

"We noticed a definite need for a paper like *What's Happening*," said Ungemach, the production manager, who today shares the title of publisher with Lyman and McKelvey. "The *Willamette Valley Observer* had folded, and a lot of the events and activities that were important to people in Eugene just weren't getting the coverage they deserved. We had an intuitive feeling a paper like ours would be supported."

Supported it was, but neither as a replacement to the muckraking *Observer* or as a foil to the staid *Register-Guard*. The editors at *What's Happening* instead wrapped an eclectic assortment of news around an in-depth calendar of events for Lane County. Avoiding the country club circuit, *What's Happening* reporters filed articles from poetry readings, theaters, country fairs, art shows, running trails and even a jump plane high over a local skydiving drop zone. News events buried by other papers found new life—and interested readers—in the galleries of *What's Happening*.

The eight pages grew to 12, then 16, then 20, and sometimes 24. From copies stacked on the counters at a handful of *What's Happening* advertisers, the distribution network blossomed to over 200 newsstands and locations around Eugene. Distributors in Corvallis and Florence called for copies, and the presses were soon running 18,000 copies on a regular basis.

The format diversified to include food, travel, sports, fitness and even investigative reporting on local issues.

"It's incredible," reflected Charles Swift, the former retail ad manager of the *Register Guard* who now publishes a Eugene-based aviation publication. "The paper has what every publisher wants but few have—a base of small space advertising that works so well for the businesses who advertise that it gives the paper a life of its own. They're not dependent on one or two big advertisers who might want to control the popstand, so if they step on a few toes, who cares? Obviously, the readers love it."

The format that drew both readers and advertisers gave many small businesses in Eugene their first effective vehicle for promotion. Small bookstores, bike shops, art studios, natural food stores, health clinics and therapists with slim ad budgets found that the small-space stands out in *What's Happening*. With backgrounds in public service, competition bike racing, dance, mountaineering and art, the small handful of sales people at *What's Happening* seem cut from a different cloth, too. Delivering last-minute proof changes by bike to an advertiser in a 10 pm meeting at Sy's Pizza, Garde Wells typifies the elevated level of personal service that Lyman's staff is known for.

Comments like "affordable and effective" and "it's what works best" are echoed by advertisers, many who have been with the paper since its first issue.

"It's the only advertising we do," said Joel Donohue, owner of downtown's Argus Fine Arts Gallery.

Rick Lawler, owner of Noteworthy, credited the "handsomely-styled format" and a concise and interesting package of news for readership of his ads.

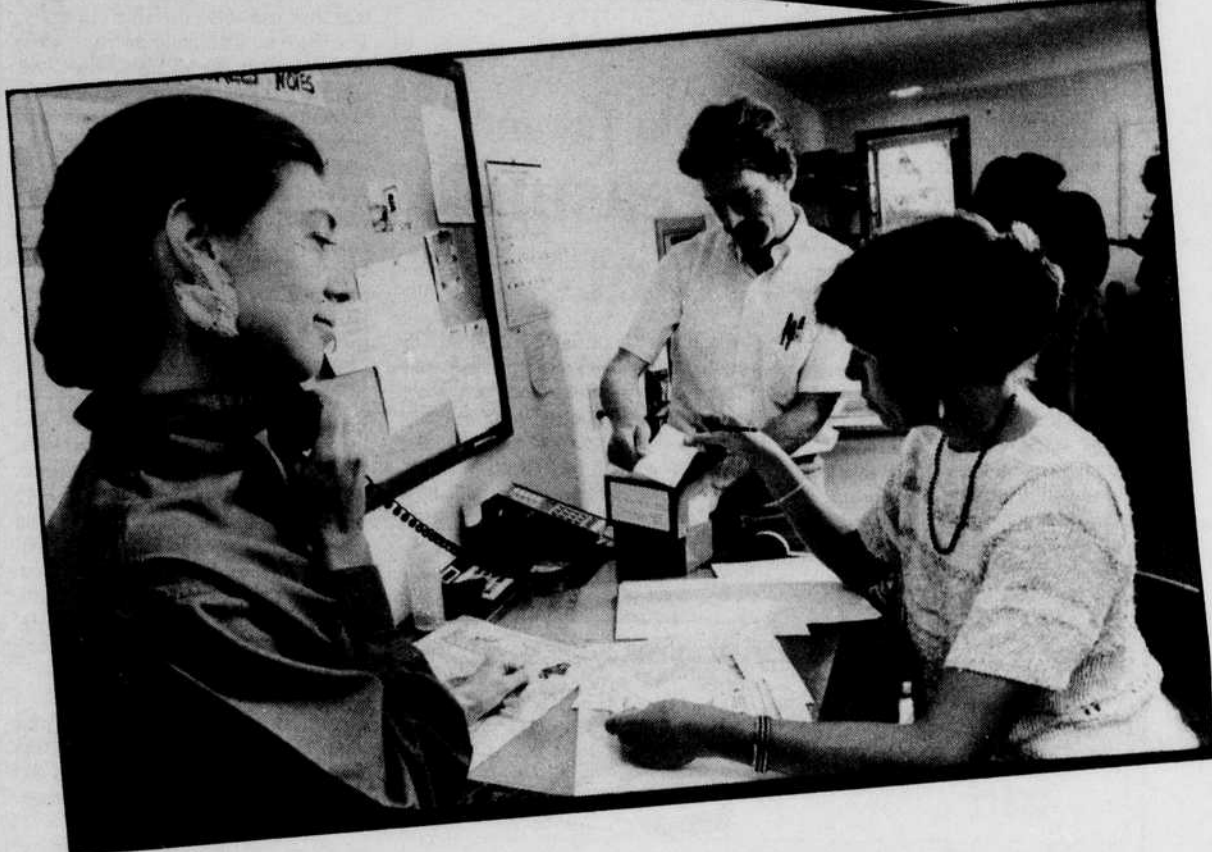
"The ads receive a high level of exposure to a market which is highly responsive and supportive of *What's Happening* advertisers," he noted with a successful businessman's eye for demographics.

The paper emerges each week from a two-story officehouse at 335 W. 20th, now home to a fulltime staff of seven and a half-dozen people in key part-time roles from typesetting to delivery. Jobs are typically shared there, as when office manager Sheri Longobardo switches to the design and layout department on Tuesday.

The house is surrounded by tall trees, a lattice of grapes and raised beds of organic gardens, a far cry from the imposing office structures of larger publishing empires. Here, the aroma of herbal tea wafts on a breeze by an open window while Joan Baez or some rock 'n roll provides relief from a world of Corporate Muzak. More cozy than cramped, editors and ad people rub shoulders, jockey for position at the copier or layout table, take phone calls and bid for computer time in a bustle of activity that peaks each Wednesday when pages are readied for the camera and offset presses in Springfield. There's hardly time to reflect on the past five years when the publishers are preparing for the next five.

"The paper has changed all of us to some degree," said Ungemach, who once lived on a commune in northern California with Lyman and McKelvey. "I've become a lot more aware of the needs and problems of small businesses, because now we are one."

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