Martha Wagner

**Proofreader**  
Deborah McGee

**Photographer**  
David Stein

**Distribution**  
Daybreak News Co.

**Typesetting**  
ProtoType

**Camera Work**  
Graphics Unlimited

**Printing**  
Springfield News

335 West 20th Avenue  
Eugene, Oregon 97405  
(503) 484-0519

Copyright 1986 What's Happening.  
All rights reserved.

**CHILDREN'S**  
★ soft star shoes ★

handmade leather shoes  
soft & flexible  
sizes 1-12 or custom made  
choice of crepe or leather soles  
six colors available, 4 styles

\$11.00 to \$28.00 • fast service

Call or Send for Free Brochure  
P.O. Box 1629, Wimberley, TX 78676 (512) 847-3931

FUTONS  
FUN  
HOME  
FURNISHINGS



► 11-7 M-F, 11-6 SAT.  
339 E. 11TH

**GOING  
OUT OF  
BUSINESS**

Further reduction  
on all  
merchandise.

Doors must close  
Saturday,  
Jan. 31st,  
6 pm