

A 'typical Eugenean' eludes final definition

By OSCAR HALPERT
Of the Emerald

Before I left my hometown for Eugene a few years ago, friends had told more than one story about the city's curious residents — the Eugeneans.

"Watch out," a friend warned. "They'll make you into a radical leftist and force you to recite strange poetry."

Yet, others warned of Eugene's conservative, reactionary climate.

Two years in this city and they're (we're) still a little hard to categorize. Walking through the downtown mall recently, I got some interesting perspectives from a few local and not-so-local residents.

"The typical Eugenean is totally out of fashion and unaware of other states," said one of two teenage girls in tennis shoes. When asked to describe what a typical Eugenean looks like, she replied, "Natural."

A hurried-looking man in grey suit and glasses described the typical Eugenean as "narrow-minded and parochial."

Some interesting responses came from two recently transplanted Oregonians.

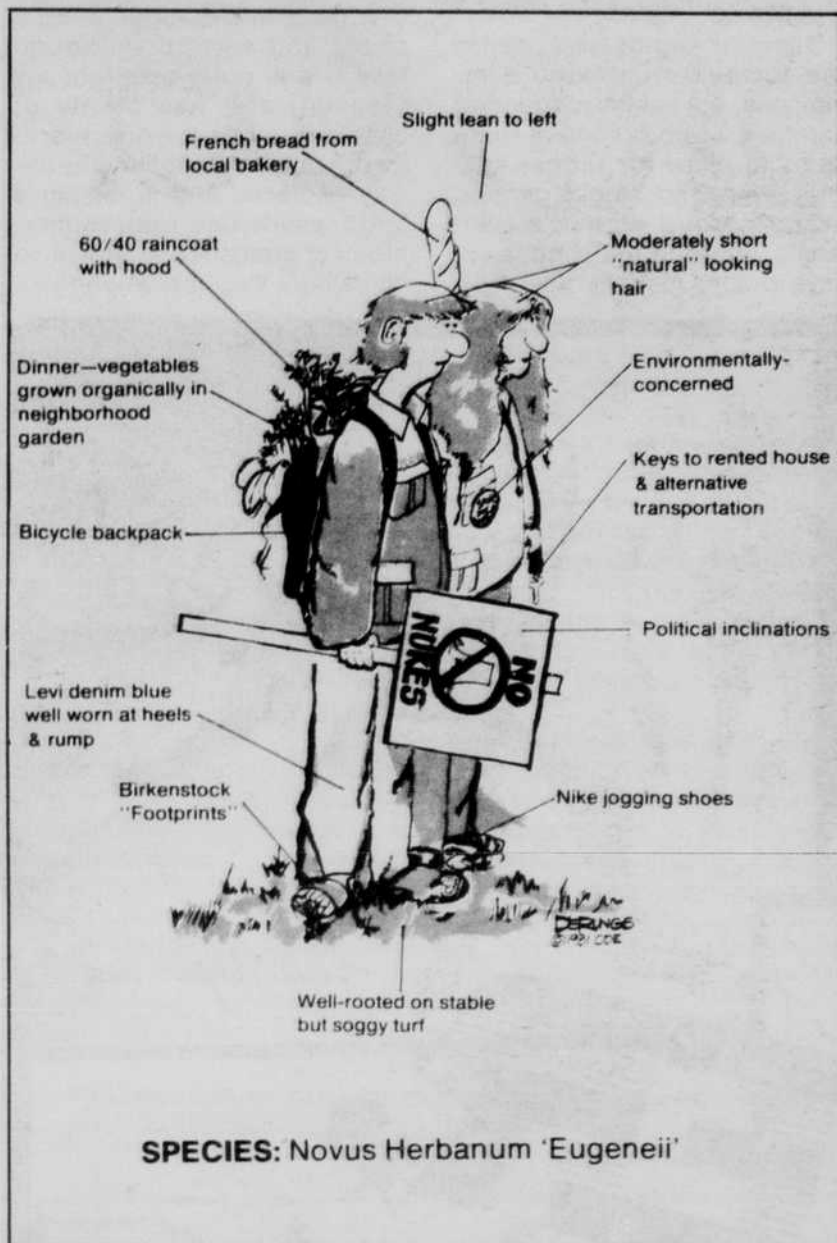
"They're warm-hearted here, more than back east," said a girl from Vermont.

"What exists here is a squirming mixture of distinct social groups," said a sandwich vendor originally from Ithica, N.Y.

"First, you have a huge hippie population," he said. "Then, a bunch of imported easterners, backwoods natives and a large, affluent and boring middle class."

One woman said she felt Eugeneans were a little too self-centered.

"They're a little bit self-right-



SPECIES: Novus Herbanum 'Eugeneii'

eous. But they're nice people, outgoing. Most are common looking and there's way too many hippies," she said.

Still others described the typical Eugenean as "sheltered" and "sitting in their own little environment."

I sat down next to an older lady — my mind wandering back to those warnings from my

friends — and asked her to describe the typical Eugenean.

She looked up from the magazine she was reading, pushed her glasses up and paused a moment.

"Open-minded, tolerant, environmentally concerned, anti-big city," she said. She paused again, then added, "maybe a little bit elitist."

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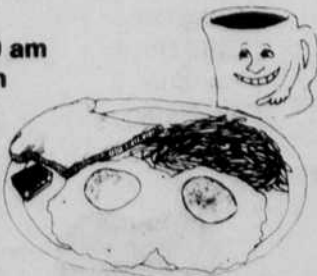
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