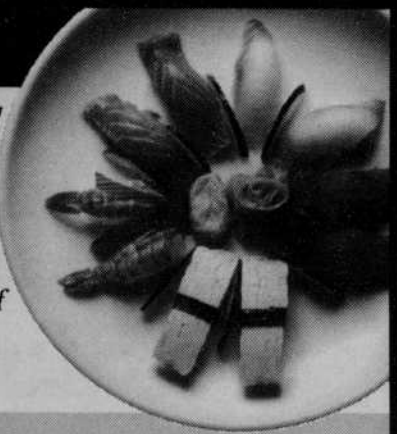


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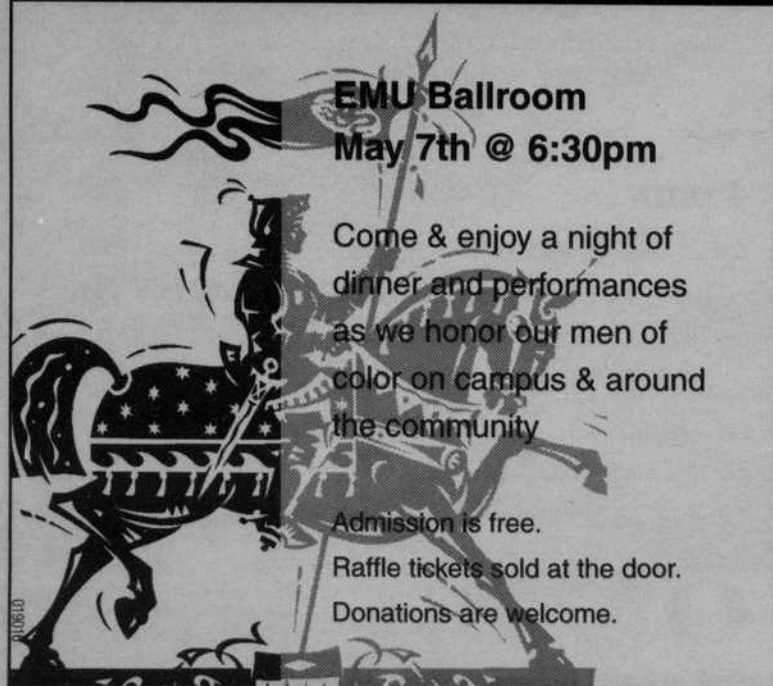
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Local bookstore celebrates fine art of competitive poetry

Foolscap Books will send
Eugene's best slam poets
to the national tournament

By Carl Sundberg
Pulse Columnist

Tucked away between a Mexican restaurant and a wig shop on Blair Boulevard lies a quaint independent bookshop called Foolscap Books. The shelves are lined with an assortment of used and rare books about astrology, politics, history, poetry and a plethora of other topics. In the center of the store is a large L-shaped couch and coffee table. On the windows, among the flyers for upcoming events, are signs stating "Liquidation Sale."

After five years of struggling sales, owner Marietta Bonaventure has decided to close the store on May 15 and convert to an online-only sales model.

"It's become really clear that most of my business is online sales," she said. "I basically worked six days a week for five years without really making a paycheck."

During this time, Foolscap Books evolved from a modest bookstore into a cultural hotspot. Bonaventure obtained a grant from the Lane Arts Council which allowed her to make Foolscap Books the first official venue for slam poetry competitions in

PART 1 OF 3

Today: An overview of the bookstore and its role in the formation of the slam poetry scene.

May 13: An in-depth preview of the final slam competition to determine this year's Eugene slam and a look at the future of slam in Eugene.

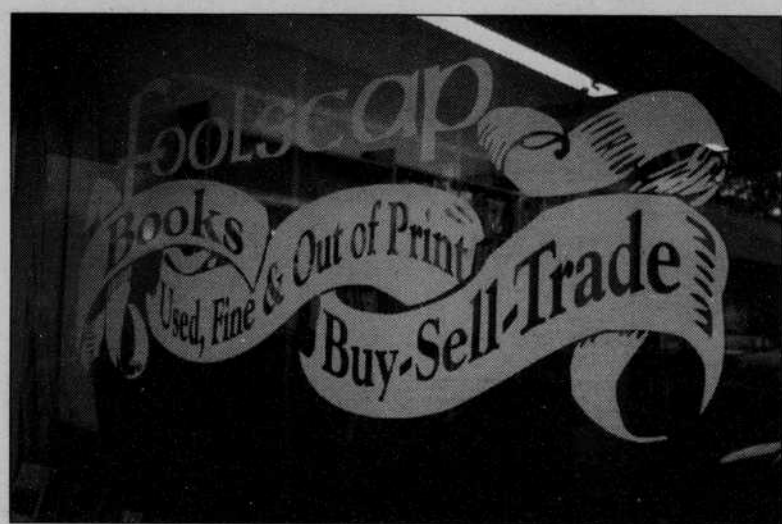
May 20: A reporter's notebook looking back on the finals and what went down, interviews with the winners and more tales of madness.

