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## Rummaging

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"I get a (social security) check every month," he said. "This is just something to do."

By walking or biking to bins, trash cans and Dumpsters all over town, Tommy said he gets pretty good exercise and even puts an extra effort into cleaning up the trash other rummagers have spread all over the area.

California-born rummager Hallis, 37, said careless divers can hurt Dumpster accessibility for others.

"When people put trespassing signs on Dumpsters, that's pretty sad," he said.

Hallis, who only gave his nickname, has rummaged throughout Eugene for more than 12 years. He said the sloppy rummagers and divers give the game a bad name.

"People think we're just bums," he said, shaking his stringy head of hair. "Getting cans from all over town is actually a workout."

Hallis said the suffering economy has inspired more Eugeneans to rummage and dive, which has caused him to venture out less.

"Today, if I were to try really hard, I might make \$3 or \$6," he said, "but back in the '90s, I got an average of \$60 a day."

When he isn't using his recycling money to buy rolling papers, tobacco

and 59-cent hamburgers, Hallis said he enjoys getting an occasional beer but has left the harder stuff behind him.

"When I had a dope habit, I was rummaging a lot more, and I would lie and tell people it was for beer," he said. "Nowadays it's a lot rougher because other people are in Dumpsters around the clock — even at three in the morning."

Towering 29-year-old Monster, as he is nicknamed, said he has been rummaging consistently in Eugene for about a year. Monster said he rummages all over the city for money to buy food, cigarettes, beer and marijuana when he can.

"The secondary effect, of course, is lightening the load for trash carriers," he said.

Between ramblings, Monster said he recently felt offended by the snobbish looks and remarks of those who judge him by his appearance. Wearing a short, white bathrobe, dirty basketball socks and shorts, and a faded T-shirt and a hat, he said he isn't out to impress anybody but doesn't appreciate disrespect.

"I am a kid," he said. "But I won't take people talking to me with a stuck-up attitude."

Not all can collectors encountered by students appear to have problems making ends meet.

A couple of months ago, University junior Maggie Thompson stepped out on her apartment porch late one evening to find a well-dressed, 30-something man filtering through the recycling bin by her front door.

When Thompson asked if he knew she returned the cans and bottles for money, he politely told her he was fundraising for his church group and figured she put them out to be collected.

"I really don't think he was homeless," she said. "And he smelled good, even though he was wearing too much cologne."

What struck Thompson as odd about the man was the time of the supposed church collection — about 1 a.m. — so she told him to take the

cans and bottles but asked him to avoid rummaging by residences so late in the evening.

"I felt rude," she said, "but it's scary to hear people outside my house at night."

Thompson — who didn't want to speculate about what is bought with money obtained by can rummagers and Dumpster divers — said she no longer leaves her empty bottles on her front porch.

"I don't care if (collectors) take them," she said. "But now I put them by the Dumpster so that they don't come up on my property."

From the perspective of local authorities, can rummaging and Dumpster diving are in no way discouraged until police receive trespassing or vandalism complaints from business or property owners.

"It's not like an officer will stop and cite someone engaging in these activities," Eugene Police Department Lt. Rich Stronach said. "But (rummagers) should be mindful of trespassing signs and refrain from trashing the place."

After interacting with compliant rummagers and divers for more than 20 years, Stronach said the best way for them to avoid complaints is to ask permission before collecting. But according to grocery stores in the University area, the activity isn't a huge problem in the first place.

As a recycling center and casual hang-out for local rummagers and divers, Safeway, located at 145 E. 18th Ave., has an in-house trash compactor that eliminates the possibility of collector trespassing and vandalism. Although the assistant manager at PC Market of Choice, located at 1960 Franklin Blvd., has encountered divers in unlocked store Dumpsters, he said he asks them to get out of the containers for safety reasons and rarely calls EPD to complain.

"We really don't have a problem with it," he said.

Contact the reporter at caronalarab@dailyemerald.com.

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