

'New-Age' businesses market special products locally

By Sean Nelson
Of the Emerald

Eugene is home to many small businesses, some traditional and some not so traditional. Call it 'New Age' if you must.

Susan Short is the owner of "The Liberty Coffee Company," a business serving Eugene coffee connoisseurs since 1973. It offers everything from the traditional house coffee at 50 cents a cup to a Michaelangelo, which is a double espresso made with chocolate and almond syrup and costs \$1.55, according to Matthew Tift, general manager of the company.

Short, who has a performing contract with a Nashville, Tenn. television program, and has a faint resemblance to Lady Liberty, espouses the virtues of free enterprise by marketing various coffees, italian sodas and teas.

Since 1973, the company has had three owners: John Wolfe, John Wilson and Short.

John Wilson gave Susan the company "with love and respect," enjoining her to carry on the Liberty Coffee name and the quality of its products, Short said.

The company sells coffee at the Oregon Country Fair, Saturday Market, both the spring and fall University Street Faires, the Eugene Folkfest, the Harvest Festival at Skinners Butte, the Art and the Vineyard Festival, and at the First National Fiddling Contest held in Weiser, Idaho.

This year, the Liberty Coffee Company will be part of the Eugene Celebration from Sept. 23rd through the 25th.

"We try to put out a high quality drink," Tift said. "If someone doesn't like what they've got we usually give them their money back," he added.

Patrick Miller of "The Earthworks" sells crystals, stone jewelry and beads of many colors at his outlet on the corner of Saturday Market.

His products range from quartz crystals direct from Oregon to pendants, massage tools, earrings and touch

stones.

He also has brown quartz crystals, so colored because of the iron oxidation which occurred during their formation.

His prices range from 50 cents to \$15 for the more exotic items. This depends on the rarity of the formations, whether they



File Photo
Quartz Crystals similar to these are sold by "The Earthworks" at the Saturday Market.

have any water within them or not, their clarity, and what kind of inclusions (interruptions) or fracture lines occur within the crystals themselves, Miller said.

"Crystal forms on plate which is highly silicated ash," Miller said. It grows until the characteristic double termination forms on each end, he added.

Miller has sold his wares at the University and at Prineville, where his work was admired at mineral shows there.

Jennifer Jones, owner of "Star Feather," paints tie-dyed shirts with figures of goddesses, skulls, mountains and flying saucers.

With a paintbrush she uses acrylic fabric paint, which she waters down to provide a background for the main design over it.

Shirt prices range from \$18 for a simple design to \$75 for a shirt with a heavy metal goddess, with a skull in the background in the midst of a

multi-colored fog.

In addition to Saturday Market, she also markets her wares at Lazar's Bazar, Los Angeles, England, New York and Paris.

"My shirts are original paintings," Jones said proudly. "They are one of a kind," she added.

Robert Penegor, who markets his products in his own name, left a full-sized business in Alaska last year because he wanted to start his stained glass outfit here in Oregon.

"I tried in Spokane, Wash., but the economy was bad there," Penegor said.

Now his company is in Portland, Seattle and Eugene. It markets everything from crystal ball "kaliedoscopes," with triangular stained glass bases at \$15 per piece, to Tiffany Style lampshades at \$15 or \$20 a square foot.

His themes cover everything from animals to palm trees," Penegor

said. The pieces must be approved by the customer sometimes two or three times before the actual purchase, he added.

"It depends on the intricacy of the work and how much time is involved," Penegor said.

Penegor, Short, Miller and Jones see much hope for their businesses, which are a part of Eugene culture as well as a part of the Saturday Market.

Another community businessperson who sees hope for their wares is Jerry Poston, owner of Birkenstock. Since the 1960s, Birkenstocks have been one of the trademarks of new age people from all walks of life. They were considered a fad at first.

"It's not just a fad anymore, it's becoming a way of life," Poston said.

Birkenstock is located at the Fifth Street Public Market, 207 W. Fifth Ave. It became the third Birkenstock store when it was established in 1971, Poston said. The original company was established in West Germany in 1774. The first store in the United States opened in Santa Cruz, Calif. in 1968.

Unlike the more common insert-in shoe, or a shoe which requires one to insert a foot into it, the popular sandals are orthodox in nature. This means they are shoes which "you wear," he added.

The Birkenstock sandals went from a symbol of counterculture to a sandal "that appeals to all segments of the population," Poston said.

Since Birkenstocks are designed to conform to the shape of their owner's foot, they add the appropriate support where it is needed, he added.

"Their smaller features are that they are a lightweight, air circulating... (and they provide) durability and comfort," he said.

Birkenstocks range in price from the least expensive versions, which cost "\$40 on up," to the more expensive ones, which are "around \$90," Poston said.

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