

TUBE BENDERS ART THRIVES IN RIDGFIELD

There are many beer signs out there, but the granddaddy of them all has to be the neon with its bright colors.

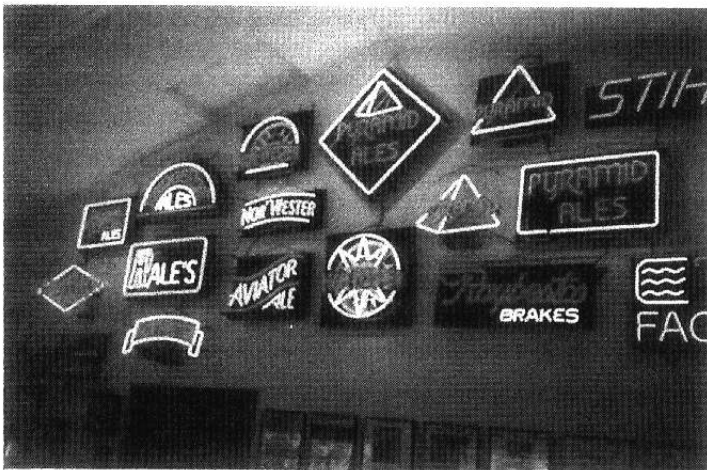


Did you know that we have a club member that owns his own neon sign business and specializes in neons for microbreweries? He is Roger Schurman who owns "Gas N Glass" in Ridgefield, Washington.

I recently visited Roger at his shop. On one wall he has some of the neons he has made for local microbreweries:

Norwestern, Bridgeport, Pyramid, Grant, McMenamins, and Aviator. There is a good chance that the Microbrewery neon that you see in a tavern window was made by Roger.

I asked Roger how he got started in the business. About five years ago, he wanted to open up a business of his own



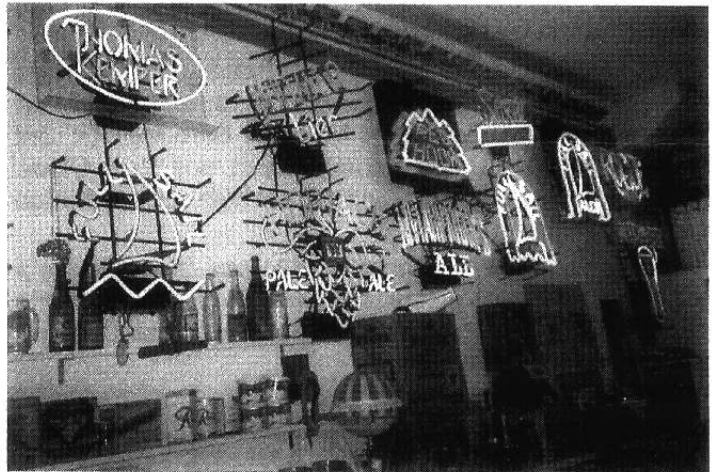
where he could work at home. After looking around he decided he could combine one of his hobbies with his own business. That hobby is his love for old movie theaters and their lights. He and his wife belong to a club that visits old theaters in different parts of the country each summer. So

his hobby became his livelihood.

One thing I learned while touring the facility is that there is a big difference in the quality of neons

that different neon companies put out. You need to be a good bender, but the most important skill is filling the glass with gas. The piece of equipment he uses cost \$10,000. One of his competitors uses a home made version.

He told me about losing a bid to make neons because



someone else's bid was \$5.00 cheaper. The brewery went with the lower bid to save \$5.00 but six months later the ends were getting dark and the color was fading on their neons. Remember that old saying, "You get what you pay for."

Several years ago Roger got an order from Norwestern for about 1,000 signs. He had hundreds of them made and ready to ship when guess what happened? Norwestern went bankrupt and closed their doors. He was left holding all of these signs. Today he still has over 300. Norwestern was paying \$150.00 for these signs but if you want one, Roger will sell them to club members for \$100.00.

While I was there Roger was making signs for Papa Murphy's pizza and Moab, a new brewery in Utah. My two favorite things, eating pizza and drinking beer! I wish I had a job where I could combine my favorite pastime and my job like Roger has been able to do.

Jim Wells