

hip capitalists

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high school when the Art Emporium was at his present location. He'd had experience managing a gas station for his father.

Moore and his wife went to school in California and knew Lincoln had no shops like the type going there. The Moores knew music and wholesale record prices, so they started Dirt Cheap with around \$600 worth of albums, and by February of 1971 were the sole owners. Moore was 20 years old and Ms. Moore.

The two said that they started their store idealistically, as a service—to provide records at the lowest price possible.

Moore said he doesn't feel that he runs a strict business, but also said he never lets any people "just hang around the store." Also, you don't make money by giving things away to your friends, he added. "If you're not geared to making money," he said, "you don't."

Now Dirt Cheap has a gift shop and sells used and new albums. Moore attends some classes at UNL, but isn't heading for any degree. The couple depend on the store for a living.

Moore said he still had idealistic feelings about the store, although it's being appreciated less, perhaps. Many current customers were't around when the store started, he said, and didn't watch it grow. To them, we're established, he said.

The only thing that might make the Moores want to quit is theft, Moore said. Stealing is a financial problem, but even more, it's a slap at their ideals. Since most of the items stolen when the store opened were consignment items—art, sculpture, pottery, etc—they carry little on a consignment basis now.

Photos by Gail Folda

From behind the counter inside the store, the Moores can see the Discount Record store at the corner of the Glass Menagerie.

Like all but one of the nine shops already opened in the Menagerie, it's part of a string. Maybe it's necessary, they said, that stores become more commercial to exist, but at the same time, they wish it weren't so.

Al Spencer, who owns the Waterbed Company of Lincoln said that people say they don't like chain stores, but at the same time do complain about small-shop prices being too high.

The trouble with the freak shops not dedicated to making money, he said, is realizing that if they don't make a profit, they aren't going to be around. The shops gave a good deal to the street people who, by definition, don't have money to support the shop, he said.

Whatever the death of freak stores means, it doesn't affect his business, Spencer said. Rather, everyone has accepted the freak life trappings and that's good, he said. He still sells the same items, but to different types of people.

Spencer, 23, said he couldn't have stayed in business with only waterbeds. There were eight waterbed dealers in Lincoln this summer, he said, and now there are two. The sales are down somewhat from summer, he said, but maybe people think of waterbeds more in the summertime.

His store also displays print bedspreads, incense and some posters and hand-made clothing.

Spencer, who finished his zoology degree this summer, claimed no plans or reasons for owning a store except "temporary insanity."

Waterbeds were just coming in big when he visited San Francisco two summers ago he said, and he had some friends in Lincoln who knew what they were and wanted to get them.

The original idea was to sell his first order of 20 waterbeds through friends. The store idea grew out of a hectic partnership with five persons whom he bought out. He became sole owner of a store with 12 waterbeds.

His store beat Land and Sky Waterbed Company into operation by only about a month and for the first year he lived month by month, having to hock an organ and work another job sometimes to pay the \$150-a-month rent.

His 20 by 100 foot store started with \$2,000 he accumulated from his money, his father's and a loan. It would have been nice to have another \$1000 to start, he said.

The first year, he said, all money went back into expenses but then, things started getting better. By better he meant he quit making mistakes.

Those \$10 and \$20 mistakes with advertising money counted up, he said. He's wiser with

advertising money and better now at ordering merchandise that will "hit the market better."

"It's more work than you would believe at first, and it seems there are no returns," Spencer said.

One of the former owners of ETC, an import shop that operated next to the Waterbed Company from September 1970 to May 1972, knows what the first is like. She's started businesses with partners three times, beginning with a hand-made clothes shop called the Hall Tree on South Street when she was 23.

"It was really bleak," she said, about the half-empty shelves in the first shop, and the effect it had on customers.

A lot of the starting money was spent remodeling, she said, and there wasn't much money left for merchandise.

"I was one with no experience and high hopes."

She and her partner moved to a better location with the Hall Tree, and after a fire there, started ETC. Does she want another shop?

Her feeling now is to wait and see, mostly because of money and her current family situation. Although she said she always wanted to have a shop, owning shops has drastically altered her family's life.

One reason for having a shop is to set your own hours, she said, but to build it up right takes time. So, unless she wants to wait until her two daughters, ages 4 and 6, are older, she said she can't afford financially, physically or emotionally to start a store with nothing again and get no financial reward.

When her first store opened there weren't many small shops—dealing hand-made clothing or anything else. In Lincoln now, small boutiques are booming, she said, and that limits the time one has to decide on an approach and to get money together before the competition does.

Dirt Cheap opened soon after ETC, and before Christmas, also had a gift shop. Dirt Cheap hit the market just right, she said, on the waves of anti-big store, anti-capitalist feeling.

What did she learn from her experiences?

"Being cynical," she answered.

Travis Gray and Blue Sky Book Store is another story—this time unsuccessful—of the student businessman.

If he and his partners decide to close Blue Sky Books Gray, 25, said he'd like to try again with a record-bookstore, but not in Lincoln.

Blue Sky opened in April 1970 and moved to its current location at 1017 "Q" in August. It may close this month. His partner goes to graduate school, but Travis who used to be an anthropology major doesn't attend UNL now.

If they would have had all the money at the beginning that they ended up begging for during the 2½ years of operation, things may have been different.

