



Photo by Andre Raneira

Cary Thompson and Joanie Kleban, two of the co-owners of Global Partners, hope to promote cross-cultural understanding by featuring crafts from Eugene's sister cities.

Store sells crafts from sister cities

By Janis Joseph
Emerald Reporter

Idealism is not something usually associated with the retail business. However, Cary Thompson, co-owner of a new import store in west Eugene, said the store focuses not only on selling crafts from other countries, but on cross cultural education and understanding.

Global Partners, 970 1/2 Van Buren St., a store which sells crafts from Eugene's four sister cities and other 'exotic places' opened last Wednesday, Thompson said.

"We thought we'd try something idealistic," he said.

"We want to enhance cross cultural ideals and connect with other people in the world. We want to see if we, as Americans, can help out people on the other side of the world," said Joanie Kleban, co-owner.

Thompson and Kleban, along with Wendy Coyle, the third partner, began working on opening the store about a year ago, Kleban said.

Both Kleban and Thompson became interested in importing goods from Eugene's sister cities after their three year involvement in setting up the Sister City Program, Kleban said.

The Sister City Program affiliates cities in the U.S. with other countries around the world to promote understanding and respect among nations. Eugene's four sister cities are Kakegawa,

Japan; Chinju, Korea; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Irkutsk, USSR, according to the sister cities brochure.

Coyle left the U.S. in April to travel to the sister cities and other places in Asia gathering unique art and traditional handicrafts, Kleban said.

"She went out into the countryside to try and find places which were marketing native art and looked for representatives to help send the stuff over," Kleban said.

Eventually, they want to bring artists from different countries here to do work or set up apprenticeships to keep some of the dying art and handicrafts alive, Thompson said.

Although Global Partners has no formal affiliation with the Sister Cities Program, they hope to help the program. Some of the money made from the store will go to help the program's committees, Thompson said.

Kleban said the business also serves as "a resource for people to make and sell ethnic crafts. We want to send as much money back to the source as possible."

She said they do this by cutting out the go-betweens as often as possible. They go to the countries themselves and buy the products which reduces the money going to people other than the artists.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, Oregon 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald is operated independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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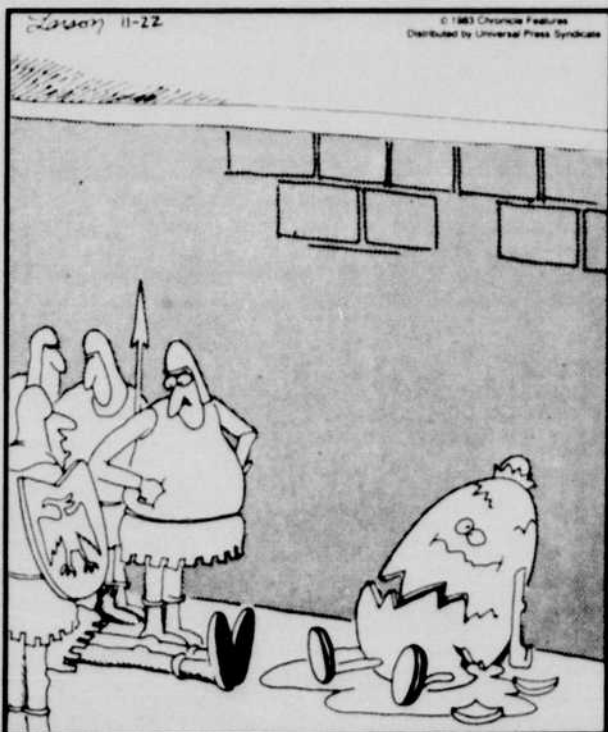
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By GARY LARSON



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