

Millsong Mercantile wishes the community farewell

March 6, 2020



An elderly man perused through aisles of used books at Millsong Mercantile in his usual reticent manner. He was a regular at the used book and music shop, always kept to himself and always left with his arms full of books. This time, however, he stopped on his way out the door, looked back at owner Patti Pearcey and said, “You know, it is nice to go where somebody always knows your name.”

Pearcey has held onto that moment, along with many other fond memories from the 27 years of running Millsong Mercantile (formerly the Bookcomber) on 840 Third St. in Crescent City, which is why she regrets having to close it.

Millsong Mercantile is a lot smaller than it once was, according to Pearcey. It used to sit in a large building around the corner from its current location, a spot that allowed room for at least 12,000 more books than they carry now.

It also served as a music venue in those days. Her brother Dale Morgan also taught guitar lessons there, and the space worked well as a live music venue, seating 75 people.

However, when the rent got too steep six years ago, they had to downsize to their current location. There was no longer performing space or room for guitar lessons, but its shelves still poured over with books, guitar string and vinyl records. And within its walls, one could still find the serene atmosphere of an old bookstore and a friendly business owner with whom to converse.

“It’s like family. People stop in and say, ‘Oh, I just needed cheering up, so I thought I’d stop in,” said Pearcey. “It’s nice to have a place where people can go.”

Then the rise of the internet encouraged people to purchase online, causing the bookstore’s business to decline over the years – even this past holiday season did not bring any extra sales for Pearcey. With high rent costs and fewer sales, Pearcey said she has been paying to go to work instead of making a profit.

“We had to pare down quite a bit that was also about the time that Amazon started really kind of taking hold,” Pearcey said. “It’s very strange, and then people, we let it happen, you know. It’s not like it happened to us, but it happened by the choices we make.”

So after 27 years of providing literature and music supplies, Pearcey will close her doors permanently in March. It is a weird feeling closing a shop that has become more of a friend than a business, she said. Her favorite part of running the shop was the friendships she gained.

“It just is nice getting to meet so many people and travelers, and I’ve learned a lot,” Pearcey said. “You know, it’s not just retail. It’s people’s lives. It really reflects their lives, you know, their music and their books, more so than just products.”

Pearcey does not know what comes next for her, but she has family and a good support system in town and has never had trouble staying busy. She plans to take a year to figure out her next step while she gets rid of her many books.

She hopes people will stop by before she closes as she needs to lighten the number of books in her inventory. Throughout the years, several people supported her business, and she wishes to thank those who have been such faithful customers.

“I’ve had some wonderful customers through the years,” Pearcey said. “There were a lot of people that really always made sure that they support local and what that really means, you know — to tend to the community they want, and not just expect things to be there for them when they want it.”