

THINGS TO DO

Eugene offers entertaining variety on a student's budget

One soon learns on a student's budget how to amuse oneself on little or no cash.

By Lorraine Rath

Years of Top Ramen destitution have yielded quite a list of entertaining pastimes. All you

need is an open mind and perhaps a cynic's eye, and the diversity of Eugene will provide all the entertainment you need.

One thing a newcomer might notice is that this city is home to an amazing array of, shall we say "odd" individuals. But the shock wears off and what's left is a motherlode of entertainment. Take our world-famous transients, for example.

Eugene's street people can provide varying levels of amusement, depending on how much you're willing to spend. A buck still goes a long way; a life story perhaps, or some exclusive tidbit of advice or information. Ninety-three cents once got me a warning that new hearing aid devices were transmitters for Soviet subliminal messages. An informational bargain, I'd say.

Quarters are OK. Three of them gets you a "thanks" and a compliment, such as "hey, love those shoes," or "you're as pretty as my sister." (The latter may not be so flattering, depending on the vagrant.)

A warning, however, to those offering smaller increments — don't. Dimes and nickels will land you only a disgusted grunt which translates quickly into: "cheap son of a ----!" And pennies? Oh boy. An outright insult to their profession. Anyone presenting copper oughta darn well know how to dodge a can of Western Family steamed tomatoes. Street people have

amazingly good aim. Just ask me about the knot on my temple sometime.

Now drugs aren't exactly an inexpensive form of entertainment, however drug addicts in Eugene can be. The game here is "Name that hallucinogen," and it doesn't cost the observer a dime. That man outside of Taylor's, is he on mushrooms, or a quaalude derivative? You be the judge.

Categorization usually is determined by what part of the body the addict addresses while talking to himself. The details here will be spard but one gets quite proficient at detection. Scoring is based on the point system, with bonuses for identifying multiple drug usage.

Now on the other end of the spectrum, we have those ultra-health conscious nutrition technicians (or more aptly know in some circles as "granola crunchers") who abhor preservative and consider irregularity to be a dirty word.

Unfortunately, the members of this group are passive, slow-

moving types and not real exciting to look at. The entertainment here is to be found in the places they frequent. Have you ever been to a Eugene health food store? They're everywhere in this town, while the Hostess delivery-truck driver is as lonely as the Maytag repairman. The real earthy stores carry organic substances I wouldn't shovel, let alone package. Rare strains of protein-infested fungi are definitely more amusing to look at than the people who ingest them.

My version of "Let's Make a Deal" becomes "Let's Make a Meal." Instead of guessing what's behind bin number one, you make a stab at what's in it. What fun. But please be warned. The last biochemistry grad to walk into a campus-area health food place had to be carried out on a Depend undergarment. Now that's entertainment!

The list of people-watching prospects goes on, as does the forms of entertainment they provide. So even on a student's budget there is never a shortage of cheap entertainment. But there is something to keep in mind while the other members of the colorful community are keeping you amused. You as a member of one particular group or another are providing a bit of entertainment for someone. That's what keeps Eugene so wonderfully interesting. Recognition and appreciation of variety — indeed the spice of life.

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