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Eugene: just your average hippie, logger, liberal, conservative town

By Alice Wheeler
Emerald Editor

Trying to find the right words to describe Eugene is not an easy task. It is a town unique unto itself.

The population here has continued to grow over the past few years, primarily because of Californians moving north. It is hot and dry for two months in the summer and wet then wetter the rest of the year.

But Eugenians don't seem to notice the rain much. They are usually too busy with the complexities of life. Issues such as the reopening of Willamette Street, maintaining a nuclear free zone status, attracting big business to the area, caring for homeless families, bringing the life back to the downtown area, funding education and paying property taxes (just to name a few issues) keep people busy.

One of the biggest concerns facing the Northwest is its dwindling timber supply and the incredible effect the timber

harvests have had on the environment.

The University and the timber industry are two of the biggest employers in Eugene. Unfortunately for timber industry workers these statistics might soon be changing. Weyerhaeuser, a wood products company, has recently made some large employee cuts. The wood product industry claims the cuts are due to the amount of land that is being set aside to protect the environment, in particular the spotted owl.

Environmentalists claim that the timber industry has cut too much too fast, and in the process has destroyed much of what remains of the ancient forests. After a long battle, the spotted owl was finally declared a threatened species and sections of forests have been set aside for its habitat.

The battle is not over and may never be, as Oregon's oldest industry struggles to survive, and citizens become activists over brutal-looking

clear-cuts surrounding the valley.

The best way to understand the idiosyncrasies of the town is to check it out for yourself. If you want to see what a clear-cut looks like, drive out to Cougar Reservoir and look at the hills surrounding you. If you want to know about the homeless problems, stop by the Eugene Mission, 1542 W. First Ave. If you want to understand the complexities of the downtown mall and Willamette Street spend an afternoon window shopping on the mall.

Exploring it for yourself is the best way to get to know the town, because no brochure, catalog or newspaper can truly capture the essence of Eugene.

It is the farmers, the loggers, the business people, the students, the store owners, the radicals, the conservatives, who make up the essence of Eugene. Despite the differing ideas and lifestyles they live together and make Eugene a great place to live.

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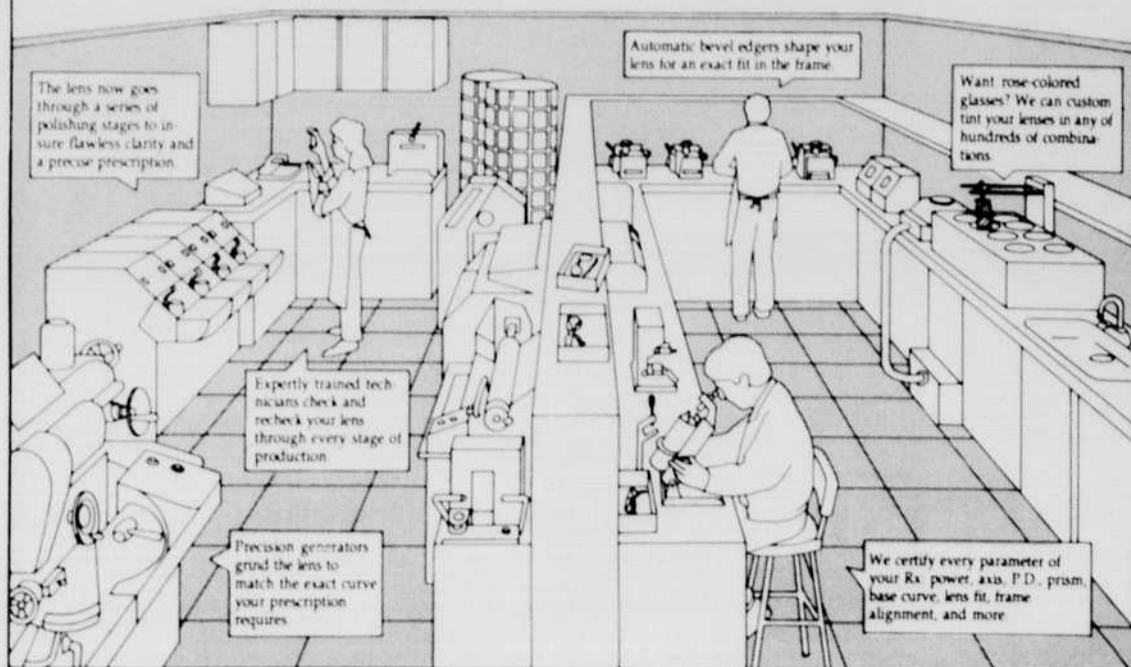
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