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Boots fit for a cowboy king

By Joseph Duerrmeyer

A renowned custom bootmaker has selected Sisters as the location for his new boot boutique.

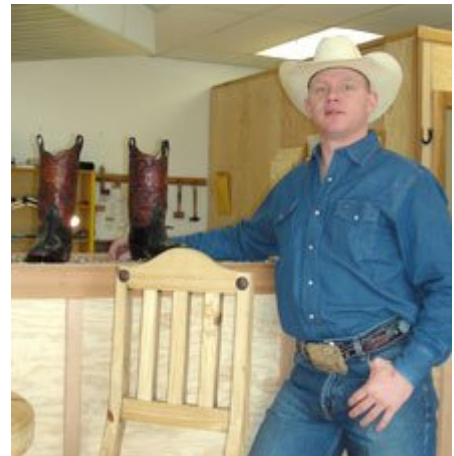
Ryder Gauteraux opened his new custom boot shop in Sisters last week, adding to the Western theme of the city. Now from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, quality custom Western wear is available in the Sisters area.

Gauteraux is a native Oregonian who has traveled the rodeo circuit riding bulls initially and then moving to saddle broncs. From the perspective of a man who has faced the worst that rodeo can throw at a competitor, he began to think about the lack of custom quality leather goods. From there, it was only a matter of time before this real-deal cowboy accepted the challenge and began his creative career.

In the image of Old West self reliance, Gauteraux taught himself all aspects of the trade. He read a few books, watched a video and soon was building his own leather goods. A natural perfectionist, his quality was soon noticed on the rodeo circuit, and it was only a matter of time before he was considered one of the best in the Northwest.

"I've been building boots for three years and chaps for seven. It's really just commons sense. The work isn't that hard," he said.

Although rodeo fans might not realize it, his work is familiar to anyone who has ever attended a rodeo in the Pacific Northwest. Early in the events when the rodeo queens make their appearances, the fine leather work of Gauteraux is on display.



Ryder Gauteraux has set up shop in Sisters.
photo by Joseph Duerrmeyer

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"I have been doing the queens' chaps for the Sisters Rodeo for about five years. Just about every one around here uses my chaps - Redmond, Prineville - almost everyone in the Northwest uses my chaps," he said.

His business had humble beginnings. His first shop was in a seven-by-10-foot room, which was also the laundry room of his home. Then, Gauteraux moved to Redmond where he lived for four years and started Western Ranch where he was a co-owner. The boutique is still located in downtown Redmond.

Western Ranch grew over the years and diversified into a variety of Western leather goods including purses, belts, chaps and boots. Gauteraux decided that the other parts of the business were taking too much time away from his love of boot and chap making, and he sold the business, reserving the chap and boot portions of the enterprise for himself.

As he began to look for a new location for his business, he decided that moving away from Redmond might open new doors for him. His search began, and Sisters was the hands-down winner in the competition. The Western-themed town, the friendliness of the people and the Sisters Rodeo were all important factors in his decision.

The building of custom boots is regarded by some as merely a vanity; however, there are many who find it difficult to obtain a pair of boots that fit.

"Sometimes a person has broken toes that never healed straight, or maybe the person is a 10 on the right foot and an 11 on the left foot. People's feet sometimes have a lot of weird stuff, so I can design a boot to fit, even if there are a lot of problems," Gauteraux said.

Although many purchase custom boots for the fit, there is also the consideration of style and the exotic for which there is a significant price to pay, both in terms of money and time. At present, there is a six-month waiting list for a pair of Gauteraux boots, and he will only make chaps for friends.

"They (the boots) start at \$1,100 give or take a little because of the options. That is for an ostrich stitch top boot. Here is a boot that is anteater with a tooled top that is about \$5,000. That is one of the most expensive boots. I am working on a pair of \$8,500 boots that have fully beaded tops. I have an Indian lady that is actually beading the tops. They're going to be bad ass," Gauteraux said.

Gauteraux already sees expansion of his business in the wind and is looking for some help.

"I would like to have someone to help out part-time, maybe a high school student," he said.

The person would help Gauteraux with his computer and book work and



the cutting out of leather.

"They don't really have to know anything. They just need to be meticulous. I can teach them everything as long as they are a perfectionist," he said.

Gauteraux Boot Company is located at 192 E. Main Ave.