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Cruising on eight wheels

Skating can be exercise, transportation, fun even

By Frank Shaw

Joggers puff along the bike paths, sweat dripping from their pores and pain written all over their faces. Suddenly, without a sound, a figure sweeps past on roller skates, moving at twice the jogger's speed and exhibiting no pain, no sweat.

It could be you.

Roller skating offers an alternative to other methods of travel and exercise. No longer is sweat and pain a prerequisite for getting from the footbridge to Valley River Center.

Dave Cole, owner of United Skates, Eugene's only skate rental shop, says skating is "really good exercise."

"There's no trauma on the muscles and joints," Cole says, "it's not like jogging."

And for some, there's another advantage.

Skating can be fun. The exercise gets lost in the pleasure of rolling silently along on eight smooth wheels that will carry you happily over surfaces ranging from smooth concrete to bumpy asphalt.

"It's really not that hard to do at all," Cole says. After a couple hours even non-skaters feel pretty comfortable rolling along, he says.

But don't let the fun fool you into thinking that's what skating is all about. With a little effort, skates can be an effective form of travel through the city.

Most shops are a bit hesitant about allowing skaters to careen through the aisles of their stores, but a little planning solves that problem. Grab a backpack, heave a pair of shoes in and take off. When you reach your destination, pull up a seat and switch into some more normal footwear.

Or for a more original trip, pack up a picnic basket, grab a partner, some wheels and head out. Try carrying a picnic basket and jogging sometime.

Cole's shop, located on the corners of 13th Avenue and Lincoln Street, provides rental skates and also sells skates. He estimates prices range from \$90 for tennis shoe skates to \$170 for some of the best skates. His average skates run from between \$115 to \$140, he says.

For people who aren't ready to make that big a monetary commitment, Cole rents skates

at a variety of rates. The standard hourly rate is \$1.50 an hour, \$5.50 for the day and a \$4 fee for overnight use.

But don't think because you were a whiz on your "Roller Derby Strap-on Skates" as a kid you can be a superstar of the skateways.

Cement is every bit as hard as it looks — as many a skater has discovered. Here are some tips that might help avoid demolition derby action.

• Wear long pants and safety equipment.

So knee pads and wrist pads aren't exactly designer apparel. But given the choice between leaving pieces of skin from your knees and palms on the bike path and looking a bit like something from roller derby, the safe choice is clear. Wear the pads.

• Be wary of hills.

Sure, the idea of steaming down a hill full speed seems attractive. But bear in mind that skates don't have air brakes and are impossible to step out of. Once you start down the hill, you're committed. And to make things even more interesting, skates often develop a high-speed shake as speed increases.

The best way to stop is to balance on one skate and drag the toe stop of the other one. While this sounds easy, it tends to upset the balance. Cole recommends skaters go to one of the foot-

bridges and practice coasting down the gentle slopes. This way the side of the bridge is there to grab if problems develop.

• Use caution while skating on streets.

Drivers have a disturbing habit of just not noticing skaters. This produces some awkward moments, not to mention contusions, abrasions and dented doors. To make things even more interesting, the sidewalk is nowhere near as smooth as it looks.

Every crack can make it's presence known in a hurry. Traffic lights have the nerve to change from green to red at the worst moment, causing some dramatic stops. And curbs sometimes present major obstacles.

But with all its potential pitfalls and hazards, skating can still be one of the more enjoyable ways to while away a summer afternoon.

Suddenly, soundlessly, a figure sweeps past on roller skates, moving at twice the jogger's speed and exhibiting no pain, no sweat.

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The new rule applies only to cash register sales and requires the presentation of pro-

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Professors, who tend to make many personal purchases, will probably benefit the most from the change, in the opinion of Thom Chambliss, manager.

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