

T-Shirts Plus Family Effort



Mallicoat family (from left), Marnie, Rob, Dale and Jo. (Herald photo)

T-shirts emblazoned with catchy phrases and artwork have become a new rage in Hermiston, thanks to the efforts of Dale and Jo Mallicoat.

The local couple opened T-Shirts Plus at the Hermiston Plaza Shopping Center late last year and discovered a market eager for their product.

Sales have been so good, in fact, that the local store has consistently ranked among the top 20 in T-Shirts Plus outlets across the country, said Dale Mallicoat, who has quit his job as the manager of a local truss plant to devote more time to the business.

The ranking is especially significant since Hermiston is the smallest town in the T-Shirts Plus chain.

The customer response has been "outstanding," Mallicoat said.

The store specializes in transferring decals onto the fronts or backs of t-shirts. And Mallicoat feels that part of the store's success is due to keeping the selection of decals "family oriented."

He cited an instance where several people objected to a decal. It was removed from the inventory and eventually destroyed, he said.

The Mallicoats started with around 400 decals when they opened last November. That total is now around 800.

In addition to the decals, the store offers a wide variety of

t-shirts, ranging in size from six months to extra-large. There are also customized hats and bumper stickers, maternity top t-shirts and shorts.

Customers have more to

choose from than just decals. Lettering can be used to print almost anything on t-shirts and transferable decals can be made from a favorite photo.

The store handles individual

and group orders. Mallicoat said some customers don't realize that their custom t-shirts can be made while they wait. "They don't realize we can do it right now."

The store has been a family enterprise with Dale and Jo getting help from their two children — Marnie and Rob — inbetween school and sports activities.

For Shoe Salesman

Hectic Pace Forces Change

Although Don Clark has been selling quality shoes for about 17 years, he no longer deals with the quantity he once did.

Before moving to Hermiston and opening Clark's Shoes last summer, he worked the major shoe markets while living in Portland.

He began his career at Nordstrom's, managing the shoe department and buying the shoes the store sold. He figures his

department was doing about \$1 million worth of business annually by the time he left.

From there it was on to Lipp-

man's, where he served as buyer for seven stores around the northwest. When he left there, he was buying about 150,000 pair of shoes a year and the stores were doing about \$3 million in annual business.

His life was a hectic one then. He was making several buying trips a year to New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, etc. In short, he was "out and moving and going all the time."

And the work was complicated at time, too. When he started at Lippman's, for example, he did his buying after analyzing one computer print-out. By the time he left, there were seven print-outs.

"That's why I'm here," he says. "It was getting worse."

Clark doesn't have any regrets about leaving the big city life. He and his family like the local

community, and he enjoys owning his own store.

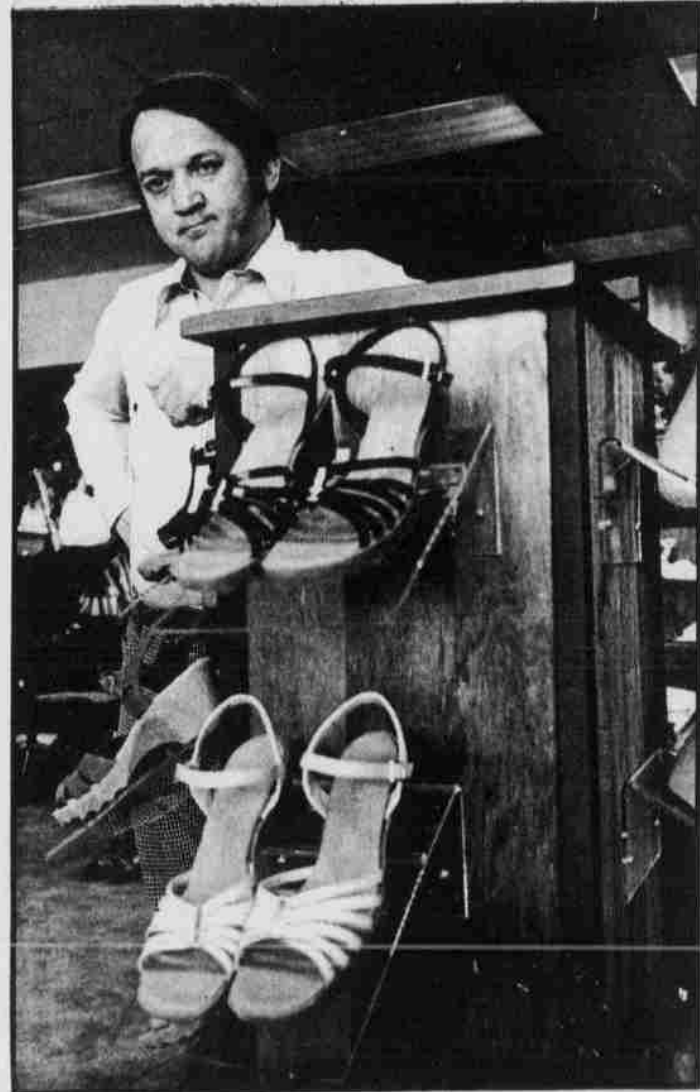
"And I like to think we're in on the first step of a major growth pattern in the area," he adds.

His biggest adjustment has been limiting the number of shoes he buys. After having bought for the major department stores, he says he feels like the woman who wants to overspend her shopping budget.

"But we're doing the same thing here; it's just on a smaller scale," he says. In fact, he takes pride in attempting "to bring a little Nordstrom's to the area."

Clark has been more than satisfied with his business.

"It's been good so far, very good," he says. Most customers have returned a second time, and "that's a pretty good indication we're doing something right," he says.



Don Clark - Selling shoes for 17 years. (Herald photo)

Sprouse Selection 'Family Oriented'

Sprouse-Reitz is keeping its tradition of a "family-oriented" store alive in spacious new

quarters at the Hermiston Plaza Shopping Center.

The 15,000 square foot store is about double the size of its old facility at the corner of SE Second Street and Highway 395 and has given its manager, Mike Houtz, a chance to display his wares.

Variety is the key with areas set aside for small pets, clothing (from infants to adults), luggage, curtains and shades, toys, school supplies, plants, stationary, picture frames and small drug items.

Houtz has been with Sprouse-Reitz for about 21 years and was the store's manager in Hermiston when it opened in November 1970.




Mike Houtz (Herald photo)

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