


ALBUQUERQUE BUSINESS FIRST

Rock & Gem Store Secures Lease At Avanyu Plaza
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ETCHED IN STONE

Amethyst, Tiger Eye and other products sold at Mama's Minerals.

"I was teaching English at Laguna-Acoma High School," Randolph told Albuquerque Business First. "A friend of mine had graduated from the School of Natural Therapeutics and did an internship in Hot Springs, Arkansas.


She invited me to dig quartz crystals there." Hot Springs is one of the best places to find clear quartz in North America, according to Randolph.

When Randolph returned from her trip, she started to sell crystals and other rocks and minerals on a little card table at the University of New Mexico, back when that kind of thing was allowed. Soon, she was attending events like the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show and the Desert Gardens International Rock, Gem and Mineral Show in Quartzsite, Arizona.

The first time she attended, she had \$500 in her pocket – inheritance money from a relative.

"There was a vendor there who sold pyrite suns and fluorite (cylinders)," Randolph said. "This man I had never met gave me a whole flat of these crystals on credit. Just my word. No money exchanged hands. His friends thought he was crazy."

Randolph repaid the debt and never forgot that kindness as she was just starting out.



A face gem


Likewise other, the rock and gem business is back to good working relationships.

People like Ivy Corning of Harris-based Vintage Strategies have supplied Mama's Minerals with inventory for years. Getting that been in the business even longer than Randolph.

When asked about working with Mama's Minerals, Corning said, "Laura (Randolph) is amazing. She has built a tremendous business over the years. I've glad I was there a part of that. We been so much fun to watch her business grow."

At 49, Corning has 4 1/2 of experience in sales. Reflecting on this breadth of experience, he said, "Mama's Minerals has been a great customer. But the landscape is changing. There are not many Laura's around anymore. There are fewer people going into business like this. At the Tucson show, U.S. vendors and buyers are becoming fewer and fewer. I'm glad Laura has built the thing that will last."

While there may not be many Laura's around, he said, "The market for gem and minerals remains strong. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, 2019 domestic production of gemstones was at \$89 million. And while you might think of diamonds and other gems as the large market share, during the Covid era, crystals (think, according to Randolph).



Carving out a niche

Randolph, as so many entrepreneurs start out, did not think of herself as a business person. She had an interest in crystals and other minerals. This interest grew from a hobby to selling from tables at craft fairs on the weekend, to opening up a brick-and-mortar store in 1990.

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"We have a number of customer groups," Randolph said. "There is the metaphysical healing community, artists and jewelry, as well as families with children. We also have 'naturalists' who just like finding unique rocks and minerals for a collection. There are people who are avid lapidaries – people who cut and polish stones and gems. There are also people who just love the look of minerals and rocks as a part of their home or office decor."

There is something for every one of them, given at Mama's Minerals. That's why, with the location at Avanyu Plaza set to be torn down, the timing was right to make a move to Avanyu Plaza in spring of 2022.

The CEO and founder of Heritage Home & Home, also owns the current Mama's Minerals property. He said he considers his future plans for the Summit site. But the Business First via email that Mama's Minerals was a wonderful company that had been part of the community for decades.

According to documents brought before the Sunlight Openly Board of Commissioners in October 2022, Summit Hillman Properties LLC reportedly has plans for future redevelopments and expansion in the Summit District.

"We greatly appreciated having Mama's Minerals located in the Summit District for the past several years," Larson said. "We wish them great success in their new location."



Larson will no longer be working at Mama's Minerals. She is now working at the University of New Mexico. She is now working at the University of New Mexico. She is now working at the University of New Mexico.

Cast in stone

The move is happening in part thanks to a decision Randolph made 20 years ago when she met (and married) Larson. Now with the title of chief operating officer at Mama's Minerals, back then Larson was working at a pet care store. Randolph's cat was mousing the end of life, and Larson gave advice on housing and other care. That interaction made a positive impact on Randolph.

Later, Larson was working on the staff at a restaurant when Randolph could find a way to get her out of the job on the spot. It was a Wednesday, and by Friday Larson had joined the team at Mama's Minerals.

Larson and Randolph never looked back, with Larson becoming Randolph's most trusted advisor, and in recent years taking over day-to-day operations at Mama's Minerals.

After finding out they would have to move, Larson started scouting out a space that had the potential to be a "forever home" for Mama's Minerals.

"It was a situation that looked like we would have to be moving every few years, losing money for a buildout, and then starting the process over again in a few years," Larson said. "So, I started looking for something more permanent."

