

E & J's Mos Faded Urban Barbershop

Everyone's a brother at E & J's Mos Faded.

On Jan. 15, 2003, Elijah opened his barbershop at 960 W. 7th Ave. in Eugene. It's a small two-chair, hole-in-the-wall that Elijah shares with barber and friend Jason Thompson, catering mainly to the black community. From Mos Faded Elijah runs a small clothing line and a hair care products company, and he lives in a modest apartment beneath the shop with his two sons and his girlfriend Merryll.

A white man running a black barbershop is a unique concept in a state known for timber and an unusually high number of churches per capita, and creation of such a shop in itself is a bold maneuver.

"He's the best guy I've seen, black or white," says UO tight end football player Tim Day, about the cuts coming out of Mos Faded. "It think it's great. In a place like Eugene, you don't usually find someone who can cut like we did back at home, like Las Vegas or California. You can't get the type of styles, a regular fade or shaping, blinding you up the way you want, but Eli's hip

' . . . you can come in and I can make you look like Brad Pitt, or if a black man comes in I can make him look like Denzel Washington.'

— JASON THOMPSON, E & J'S MOS FADED URBAN BARBERSHOP

to all the new cuts and everything. Most of the people out there, they don't know the type of cuts we like. I went in there, he already knew what I wanted."

Elijah greets everyone who walks into his shop better than you greet your own family. His forward, gregarious and coaxing manner makes the son that stands behind the father's legs step out from the shadows. He makes everyone feel like The Champ; posters of Ali fill the barbershop walls. And, interestingly enough, he makes the odd white client feel comfortable, out of his or her element, in the city's rare room where one might not understand the quickly slung and sometimes bigger-city colloquialisms.

UO athletes fill blanks in Elijah's appointment-book and plastic chairs while they wait, and coach Ernie Kent says, "where to get your hair cut comes up in recruiting and I'm happy to be able to tell athletes about Mos Faded."

"There's nothing like this in all of Oregon," says Jason Thompson, who'd been cutting hair in Portland without a license for about a decade, "just for the simple fact that a white guy and a black guy can come to the shop for an excellent cut by the same person. Usually you got just black men cutting black men's hair and white men cutting white men's hair, so it's always been kind of segregated. But you can come in and I can make you look like Brad Pitt, or if a black man comes in I can make him look like Denzel Washington."

Elijah talks to me while leaning over a black barber's chair, his concentrated eye watching closely as he slides clippers up the back of a young boy's head. The child's generously-sized father is poured over the armrests in the next chair over, talking loudly into a cell phone. He holds a palm over the mouthpiece of the phone for a moment and applauds the fade Eli's cut into the hair of his 8-year-old son. A large print of Elijah making a sick drop off Big Rock is blown up in the background.

"Boy . . . you is hooked up!" The Father hollers to his son.

That's Elijah living one of his childhood dreams vicariously, I smile. The child smiles too, smiles despite his best efforts to keep it cool. Too cool, in his plastic cape. Too cool, just like Elijah, covered in tattoos.

Elijah's cell phone buzzes from its resting place next to the medicine cabinet, under scissors and hanging clippers. He grabs for it the same way he grabs for the world, in one of many thousands of quick swipes, and turns back to the boy, "You want some pomade in that?"

"You know I do, brother," says the kid, in a voice suddenly aged with confidence and dignity, looking at his father who nods.

"You know I do."

CW

For more information about river surfing, E & J's Mos Faded Urban Barbershop, or just to contact Elijah to go river surfing, go to www.surfrivers.com, www.mosfaded.com or e-mail Elijah Mack at riversurf-prez@surfrivers.com "I'll take you river surfing!" Says Elijah.



TODD COOPER

Eugene, Wave of the Future

The WRSA seeks to build and promote a stationary-wave park in Eugene and has begun dialogue with the city.

Steve Johnson, on the Mayor's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, says "There's got to be some way to work this out. Some version of what Elijah's interested in can be created."

Here's a short list of existing stationary-wave technologies:

Waveloch - With installations in Durbin, South Africa, and San Diego, Waveloch shoots 100,000 gallons of water per minute up a curved, padded wall, resulting in a thin, quick wave for "flowboards." Drawbacks: *Muy* costly, and we want surfboards! www.waveloch.com

Jump Hydraulic - "That's a technical term for a circulating hole," says kayaker Corran Addison. Placed in a river, "the water basically jumps over a rock. The problem is that people building these sites for kayakers don't know their asses from a hole in the ground," says Addison. Drawbacks: Unpleasant sounding, biologically confusing, but still viable if designed with user input.

Tube6 - Created by physics and engineering students in Munich, Germany, this barreling wave is still a prototype. With plans to build a full-size wave by the summer of 2005, Tube6 is a deep, full wave for surfboards. www.tube6.com Drawbacks: Doesn't exist yet, but sounds and looks sick.

Diversion - Water is channeled from a water source, then pooled and released in sufficient quantity over a contoured human-made river bottom, creating a controlled, enthusiast-designed wave. Drawbacks: The only thing drawn back's the water, holmeslice!

"It's not so far away from what Park Planning already has in mind for the river," says Johnson. "The Alton Baker master-plan envisions more use out of the Willamette. Getting the kayaking element involved will be important."

The WRSA wants a wave built especially for surfers. By that, Elijah means everyone, including kayakers.

"Whether you're surfing, body-boarding or kayaking, laying down or standing up, it's all surfing." Says Elijah. "The WRSA promotes the concept of a wave park for everyone who wants to be involved and get amazing rides."

One kayaker, Tim Patrick, also the Youth & Family Services Manager in charge of City Pools and the Outdoor Program, says "I think it's a remarkable idea. The WRSA is going along in the right manner, contacting the agencies that would be involved in the project,

getting them on the same page. They need to talk to the main players with a common interest, and get their planners and engineers to look at the idea to decide the most feasible option financially, environmentally and mechanically, and then acquire funding."

About options, Johnson says "I don't think it's impossible. If costs could be kept below approximately \$200,000, the park could be built from existing park monies outside of bond measures."

The WRSA is also applying for a Lane County Development Grant, "which is typically given," says Johnson, "when you can project a resulting economic stimulus to the city. When you're building an attraction such as this, it's very plausible that you're going to attract people to Eugene." The WRSA is suggesting \$50,000 as the grant amount for creating some type of standing wave.

Going to the city, the county and the state may be the best route for the WRSA to attain their wave park.

"The city is more likely to get on board if someone else is matching their funds," said Johnson. "That way they can claim at least partial ownership to something bigger than they could afford on their own. Bringing more players to the table makes it more complicated on one hand, but it might make it easier as well."

Strap your booties on Eugene, a wave park may not be far away.

— Ben Fogelson

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