

From Bach to basics
with Royce Saltzman:
a profile
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photo by brian erb

Several months ago, Eugene artist Jan Bushell sensed that her 9-year-old son Elan was starting to place more emphasis on video games and possessions than she believed was healthy. So, in an effort to give Elan "a better perspective of how other kids live," and in part to get away from the day-to-day routine, Bushell planned a journey for the two of them to southern Mexico.

"It was the chronic attitude of consumerism — too much emphasis on things," says Bushell, now, a year later. "I wanted to expose him to more of the world than Eugene, than the United States."

On the trip, mother and son ventured south to small villages, coming within 20 or so miles of the Guatemalan border. Several of the "things" they had packed along — including a Frisbee, a bicycle water-bottle, a compressed sponge and their jackets — were passed along to delighted villagers. "The sponge really blew their minds," says Bushell, smiling at the memory.

And Elan, Bushell believes, did indeed return to the United States more aware — aware not only of how people in other places live, but also more sensitive to the kinds of

needs others have.

Like mother, like son.

After talking with her for only a few moments, one senses that Jan Bushell possesses an earnest desire to share, not only her property, but also the fruits of her talent. And that attitude may be from where Bushell's relentless involvement in and support for the Eugene arts community stems.

A member of the local marimba band, Shumba, Bushell also loves to dance. And she creates a plethora of publicity posters, often for very little money.

Although music and dance is very important to her, Bushell's graphic art is probably the most visible of her efforts. The posters she makes for Community Center for the Performing Arts, Cinema 7, and local dancers and musicians, can be seen around town, stapled to telephone poles or taped to walls.

Her contributions to local advertising include brochures, flyers and newspaper and magazine advertisements. Bushell was also responsible for the logo on the local entertainment tabloid, "What's Happening."

It was in Eugene that Bushell began her graphic art

career. As a performing artist — in addition to her role in Shumba, she was formerly a dancer in the community — she sensed that there was a need for someone to do affordable publicity artwork for local performers who had few funds to spend on promotion.

So Bushell, for little or no money, began helping them publicize their events. They, in turn, helped her career by giving her the opportunity to expose her work.

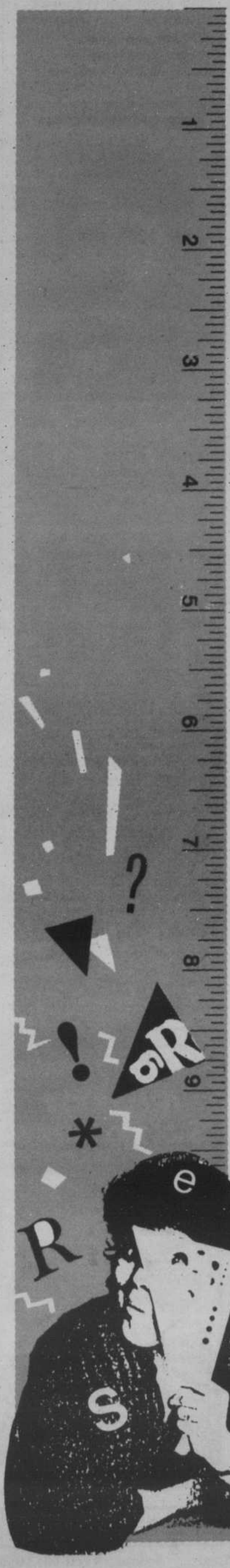
"It was a really great arena for me to do whatever I wanted because they would entrust that to me. I never even had to show a portfolio until this year, and I've been doing (graphic art) for, oh, three or four years," she says.

"There was a lot of free stuff in the very beginning, just because it was so exciting. I mean, it was like wow, a poster by me. One poster and I would be really excited for weeks," she says, laughing.

The jobs grew from small one-time jobs to regular assignments.

"I realize and I thank everyone who gave me the opportunity to do that work, because it's allowed people to

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Jan Bushell

story by kim carlson