

Enterprise

BUSINESS PROFILE

It's a 'frame-up' at Lee Cox's business

By ANGIE MARTIN
Chronicle Staff Writer

They're everywhere! Over 230 metal frames and 250 wood frames in various sizes, colors and shapes line the walls of the Art Accent and the Frame It Yourself shop. In all there are over 8,000 feet of framing material in Lee Cox's shop. And in 10 years' time Cox has framed some interesting objects. "I have framed everything from Hanes underwear to gold ingots," Cox said. Currently he's encasing a World War II army jacket and three medals that belonged to a customer's father.

But at one time Cox, a graduate of Temple University, was a successful television writer and producer. He says he considers himself fortunate to have worked in the broadcasting field. "It's a great business but it's highly pressured. I wanted to do something on my own and this is the closest thing I could do to stay with my art," Cox said.

As an artist, Cox displays many of his works in the small gallery that occupies a corner of his shop. As a business man, Cox offers the community a chance to utilize their own creativity.

The Frame-It Yourself concept is simple. Customers bring in a piece, a photo or a painting, and select the kind of frame they'd like. Customers must also choose among 240 different mat colors. Cox and his employees then cut the frame, the glass and the matting. The customer is allowed to work in a small booth in order to assemble the frame as Cox has instructed. After completing a project Cox provides the customer with a small label which reads: "Custom Framed By." The framer signs the label and affixes it to his or her work.

Custom framing is also available for those who do not wish to acquire hands-on experience in framing their own works of art. Cox carries a large selection of ready-made standard-sized frames ranging



Cox's goal: to "provide the customer with the best possible product and service at the least amount of cost and do it as quickly as possible" (photo by Santana).

from leather and wooden frames to brass and porcelain styles.

"The reason our store is so popular is because we have everything in stock," Cox said. The company also stocks art supplies for the painter who suddenly finds himself low on pre-stretched canvas, pencils or water color.

By any one's measure it's easy to see that Cox enjoys his work. "This business is so fantastic because everyday I have a sense of accomplishment. You can start a project, complete it and see the job done. In the same day we can start something and finish it," Cox said.

It also seems that Cox never stops trying to learn in order to enhance his business and serve his customers. Only a few years ago

he took part in an art tour of Europe "to see some of the framing of the original masters," he said.

Cox not only displays his own art in his shop, on a rotating basis he also displays the creations of local and nationally known Afro-American artists. In his store window now observers can get a glimpse of works by Tom McKinney. McKinney's work can also be seen on the "Cosby" show, Cox said. Winston-Salem resident, James Huff's portrait of a horn player also occupies Cox's creative showcase. Just like a craftsman, Cox carefully chooses what will appear in his window.

"I'm trying to find things that have positive imagery," he said. "If we're going to have art for blacks

to have in their homes, it should have some strength, something positive."

Cox said he believes his company does some of the best custom framing in town because he's been able to successfully pass on his business philosophy to his nine employees. Cox said that philosophy is to, "provide the customer with the best possible product and service at the least amount of cost and do it as quickly as possible."

BRIEFLY NOTED



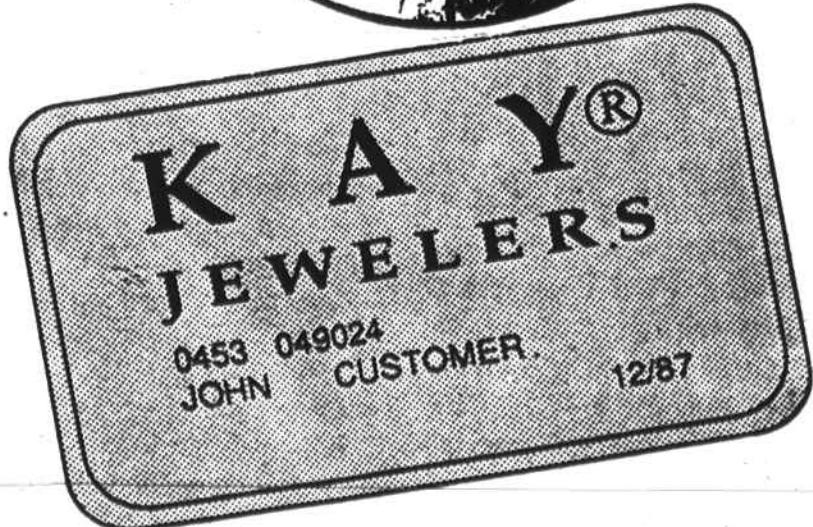
Brenda B. Diggs

Diggs named senior financial product manager

Brenda B. Diggs has been named senior financial product manager in the financial institutions group of First Wachovia Corporate Services in Winston-Salem. She will provide consulting service to other financial institutions.

Diggs joined Wachovia in 1968 and was previously manager of the Winston-Salem main office.

A native of Winston-Salem, Diggs is a graduate of High Point College.



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