

Jay Zee will mill to your will

Joseph mill gets 80% of lumber from Wallowa County forests

By **BILL BRADSHAW**

Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — One of the more unique wood-products outlets in Wallowa County has been going strong for 20 years under the operation of owner Jim Zacharias with little change.

Jay Zee Lumber is not a lumber yard per se — Jay Zee has no dry kiln to produce finished lumber and only does a little planing — the mill does custom-cut lumber for projects large and small.

“If someone comes along, they might want one board 3 feet long or they might want 3,000 boards of all various dimensions,” Zacharias said Wednesday, Jan. 27. “We sold a truckload yesterday of about 8,000 board feet, it was all 1-by-12 Douglas fir.”

He also does large beams for construction projects, though contractors can’t use most of his lumber for homes because it’s not stamped and graded, he said. Some of the beams are as large as 12-by-16 inches and 25 feet long.

“They can use the big beams and siding,” he said.

Zacharias gets virtually all of his logs from Wallowa County forests. He said about 80% of his wood is Douglas fir, Ponderosa pine and Western larch. Virtually no hardwoods are milled at Jay Zee, 600 E. Russell Lane on the north side of Joseph. The exception would be if a customer brings in a hardwood tree they’ve felled at home and want milled. Otherwise, hardwoods just don’t grow in the county.

Some timber he buys from the family-owned logging operations.

“That’s something people get confused about,” he said. “There’s three generations of Zacharias logging here.”

Jim’s father, Bob Zacharias, owns and operates Zacharias Logging.

“He’s 85 and still going to work every day,” Jim said.

In fact, Jim worked for his dad logging for two years right out of high school and then went out on his own.

“Now I’ve been logging for 46 years — 44 of those self-employed,” he said.

Jim’s sons, Tom and Seth, operate another logging company called Pro Thinning.

“A lot of the time we work together, or I might buy logs from them, but they are all three separate entities,” Jim said.

The custom-cut work at Jay Zee goes toward much fencing

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Leah Over prepares scones on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, at the newly opened Liberty Theatre Cafe in downtown La Grande.

Kneads No More

New Liberty Theatre Cafe rises in the Putman Building

By **ALEX WITTWER**

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Kneads Bakery in downtown La Grande is no more. But its owners, McKenzie Funk and Leah Over, continue their bakery just down the street in the new Liberty Theatre Cafe.

The business held a soft opening the end of last week, starting Feb. 4. The move expanded the business operations to include an espresso machine, and Over and Funk said they plan on expanding further over the next few years to include a bar and beer taps when the titular theater next door reopens.

While Kneads is gone, the recipes, hand-crafted bread and creative vision of the future remains in the hands of its two bright and enterprising owners.

Funk and Over were planning the move for more than a year. In December 2019 they were setting sights on the cafe across the street. The pandemic halted that idea, but Over said it was a blessing in disguise — the pause allowed her and Funk to think carefully about their next moves.

“Three years ago, the theater foundation had talked about wanting to have food with the theater, so I kinda got into that conversation with some other people,” Over said. “And I’m really excited to have the cafe, but I really want to work with the theater. Our business is actually to run the cafe and the theater, so we’ll be programming for music and movies and other events.”

Over, prior to founding the new Liberty Theatre Cafe with Funk, had run Kneads Bakery across the street for six years. It was her first venture into baking. She said her primary reason for getting into the industry was to be her own boss, that she liked the



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Liberty Theatre Cafe owners McKenzie Funk (left) and Leah Over take a moment behind the counter Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, at their business in downtown La Grande. The cafe held a successful soft opening late last week.

freedom it entailed. The previous owner of Kneads handed the keys and a 1940’s oven to the fledgeling baker. She wasted no time getting her hands into the mix and building up her business.

“I just wanted to have my own business, basically,” Over said. “I learned most of what I know from [this] job. I didn’t do a lot of baking before I got the business, but I’ve learned a lot since.”

