

# Springfield

## The 'other' city

By Harry Esteve  
Of the Emerald

Springfield: The bike paths end there. None of the shoestores sell Birkenstocks.

From a Eugene perspective, it's simply an ugly appendage, desecrating the east end of a hallowed city.

Its most impressive building is the public library; the classiest restaurant serves barbecued beef.

Until recently, Springfield was one of the fastest growing cities in Oregon. People seemed to like its quiet, shaded streets, its hick-town atmosphere and its low-priced property. That's when the mills were open and people were working.

Now Springfield seems to be shrinking. As the mills close one after another, parts of the city are being abandoned. In some neighborhoods, every other house displays either a "For Rent" or "For Sale" sign. Some of the signs have been up for an entire year. Few new houses are being built.

Yards that once were carefully maintained have grown into weed wildernesses, tangled

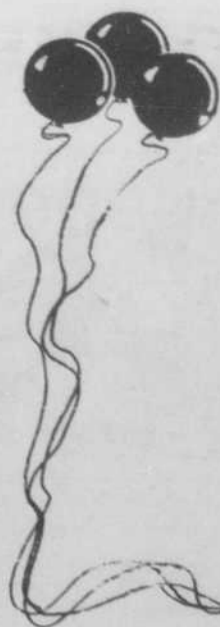
with blackberry brambles. Peeling paint, tumble-down fences and wizened rose bushes give some parts of the town an eery feeling of neglect — not just by the people who have given up and left, but also by the people who have given up — and stayed.

These are mostly young couples with small children. With the mills shut down, they rely on food stamps, welfare or low-paying part-time jobs. They cling to the low rent districts of Springfield, where two-bedroom houses go for under \$200 a month.

They spend their food stamps at corner convenience stores, buying eight-packs of Coca Cola, using the change for cartons of cigarettes. Their children trade dollar stamps for handfuls of candy and giggle with brown smiles.

There is, of course, another side to Springfield. Some families have been lucky enough to hold onto their jobs. Most live in modest houses in one of several residential neighborhoods tucked to the

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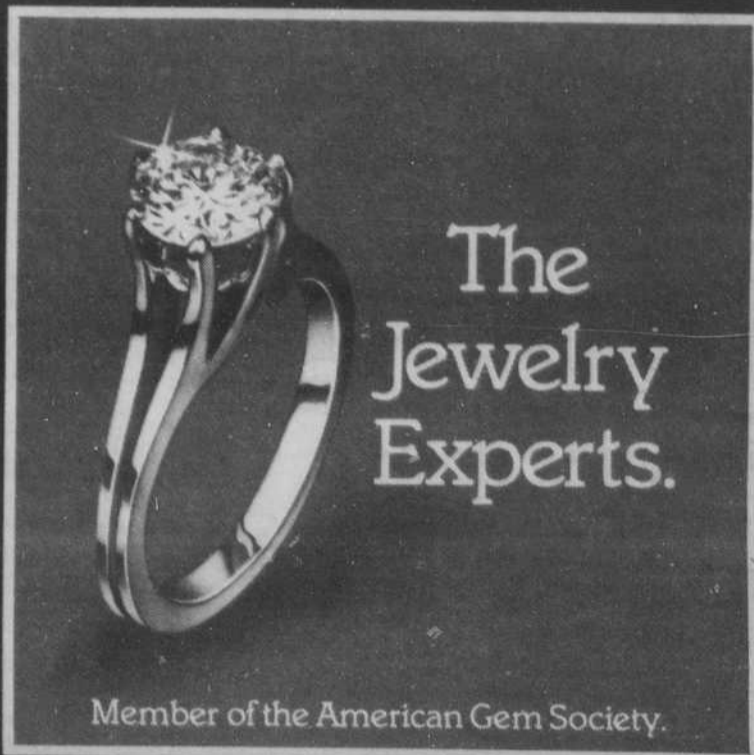


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