

# Starting A Retirement Business Complex, San Jose Couple Learns

By Ernest K. Bennett

San Jose (AP)—Getting ready to retire? Planning a little business project to fatten the income after retirement?

Why not commercialize your hobby and not a store-type business with shelves to stock, overhead and employe problems. No, just a matter of expanding your hobby to where money is coming in instead of going out.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well, it isn't, as Mr. and Mrs. Earle Choate of San Jose can tell you.

Their rock collecting hobby has grown so big it could, they believe, be converted into a profitable business almost over night. In the days of our grandparents such a project might have been launched

at once. Today there are obstacles, mostly spelled T-A-X-E-S.

The Choates have been rock collectors ever since their daughter took a geology course at San Jose State 12 years ago. Earle, Western representative for a dental equipment firm, traveled a lot. He started looking for—and buying—interesting rocks and uncut semiprecious stones.

The couple bought a tumbling bin, small diamond saw and polishing wheels. Some of the rough rocks, they found, turned beautiful when cut and polished. They were well on the road to becoming dedicated rock hounds when Earle suffered a heart attack.

That led to long think sessions

about the future. Perhaps he wouldn't be able to travel. The doctors might even insist he sit quietly. Well, they would accumulate enough equipment and material to begin a little business at which he could work leisurely and with little exertion.

Fortunately, however, Earle was able to resume work until retirement age. The rocks remained just a hobby. Meanwhile, they built a two-room shop for the rocks and machinery. Their growing collection now included stones from far places—Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Africa. Some were rare.

After Earle's retirement, they became students. Mrs. Choate, one-time technical illustrator for Lockheed, suggested they do

a series on metalwork and stone mounting for a rock collectors' publication. But first they must study metalwork methods.

This was not easy. They tried to learn from various American workers but found each one using different techniques and demanding different tools. Finally they turned to Mexico, source of many interesting forms of metal ware. They found good instructors there who used a minimum of equipment.

They studied stone insets and mounting as well as "marriage" of gold, silver, copper and other metals.

Then the Choates began to see about turning their hobby into a business. But the tax structure in California is complex. The couple found that in order to "go commercial" they would have to render an inventory of all they possessed pertaining to rock cutting and metal-smithing. They said the county would demand a 9 per cent inventory tax, the state a 4 per cent tax on all stones they had acquired through trading with other rock collectors.

A state sales tax would have to be collected on every item sold, plus a federal excise tax on many of the items. Much bookkeeping would be required. The Choates decided to back off.

"We just don't want to become that involved," they said.

It's not a financial necessity. There is some retirement income and Earle is still serving in an advisory capacity for both the dental firm and for the armed forces in the field of dental equipment maintenance.

Still enthusiastic rock hounds, they are presently trying to help organize a rock museum. "All the best rock samples from this area are in distant exhibits," they explain. "We want a place in this area that will be instructive and interesting to our own young people."

Working toward this and related goals while doing such metal and lapidary work as strikes their fancy—mainly making gifts for friends—provides the Choates a satisfactory life, they say, without the pressures of the business world.



San Jose—Mrs. Sharr Choate of San Jose stands beside shelves holding some of the rock specimens that she and her husband, Earle, have collected from

many parts of the world. Rocks shown include a variety of jade, petrified woods and agates as well as many others. Their

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plans for a part-time business of lapidary and metalwork has failed to materialize because of tax complications.

(AP Wirephoto)

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