

clean up at the holiday market

LOCAL SOAPMAKER OFFERS FRAGRANT BOUQUET by Anne Pick

Soap making, bookbinding, writing, teaching: Paula Marie Gourley does it all. Gourley moved to Eugene and joined the Saturday and Holiday Markets seven years ago. She sells handcrafted soaps, handbound books and journals, decorative papers and cards.

The creativity flowing from Gourley's imagination leads to unique and interesting soap titles and fragrances; *EW* writers, for instance, favor the Writers Block soap. Other lines are French, Literary and Hippie Chick. The Literary line contains *Gatsby's Beautiful Shirt*, stemming from a scene in the film in which Gatsby shows Daisy his closet full of shirts and she brings them to her face and inhales the fragrance.

Gourley says naming the soaps and mixing the scents comes from "where I am, what I'm doing, who I meet. It's just fun and lets me express myself." She blends fragrances according to what she's thinking about, but it's not a cakewalk: "It's hard work, lots of fun and very personal."

At this year's Holiday Market, Gourley will launch her latest soap, *Buckskin Casanova*. This new soap is inspired by fellow Saturday Market artisan and leather worker Paul Thompson. Gourley had

planned on creating a "burly man" type of soap. When Thompson began chatting with Gourley one Saturday while helping pack up her booth, the title came to her instantly. Gourley is even putting Thompson's likeness on the label of *Buckskin Casanova*.

In making her soaps, Gourley uses high quality vegetable oils such

as olive, coconut, sweet almond, apricot kernel, jojoba, avocado and shea butter. The oils melt and blend together, and then she adds a lye solution. The chemical reaction between the lye and oils, called the "saponification" process, forms soap. Then she stirs the soap until it thickens. At this point Gourley adds the fragrances, essential



oils or herbal products such as rosemary, rose petals and ground sage.

She pours the thickened mixture into molds and insulates it for 24 to 48 hours. Removed from the molds when sufficiently hard, the soap is then cut into bars. It must air-dry (cure) for a minimum of six to eight weeks before Gourley trims, wraps and labels it. Gourley explains that the longer soap cures, the milder it becomes. She says, "I have a high standard and do not sell any soap which has not been properly cured. In addition, all of my work is done by hand, the old-fashioned way, in small batches (40-50 bars at a time). I use no animal products in my soaps."

Gourley taught the bookbinding curriculum in Tuscaloosa for the University of Alabama's MFA Program in the Book Arts for 14 years before relocating to Eugene. Her booth at the Saturday Market led to a grant which allowed her to establish her business, *Lilyhouse Studio Editions*, and she taught business and entrepreneurial classes until the grant ran out. Gourley now works as the Senior Connections program supervisor for the Lane Council of Government. Still teaching, Gourley travels to different colleges conducting three to seven day classes on bookbinding and is the U.S. representative for a French bookbinding company.

The *Lilyhouse Studio Editions* booth makes its home in Holiday Hall, a smaller room to the right of the main hall of the Holiday Market. Follow your nose:

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