



A Labor of Love

What is a lawyer to do after retirement—at age 51? We spoke with Jane Reddin to find out.

She had worked as a labor and employment attorney for almost 20 years at Lewis and Roca in Phoenix. When she left her partnership, she weighed her options for a new chapter in life.

*We called her minutes before that chapter was about to open. On April 18, her Phoenix retail shop **Practical Art** debuted. Selling “utilitarian items for everyday life,” the shop features the work of artists and artisans who craft wares out of “repurposed or reused materials.”*

We forced the entrepreneur to give us 10 minutes before her doors were flung open.

ARIZONA ATTORNEY: How long have you wanted to do this?

JANE REDDIN: I got the idea about four years ago. Do you ever go through those exercises where you say, “If money were no object, and you could do anything you wanted ...?” It wasn’t really a concrete dream until after I retired from the law firm in May 2006.

AZAT: You’re pretty young to be retiring.

REDDIN: Yeah, I am.

AZAT: So why not practice law until you’re 95?

REDDIN: I loved practicing law. It wasn’t anything like burnout. It was more about this: I felt like I’d accomplished everything I wanted to accomplish in my niche. I went through a kind of “simplify your life” thing where I sold my big house, moved downtown into a little high-rise condo, and I started really analyzing: Do I need to keep doing this? Is it really fulfilling me? Is there another chapter in my life?

I put the numbers together and figured out I could retire—I’d have to live a lot more simply than I did.

AZAT: Were you nervous?

REDDIN: Yes. I loved my firm so much, and I love all my partners, and I was nervous that they would be upset with me. Pretty much, they all said, “This is so wonderful; I wish I could do that.” And I said to every one of them, “You really could.” If you sit down and think about your priorities, you don’t need to make as much money as you do.

AZAT: This shop is quite a change for you.

REDDIN: This is totally a labor of love. People say to me, “Do you really think you’re going to make money at that?” And I say, “I don’t really care.”

It’s really more about the fact that I thought the Phoenix community needed a place to connect artisans who are making wonderful things you can use in your everyday life. I was inspired by my travels through Arizona—Jerome or Flagstaff or Payson—and there are all these cute little shops where they have these things that are accessible for the average person. Where is that store in Phoenix?

AZAT: But you didn’t open the shop right after retiring.

REDDIN: No. I did a lot of fun stuff. I went down to Costa Rica for six weeks to study Spanish. And my parents live in Buffalo, N.Y., and I spent a month and a half there. I just had this nice, easy, retired pace for awhile. And then I got the itch. What am I going to do?

AZAT: So you returned to your idea.

REDDIN: Yes, that store still hadn’t opened in Phoenix. I finally came to the conclusion, if I don’t do it, I’m going to spend the rest of my life going, “I wonder how that would have turned out.”

AZAT: Did the tough economy give you pause?

REDDIN: No. I don’t believe in that. I just don’t. Does that sound crazy? I feel like there are always opportunities in a tough economy. There’s always an economy, and you can always be a part of it; you just can’t necessarily do things the way you used to do them.

AZAT: You’re located just north of Camelback on Central.

REDDIN: Yeah! With the light-rail stop at the corner of Camelback and Central, if things go the way they predict they will, I think we’re going to have some really great synergies here.

I have to go! 

—Tim Eigo

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