



In these shades the view looks more goofy than rose-colored to David and Judy Maney. David—who has sent sunglasses to President Bush—has a talent for fitting frames to faces.

Frame Fame

This Greenville hot spot offers nearly every pair of shades under the sun.

I scan the street, searching for a likely suspect. Aha! Zeroing in on my target, I drive up beside her, roll down the window, and toss out my question. My hunch proves correct.

Virtually anyone sporting good-looking sunglasses in Greenville knows about Fowler's Pharmacy. "You can't miss it," responds the polite woman, smiling beneath her stylish frames. "It's at the corner of Laurens and Parkins Mill." As I suspected, the family-owned drugstore lives up to its made-in-the-shade reputation for sunglasses.

Shades of Heaven

Jeepers, creepers! Thousands of peering pairs peep from glass cases and countertops inside the unassuming, windowless building. David Maney, the general manager, greets me. His wife, Judy, a pharmacist, works in the back. She's the daughter of the owner, druggist Eugene Estes.

"We're just an old-fashioned pharmacy," says David about the Greenville landmark owned by Eugene since 1957. As a senior citizen enters, the manager pauses, aims a wolf whistle at the gray-haired patron, and then grins as she giggles. He explains the unusual greeting as a standing tradition between the two of them. Obviously Fowler's regulars and staff members enjoy an easy familiarity.

"We still have charge accounts,"



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David says, "and we still make home deliveries." Such personal touches keep the drugstore a favorite with the locals. But Fowler's niche business earns the pharmacy fame far beyond the city limits.

Sunny Side of the Store

Eugene tried various sidelines—including knives and pocket watches—before settling on sunglasses in 1976. Shades now account for about 40% of the pharmacy's \$2.8 million in yearly sales.

David oversees the drugstore's huge inventory of glasses—about 10,000 pairs—with sales of 15,000

I Spy a Trend

David Maney offers these tips for those eager to emulate such icons of cool as the perpetually shaded Bono.

- Go to the movies to discover the next big thing. "The frame worn in *Men in Black* is still the most asked-for frame in the country," he says. Other memorable films with shade-making reputations: *Risky Business*, *The Terminator*, *The Blues Brothers*, and *Ray*.

- Check out shades worn on the golf course, tennis court, and racetrack. "I always hoped that Dale Earnhardt would win because when he did, someone would be standing at the door, wanting to buy a pair of those ugly Gargoyles sunglasses," says David.

- Stick with the basics to avoid ridicule. "People like black and tortoise. Color frames come and go."

- Live large. "The bigger styles are coming back, especially for women," David says. "I call it the Jackie O. look."

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- R-e-f-l-e-c-t. Find out what it means to me—and the kids of today. Mirrored lenses top the list for students, especially paired with an eye-wear retainer or cord, commonly referred to by the original brand name, Croakies.

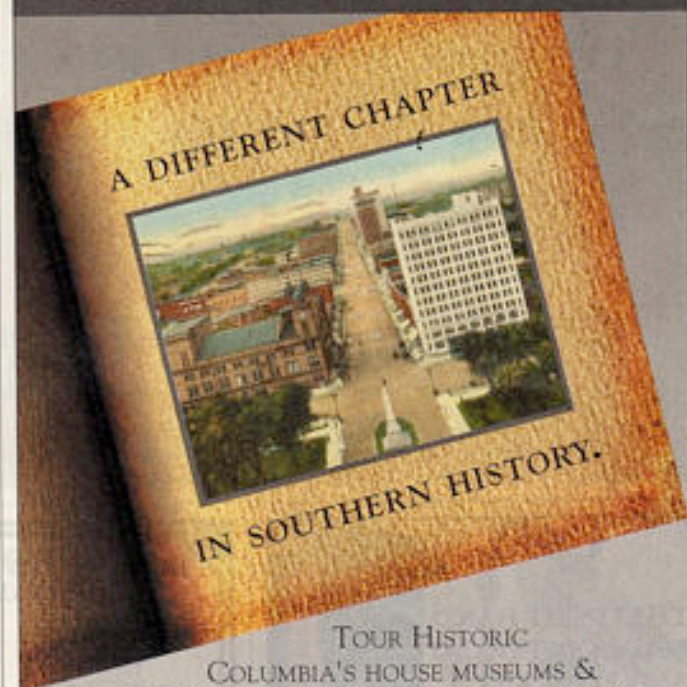
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above: Daniel Arciniegas searches through the inventory. "Ten years ago, it was hard to find sunglass companies," says David Maney. Now even John Deere has a line.

to 25,000 pairs annually.

"We sell more sunglasses under one roof than a lot of the chain stores do," he says. Manufacturers often refer customers to Fowler's when asked about discontinued lines.

David works hard to earn that go-to guy status. "We keep up with what's selling," he says.

Sticking to His Own Style

The former employee of a lumber company seems an unlikely authority on eyewear fashion. He drives a truck; eats, drinks, and sleeps sports; and displays a framed note and photos of George Bush and Air Force One, received as a thank-you for sunglasses sent to the President and First Lady. Yet, to keep his merchandise as current as the latest Paris Hilton brouhaha, David jets to übercool trade shows that tout sunglasses.

"I like the New York shows the best," David says. Surrounded by black-swathed fashionistas, he dresses "just like I am now—in khakis and a golf shirt." Despite his unpretentious approach, smart company representatives eagerly pitch their

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A Shady Reputation

Coaches, golfers, tennis players, boaters, motorcyclists, parents, and teens stream into Fowler's in search of shades. Prices range from \$5 for kids' plastic shades to \$400 for brand-name products. Best-sellers for Fowler's include Costa Del Mar and Maui Jim, but the pharmacy also sells Ray-Ban, Revo, Gargoyles, Bollé, Anarchy Eyewear, Action Optics, Serengeti, Angel Eyewear, and more.

Visit Fowler's Pharmacy at 1908 Laurens Road in Greenville. For more information call toll-free 1-866-944-9144, or visit www.fowlerspharmacy.com. The Web site offers information about sunglass merchandise, but orders must be phoned in.



above: Sunglasses bring out the inner diva in customer Anna Cain. Today's women like large frames.

wares to the laid-back Southern-er. Styles of sunglasses may come and go, but sales through Fowler's Pharmacy remain as assured as the new day sun.

Occasionally a too-hip sales rep urges David to throw a marketing party, complete with models, wine, and cheese. David politely declines. "We are just a good old down-to-earth drug store," he explains.

Maybe so. But Fowler's Pharmacy still manages to corner the market on cool.

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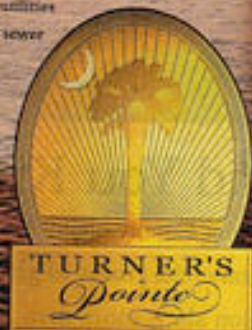
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