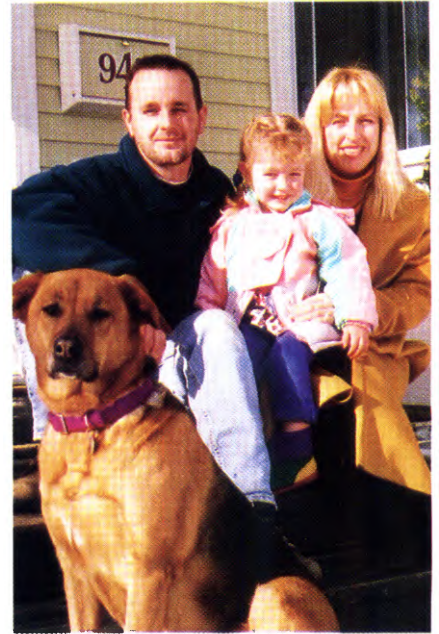


## Follow-Up

# Ann Meillier and Dave Correll

Faribault, Minnesota



Dave, Ann, daughter Madeline, and shop dog, Zuke

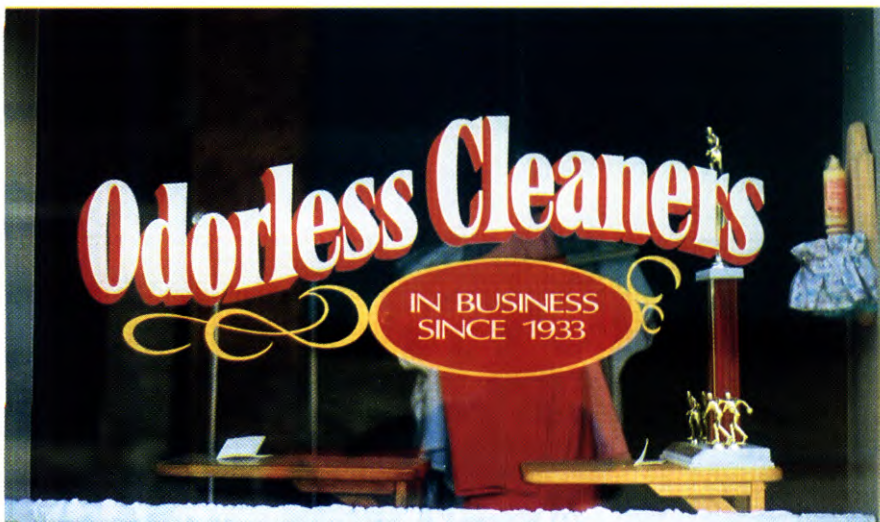
When they were profiled in the September/October 1989 issue of *SignCraft*, Ann Meillier and Dave Correll's shop, Brushwork, had been open for about one year. In looking back over the past seven or eight years, Dave feels that one of the biggest changes he faced was accepting the advent of today's technology into the sign industry.

"When we first started I was very anti-technology. I didn't like what was happening with the computers in the industry. Now I've come to terms with it, and I actually do have a lot of technolo-

gy here working for me. I think many people go through these feelings. You work so hard to perfect your skill, then all of a sudden, whamo! There's this machine that can do it almost as good."

Another change was in the type of work they've done in the last few years, as Dave's wife, Ann, points out. "We have gotten more into woodworking and fabricating large signs, such as 5-by-10-ft. sandblasted signs. We needed a larger production area, so we took down the walls of the art room where Dave did his drawing and opened that up into a greater shop

area. Our goal is to eventually have the woodworking area completely separate from the lettering area and the computer area. We



48-in.-wide window lettered with enamels. Since 1933 is vinyl.



16-in.-by-4-ft. A-frame. Aged 2-by-2s frame the overlaid plywood. Lettered with enamels



## Follow-Up: Ann Meillier and Dave Correll



33-by-96-in. overlaid plywood, finished with acrylic latex and lettering enamels



52-by-96-in. sandblasted redwood, finished with acrylic latex



Vinyl graphics were used on this modified Chevy S-10.

are currently working on some expansion ideas, too."