Eugene. The bookstore is registered with Poetry Slam Incorporated, the national nonprofit organization in charge of overseeing the growth and maintenance of slam poetry on both local and national levels.

"It's been really, really gratifying the kind of things that I've been able to do, like the cultural events, especially the slam," Bonaventure said. "If you had told me that I would be doing this five years ago when I opened the store, I wouldn't have believed it. The biggest thing I'm taking away from the bookstore is the Poetry Slam."

So, what is poetry slam?

"Simply put, poetry slam is the competitive art of performance poetry,"



Courtesy

Foolscap Books, birthplace of the Eugene slam poetry scene, is closing May 15.

according to <http://www.slampapi.com>, the Web site of Marc Kelly Smith. Smith, a construction worker from Chicago, created the form in the 1980s to reinvigorate poetry and make it accessible to anyone. It has been growing at a feverish pace since its creation.

"I think Marc Smith himself considers slam the biggest thing since Beat to hit the literary arts scene," Bonaventure said. "And I think that's true."

With an exponential audience growth rate and voracious public hunger for the art form, slam has blown up nationally and locally.

"Because of the traveling poets that Marietta has brought in, the reputation of Eugene has become one of the hottest reads in the country," said Nathan Langston, a Portland poet and member of last year's Eugene Slam team.

When the national slam competitions began in the late 1980s, there were only four national slam teams competing against each other. This year, there are 64.

Aside from the Beats, other equally important influences are hip-hop and stand-up comedy, along with regional and ethnic aspects, Bonaventure said. But one of the most important influences is the competition.

On a local level, several competitions take place throughout the year. These contests culminate in a final round, during which a smaller group of the year's best slam poets compete for a place on the slam team. This

slam team will compete in the national tournament in St. Louis on August 3 to 8.

Last year was the first year Eugene slam poets competed at the national level. The Eugene team — consisting of Martha Grover, Jahan Khalighi, Nathan Langston and Treysi — went to Chicago to compete against 63 other teams from across the nation.

With the aid of Bonaventure, the team raised funds and saved up enough money to compete against some of the top-rated slam poets in the country.

"It was crazy," said Khalighi. "I was somewhat blown away by their skills."

At the end of each night, the group slept in a friend's art gallery.

"Our first bout was against Nuyoric (Poets Café), which is where hip-hop was born," Bonaventure said. "We were in so much trouble — a first-year team up against the total granddaddies of hip-hop."

Nervous and unprepared, the Eugene team bombed. The second bout went better, when Eugene went up against the Chicago Green Mill and the Mesa, Ariz., teams, beating them both and taking first place. When the smoke cleared, Eugene came home in the middle of the national pack: 38th place overall, "which is great for a first-year team," Bonaventure said.

This year, a new Eugene team will head to St. Louis in August for the National Poetry Slam competition. The finalists will be determined May 15 at Foolscap Books in a competition and final party that will last throughout the night.

Contact the Pulse columnist
at carlsundberg@dailyemerald.com.

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205 Dorris St., Springfield
May 8—Wild Teas
10:30—NOON

Lane County

Historical Museum (\$)
740 W. 13th Avenue, Eugene
May 8—Photo Exhibit & Speaker
9AM-5PM; 2PM speaker
REFRESHMENTS 9AM-NOON
May 9—Photo Exhibit
NOON-5PM

Masonic Cemetery

25th Avenue & University Street,
Eugene
May 9—10th Anniversary
Celebration
11AM-4PM

The Science Factory

**Children's Museum
and Planetarium (\$)**
2300 Leo Harris Parkway, Eugene
May 8 & 9—Scavenger Hunt
NOON-4PM

**Shelton-McMurphy-
Johnson House**

303 Willamette Street, Eugene
May 8—Tea (\$)
(Reservations required)
May 9—Open House (FREE)
1-4PM

Springfield Museum

590 Main Street, Springfield
May 8—Heritage Day
NOON-4PM

UO Museum of Art

1430 Johnson
University Campus
May 8—Open House
1-4PM
Special Program @ 1PM

**UO Museum of
Natural History**

1680 East 15th Avenue
University Campus
May 8—Identification Day
1-4PM

West Eugene Wetlands

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May 8—Bird Walk
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