

# Flooded waterbed market leaves doubters all wet

By STEVE DODGE  
Of the Emerald

**News item:** Man attempts to crush unconscious wife under filling waterbed. Wife wakes up, man goes to jail.

**News item:** Woman is thrown out of waterbed by wave. Bed flips on top of her. Fire department is summoned.

Despite isolated incidents and persisting myths about waterbeds, the industry reported \$300 million in sales in 1978, and at least locally, sales haven't sprung a leak.

"The industry has been looked upon as a fad for the last two years," says Rick Coccelletto, who along with brothers Reed and Don, owns Eugene's oldest waterbed outlet, Mellow Brothers.

But the "fad" has gained momentum every year of the company's six-year existence, Coccelletto says. This year, Mellow Brothers turned six figures worth of sales as part of a Northwest boom.

In fact, waterbeds have done so well of late that they're even being offered by department and furniture stores.

But the industry in Eugene hasn't been without casualties. The likes of Make Waves, The Bedroom, The Waterworks, Northwest Woodworks and The Waterbed Shop have gone under in the last two years.

Still, the survivors are happy with the current situation.

Coccelletto says the Mellow Brothers are doing "real great. It's a phenomenal business."

He says the industry is "constantly growing" here, although the major portion of sales still occur in California where waterbeds first emerged in the late 1960s for home use.

Waterbeds were first used in hospitals for back patients. Sacred Heart General Hospital reports waterbeds in use in their neo-natal intensive care unit for premature babies and babies with respiratory problems. They also use waterbeds for burn patients and for long-term patients to prevent bed sores.

However, says Coccelletto, floatation sleep shows up as far back as the 7th century, when folks filled goat skins with water.

That's probably about the time the myths began.

Coccelletto answers the most prevalent myth, "If built to code any building will withstand the weight."

A king size waterbed holds anywhere from 200 to 300 gallons of water and weighs from 18,000 to 22,000 pounds. The weight, however, is dispersed over the width of the bed (often seven feet square) and amounts to about 48 pounds of pressure per square inch.

That's less than a refrigerator weighs, according to one local store manager. A pamphlet handed out by Mellow Brothers relates the weight to that of eight full-grown men.

Coccelletto says the Eugene Hotel has waterbeds on its second floor, and the Patterson Tower has them as far up as the eighth floor.

But for those skeptics — especially land owners — who fear plummeting blobs of plastic and tidal waves, a San Jose, Calif., insurance firm offers waterbed insurance at \$25 a year for up to \$100,000 worth of coverage for such calamities as well as lesser ones including leakage.

"Ruptures very rarely occur," says Coccelletto, who has pictures of a diesel truck parked on a bed to demonstrate.

"The problems waterbeds had with infancy," says Stan Tzkas of Eugene's New Waves waterbeds, "are all but eliminated."

All merchants agreed that today's lap seams (double seams and corner reinforcements) are superior to the old "butt" seams that the industry used at one time.

The industry also has attempted to deal with the misconception that you can get seasick on a waterbed — with a relatively new mattress that has built-in "baffles"

(Continued on Page 11A)



Graphic by Joe Sacco

## Waterbed price listings

**Waterbed Factory, Springfield**  
Basic package: \$189. Includes lap seam mattress, liner, heater.  
Same items separately: lap seam mattress \$49.95, liner \$9.95, heater \$49.95, frame (finished) \$119, frame (unfinished) \$110.

Warranty: five years for mattress 13 years for heater.  
Baffle system: alone \$149.95, with any package, \$90 extra.  
Air Float: alone \$89.95, with package \$40 extra.

(Continued on Page 11A)

## Measure causes biting controversy

Oregon's battle of the palate has turned into a confusing fight between "capitalist dentists" and "illiterate" technicians.

So, depending on whom you talk to, Ballot Measure 5, which would license denture technicians to fit the dental aids, is either a boon to patients with big dental problems and small pocket books, or a chance to take another swipe at already down-trodden consumers.

"Freedom to choose is the gut question," says Ron Wyden, co-head of the Gray Panthers. "It is the beginning of some in-roads into health care monopolies," he adds. He sees new choices opening for the public.

"It's an attempt by the consumer to jimmy open the door, and it's scaring the dentists," Wyden says.

"Denturists aren't even required to be high school graduates — or to be able to read and write," says Ken Rinke, director of the No on 5 Committee.

State groups opposed to the measure, according to Rinke, are the Oregon Dental Assn., Medical Assn., Optometric Assn., Nurses Assn., Pharmaceutical Assn., Assn. of Dental Laboratories, Blue Cross and Oregon Physician.

Advocates of the measure say the price of dentures would be greatly reduced because dental labs could fit and sell dentures directly to the public.

"The measure would reduce the cost of dentures to half-price," says Wyden, "to about \$300 or less."

"If the denture doesn't fit well, it's not worth getting free," Rinke says. "Mr. Wyden doesn't know what he's talking about."

Under current Oregon law, only licensed dentists may take impressions of the human mouth to make, fit or repair dentures. A dentist must supervise any denture work by dental technicians.

If Ballot Measure 5 passes on Nov. 7, denture technicians would be licensed as denturists and do this work without the supervision of a dentist.

Those opposing the measure claim the proposed denturists are not properly trained or qualified to assume this responsibility.

Opponents say that since dentist supervision is not required, there's a danger of disease and bad fitting.

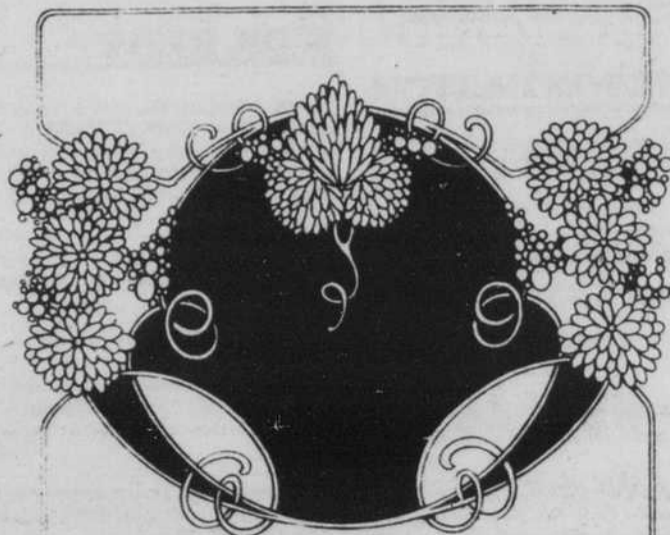
Two years of formal training and at least two years of practical experience would be needed to become a denturist, or, prior to July 1, 1982, a person would need at

least six years of practical experience in making dentures and pass a six-month approved training course.

To become licensed, a person must then pass a Health Division test. The division would give, refuse, suspend or revoke a denturist's license, and would also hear complaints against denturists.

Before working on a patient, the denturist would also need a dentist's or doctor's written statement that the mouth was free from disease and that the patient could be fit for dentures.

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## What would Socrates think of O'Keefe?

If you question long enough and deep enough, certain truths about O'Keefe become evident. It has a hearty, full-bodied flavor. It is smooth and easy going down. And, the quality of its head is fact rather than philosophical conjecture. We think there's one truth about O'Keefe that Socrates would not question: *It's too good to gulp.* As any rational man can taste.



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