Work begins at 4:30 a.m., and it’s not uncommon for Over to work more than 12 hours a day.

Kneads grew considerably over the years, taking on a new decor, expanding the menu and elevating its artisanal breads to a form of art. Sourdough became the bakery’s pride and joy, and remains a staple for most of the sandwiches at the new cafe — but due to COVID-19 restrictions, service is takeout only.

Funk met Over at a mutual friend’s annual party in 2017. Funk is a former Bay Area pastry chef at the famous Chez Panisse, a

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Pendleton brewery sues Anheuser-Busch over national ad campaign

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**

East Oregonian

PORTLAND — A football commercial aired during an NFL game has led to a lawsuit pitting a Pendleton brewer against one of the largest beverage companies in the country.

Suzie’s Brewery Co. filed a lawsuit on Feb. 2 against Anheuser-Busch in U.S. District Court in Portland, alleging that the company’s advertising campaign for a new hard seltzer product was misleading and harmed its own product, Suzie’s Organic Hard Seltzer.

“Using the bully-pulpit its massive national advertising budget allows, Anheuser-Busch has premiered a new false and misleading advertising campaign aimed at convincing health-conscious drinkers that its new organic hard seltzer is a unique, one-of-a-kind product,” Suzie’s Brewery’s complaint states. “To be clear, it is not.”

Suzie’s Brewery President Chris Barhyte said

he first learned about the potential conflict when friends and family started contacting him about a commercial that was running during a slate of NFL playoff games on Jan. 24.

The commercial touted the qualities of Michelob Ultra Organic Seltzer before stating that it is the “only nationally USDA certified organic hard seltzer.”

Suzie’s Brewery is a subsidiary of Barhyte Specialty Foods, a company known for its mustards and other sauces. Suzie’s Brewery launched its hard seltzer over the summer, emphasizing its organic ingredients and displaying the “USDA Organic” logo on its packaging.

According to the lawsuit, Suzie’s Brewery started researching the rest of Anheuser-Busch’s advertising campaign and media presence and found that Michelob Ultra was also described as the “First of its-kind organic option to the hard seltzer category”



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Barhyte Specialty Foods’ subsidiary Suzie’s Brewery Co. in Pendleton filed a lawsuit on Feb. 2 in U.S. District Court against Anheuser-Busch alleging the company’s advertising campaign for a new hard seltzer product was misleading and harmed Barhyte’s brand, Suzie’s Organic Hard Seltzer.

and the “First-ever national USDA certified organic hard seltzer.”

Barhyte said new competition is actually a good development for Suzie’s Brewery because it raises awareness about the organic hard seltzers. But Suzie’s Brewery didn’t want

Anheuser-Busch confusing consumers into thinking it was the only option available.

Barhyte said Suzie’s Brewery sent the beverage giant, which owns brands like Michelob, Budweiser and Rolling Rock, a cease and desist letter. When

Anheuser-Busch neither ceased or desisted, Suzie’s Brewery filed the lawsuit seeking to prevent the company from describing Michelob Ultra seltzer as “first” or “first-of-its-kind” or “only,” in addition to damages and attorney’s fees. Despite the legal action

taken against it, Anheuser-Busch is standing behind its advertising campaign.

“Michelob ULTRA Organic Seltzer is the first national hard seltzer that is USDA-Certified Organic,” an Anheuser-Busch spokesman said in a statement. “We are looking forward to vigorously defending this factual statement.”

Attorneys for Anheuser-Busch filed a response on Feb. 2, arguing that its advertisements weren’t inaccurate because it always paired descriptors like “first” and “only” with the adjective “national.” Anheuser-Busch stated that using “national” made the commercials accurate because Michelob Ultra seltzer was nationally distributed, available in 49 states to Suzie’s Brewery’s six. The company added that Michelob Ultra wasn’t even Anheuser-Busch’s first organic hard seltzer, but the other brand was only distributed regionally.