As it was, scraping at first left no money to fall back on when the books they stocked didn't sell fast enough to pay bills.

"Most of the trouble is just bad management and it's awfully hard to figure out what to buy."

The books they stocked may sell someplace, he said, but not a copy sells in Lincoln. He said he doesn't understand why there isn't a market for the books near a campus the size of UNL. Popular best-sellers, history and political-subject paperbacks don't sell. But occult and science fiction does.

The money they could afford to spend for advertising seemed to do little good, Gray said.

"I don't want to be a businessman," he said, "I just want to sell books."

Others seemed to have an easier time of it, but only because their businesses now are past the starvation period.

The owners of both PJ's Corner at 16 and "Q" and Mantra, 118 No. 14th Street, rode into business selling printed t-shirts.

Mantra owner Rick Hollingsworth, 26, was printing t-shirts in his mother's basement six years ago before starting a summer store similar to Mantra in Jackson, Wyo.

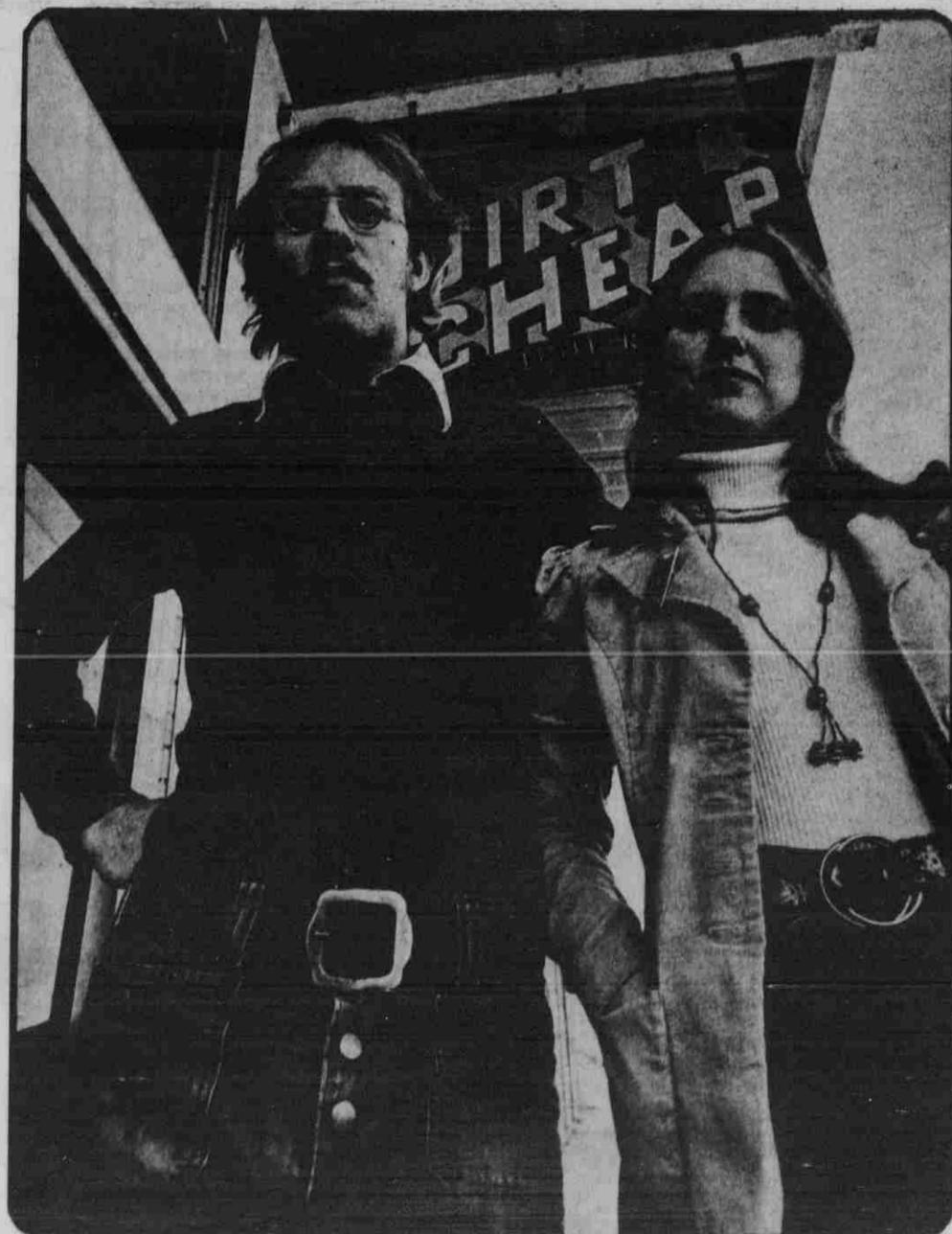
He hadn't really decided to go into business for himself until graduating from the UNL with a business administration degree and earning his masters in Colorado. He went into business with a store in Lincoln in 1970 because the job market was so poor.

Mantra was started as a youth-oriented gift shop, Hollingsworth said, becoming defined somewhat as a "head shop" because he carried hashish pipes.

Dirt Cheap was soon in business and so was the Poster Joint, located closer to campus than Mantra.

PJ's owner Verne Holoubek, 29, was printing t-shirts and sweat shirts for UNL fraternities. When

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Terry and Linda Moore . . . started their store idealistically, as a service.