For the woodworking area, Dave added a table saw, radial arm saw, a miter saw, and a panel saw. His art room is now about 8-by-8-ft., which provides enough room for him to work up designs at the computer. He still does thumbnail sketches, but to present a sketch to the customer, he'll refine it on the computer and print it out for the customer.

"I have a Power Macintosh and run Amiable Technologies' Flexi-Sign-Pro™. I was familiar with the Macintosh because we have one in the front office. It's easy to use, and we really like it, so we decided to stay with Macintosh. I have it hooked up to a Gerber IVb™ for cutting vinyl. We're now using vinyl for about 75% of our signs. I'd love to do more hand lettering, but it's so much quicker with the computer, and it saves a lot of time. I'll often hand letter something, though, and scan it into the computer. That way it still has the hand-lettered look. To me, the computer is more of a production tool than anything else."

Dave and Ann are doing what they feel is a good mix of commercial work right now. When they first started the business, one of their goals was to remain versatile in the work they did. "One day we might do showcards," explains Dave, "then work on a sandblasted sign the next, and letter a cube truck the third day."

Ann still meets with customers and helps Dave whenever possible. "I come into the office every day at 10:00, after spending the first couple of hours with our three-year-old daughter, Madeline. I'm still pretty active in designing, but mostly in consulting with Dave on a job. I will forward my thoughts and ideas to him, and maybe do a thumbnail sketch or ask him to refine a design idea I have.



"I'm quite happy in the office, doing the bookkeeping and consulting with the customers. It's a thrill when I get to paint block letters or coat out a sandblasted sign with an old fitch. I'm sort of the gopher in the back when I get a chance, but to be honest, I bet it's only for an hour or so every other week now that our second child is on the way."

Dave and Ann have discussed hiring someone to help out in the shop, but feel that they would then need to increase their business. This would result in even more growth, which is something they prefer to avoid. They have recently worked out an arrangement with Mike Meyer of Mazeppa, Minnesota, who comes to their shop to help Dave occasionally. Dave, in turn, goes to Mike's shop when he needs extra help.

"For instance, Mike was here yesterday, helping me do a cube van on location," says Dave. "It works out really well, and Mike and I have become good friends as a result. It's a great opportunity for two sign painters to work together. It's almost like a miniature Letterheads meet when we get together!"

Rather than hiring employees, their main goal now is to build enough equity so that they can eventually purchase property and a building of their own. "At this point," Ann explains, "we don't have anything to sell but our skills and a few tools, so we have to look toward our future and our retirement. We know that to realistically prepare for our future we need to have some real estate. As far as changing the format around here, we know that in 10 years we're going to have to make some changes in terms of the physical work we do. We'll probably take a closer look at what we market."

"Overall, we're going in a direction that we wanted to go," Dave adds. "It'd be nice to do more of

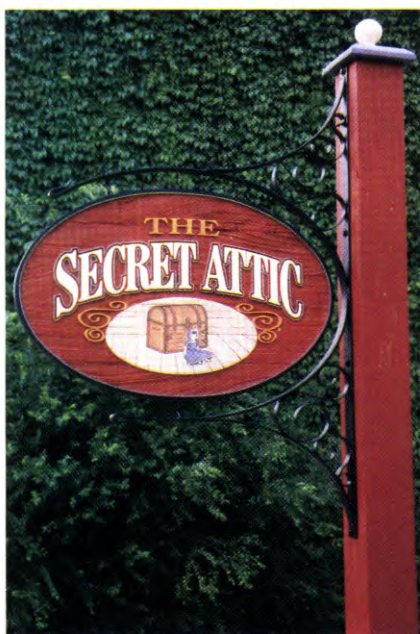
the high-end custom work, but the market around here really doesn't support that. We get some really nice jobs to do once in a while, but I also enjoy doing the typical commercial sign work, too.

"I'm happy with where we're at right now. Making a lot of money

isn't that important to me. One of my goals is to cut down on the amount of hours I put in. Now that we have our daughter and the new baby on the way, I'd like to spend more time at home with the family. That's important to me." □



48-by-96-in. overlaid plywood, finished with lettering enamels



24-by-36-in. sandblasted redwood, finished with acrylic latex



14-by-22-in. showcard