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B&B offers homey accommodations

By Holly Blanchard
Of the Emerald

It may be the smallest bed-and-breakfast (B&B) in the Northwest, but what really distinguishes this proprietary from others is its proprietor — Ursula Bates.

In less than an hour one Saturday afternoon, the energetic innkeeper answered six telephone calls, loaned garden tools to a fraternity next door, chatted with two teenagers she affectionately referred to as "my girls," exchanged ideas and experiences with a fellow B&B owner visiting from Portland — all while carrying on an impromptu interview.

"In this business, flexibility has become my middle name," Bates says. Maybe that accounts for the success of the Campus Cottage, a home the former decorating consultant converted into an English-style bed-and-breakfast inn with a country atmosphere in 1981.

The exterior is painted blue with cream trim, set off by large Cape Cod windows lavishly covered with embroidered lace. Flowers border the walkway. The inside resembles the setting in an Agatha Christie movie. The walls are covered with a flower print, and the over-stuffed reading chairs and furniture are situated around a large fireplace crackling with burning logs.

Not a single detail has been forgotten. The two-bedroom inn boasts brass beds with down comforters, antique wash basins, embroidered hand

towels and English tea biscuits stuffed in silver jars.

Guests can shower in a cedar bathroom with brass-and-porcelain fixtures or relax in a turn-of-the-century bathtub with a good English mystery novel.

"You have to offer people something different and unique they can't get at a hotel or motel, and that something is service with all the finishing touches," Bates says. "Service will be the deciding factor of whether other bed-and-breakfast inns survive," she adds.

Bates makes a real commitment to the cottage, which is conveniently located on East 19th Avenue, one block from the University campus and easily accessible for out-of-towners.

"I'm booked solid through March 17 and literally have to turn business away," Bates says. She still has openings for her busy summer months, but she's already booked for part of September. Not all of the 50 to 60 B&Bs in the Northwest have been so fortunate.

Bates attributes much of her success to long hours; some days last 16 hours. "I sleep out on the porch that also serves as my office while new innkeepers quarters are being built, and I'm always the last to bed and the first to get up." She cooks breakfast for her guests every day.

However, Bates cautions that the

key to a successful B&B is to "run it like a business, but don't let it look or feel like one."

Bates says it's vital for innkeepers to have high energy levels and lots of perseverance, and to be well-organized — and not forget their sense of humor. "Multiply all these things three times, and you've got the formula," she says. "You also have to be a little bit crazy."

It may sound crazy, but Bates can make you feel like you've known her for years. She's the epitome of English charm and hospitality. The Campus Cottage atmosphere is just what the brochure promises — warm and friendly.

Her guest book testifies to her success. Last year's visitors included a U.S. senator's wife, a state attorney general, an internationally known architect, a Japanese ambassador for the United Nations and professional entertainers performing at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

Bates' interests go beyond 1136 E. 19th Ave., though. She's an active member of Unique Northwest Country Inns and gives seminars on how to open and run B&Bs around the country. At a recent seminar she said, "An innkeeper must be sensitive, tolerant, like people and have a lot of patience."

When asked by a participant what she meant by being patient, Bates gave an example. "I came home one day to find my guests had moved a vase of flowers, a plant and furniture from their bedroom into my living room. I took a deep breath and said to myself, 'Patience.'"

Occasionally, Bates takes a night off from her duties at the inn, but she speaks well of her answering service. "They're so reliable they even tracked me down at the movie theater, right at the best part of 'Ghost Busters'."

Bates wants Eugene to be perceived as a stopping point for travelers. She's active with the Eugene/Springfield Visitors and Convention Center. "Business people in a small community like ours need to be creative in their endeavors, and networking is vitally important."

"The idea of a bed-and-breakfast inn was a primitive concept when I started mine in 1981, but now it has really caught on."

Bates offers her customers a choice between suite accommodations, at \$65 a night, and guestroom arrangements, for \$55 a night. For more information, call the Campus Cottage, 342-5346.



The Campus Cottage, located near campus on East 19th Street, provides guests with a cozy room and breakfast to boot.

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Show honors instructor

Nixon's 'inspirational' teaching praised by his students in exhibit

By Kim Carlson
Of the Emerald

Max Nixon has been teaching art at the University since 1956, long before most students here were born.

To pay tribute to Nixon and to convey a sense of how he has inspired art students over the years, three of his former students recently organized an exhibit that features the works of Nixon and several of his pupils.

The result is "28 years: Metalsmithing With Max Nixon," a University art museum exhibit that opens March 24 with a public reception from 2-4 p.m.

The exhibit, which runs through May 5, features jewelry and metalwork by more than 45 of Nixon's former students from throughout the United States, along with selected works created by Nixon during his tenure at the University.

Nixon taught jewelry, metalsmithing and weaving at the University between 1956 and 1973. He retired from the faculty in 1981, but still teaches occasional studio courses as a fine arts professor emeritus.

"As an artist who is consistently creating work himself, Max has inspired hundreds of students," says Ken O'Connell, head of the University's fine and applied arts department. "This exhibit is the result of the strong feelings of alumni about his teaching."

Planning for the exhibit began about 18 months ago, when the three former students of Nixon's decided that showing how he has inspired students over the years would be the most fitting tribute they could give to the artist.

The three, Jerry Harpster and Lin Cook Harpster of Monroe, and Greg Wilbur of Eugene, are all working professional artists. They have put in "bunches of time getting the show ready," Cook Harpster says.

"We do shows around the country," she says, "and this is going to be a really terrific show... It's huge."

O'Connell describes Nixon as being a shy person who has always shunned self-promotion.

"Max has devoted most of his life to the classroom workshop," O'Connell says. "His teaching emphasizes freedom to seek one's own artistic identity. A new interpretation of an old technique or design is always a thrill to Max, and he worked to instill this excitement in others."

Cook Harpster agrees, saying that she feels Nixon's method of teaching allows each student to "experiment with and experience the metal." She expects there to be a pervading style of "freedom of expression" in the show that reflects that method.

The piece Cook Harpster created exclusively for the exhibit is a huge metal kite.



Max Nixon

She describes it as "playful," and says it exemplifies for her "the way Max is."

"He's not a real intense teacher," she says, adding that Nixon allowed his students to "kind of play with the metal."

The exhibit is the cooperative effort of the University's fine and applied arts department, interested alumni and the art museum.

"Max's contributions have affected everyone who has become associated with him," O'Connell says. "He is an artist of metal, paint and fibers, and perhaps also of life, for his generosity and endless devotion to his teaching; the University and his countless friends have woven a tapestry wonderfully rich in spirit and unique in style."

Nixon has forged numerous presentation pieces for retiring members of the University's architecture and allied arts school, some of which will be displayed in the exhibit. In 1981, Nixon designed and constructed the University Mace, which is carried by the president on ceremonial occasions.

In reflecting on his career, Nixon says that the Great Depression had a major impact on his development.

"I enjoy making things out of scrap materials, saving my expensive materials for some day when the muse will direct me into making that object commensurate with what I feel is acceptable," Nixon says. "My diverse interests have earned me the reputation as an irrepressible junk collector whose garage sale will be an event much looked forward to by many of my students."

Nixon and his wife, Hattie May, live in Eugene.

For more information about the exhibit, contact designer Tommy Griffin at the art museum, 686-3027.

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