

More regulations, higher insurance end a tradition

By LANE WALLACE
BUSINESS EDITOR

WHEN "Mac" McCarty opened McCarty Paints in Santa Cruz in 1949, he made his paint from scratch instead of buying from suppliers, as most stores do.

McCarty's son, Dan, kept up the tradition when he took over the business 19 years ago. But because of what he calls "more and more government regulation" and a quadrupling of his insurance, McCarty has decided to give up manufacturing the paint, which supplied the company's two stores, in Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

McCarty emphasized that he's still very much in the paint business — it's just that somebody else is making it.

McCarty said he knows five other stores in northern California that have given up making paint in the last few years. "We were the last one in Santa Cruz County," he said.

There was some sentiment in carrying on the family tradition, McCarty said, "but you can't eat sentiment."

McCarty doesn't object to regulation of his use of chemicals, but feels the rules go a little too far.

"The county (Environmental Health Department) is very strict," he said, noting that inspectors wanted to require a permit for "a four-ounce can of rubber cement" he used to secure the edges of carpets to the floor.

It wasn't just the cost of the permits (about \$350 a year), McCarty said, but the time involved in filling them out as well.

McCarty said he's as concerned as anybody else about the safety of the manufacturing process.

"I work here, and if anything bad is going to happen to any employee, it's going to happen to me, too," he said.

For 38 years, McCarty's paint-making operation was insured by the same company.

"They cancelled us this year," McCarty lamented. He looked into getting a new policy and found it would cost quadruple what he was paying.



Dan McCarty with a color dispenser for paint that his father invented.

One of the reasons McCarty made his own paint was to have quality control. "There's no secrets" to making good paint, McCarty said: It's simply including enough of the key ingredients.

McCarty still has some control over the quality of his paint. He gets his paint now from Spectra-Tone, a Southern California company. Some of the paint is Spectra-Tone's own formula, but some

is also produced according to a formula McCarty worked out with the company.

When he stopped making paint at his Santa Cruz store, McCarty had some empty space, so he decided to make something else: aluminum mini-blinds.

McCarty, who had been buying the blinds wholesale, decided "somebody is making money from these"

and started making them himself.

Making blinds is cleaner than paint-making, McCarty noted, "and your clothes don't get paint on them."

"I've learned a lot" about making the blinds, said McCarty, who is selling as many blinds as he and his wife can produce. "They're really popular. I never realized there are so many windows in Santa Cruz."

Industrial to 1970