

## How to Make Your Hobby a Paying Homebased Business

It's great to have a challenging and interesting hobby such as origami, papier-mâché; sculpting, fine art &ndash; painting and/or sketching, rockhounding, photography, or jewelry making. It's even more exciting to have a specialty in one of these fields that no one else has, and then to turn your special talents into a successful home-based business. It's gratifying indeed to be able to take two or more of these and combine them into a paying proposition.

That's exactly what Loring Windblad of Sierra Vista, AZ, did.

But these aren't isolated stories. Men and women across the country are joining the ranks of entrepreneurs converting hobbies into moneymaking propositions. It's important to note that none of these women originally planned to start a business. On the contrary, interest by others in their hobbies convinced them to sell their work.

### LORING WINDBLAD'S CUSTOM-BUILT COMPUTER BUSINESS

Loring Windblad spent 20 years in the US Army in Electronics, and retired from that position on January 1st, 1976. But in the course of those 20 years additional skills were picked up including teaching (electronics), typing (over 100 wpm), general writing and technical writing (electronics and communications, lesson plans, etc), photography and even SCUBA diving.

Years and miles later (read on below, also) found Loring in Canada playing in a major bridge tournament but also renewing acquaintance with his first love, whom he met in 1952. Strange things happened and they got married in June of 1990 and began their own business in July of 1990. The business took on a form of its own, evolving from humble beginnings into a Desktop Publishing and Graphic Design endeavor by September, when they purchased their own computer &ndash; and landed their first big job starting October 1st.

That same Friday night, September 30th, was portentous in several ways. Loring played his baseball games for his computer baseball league and then shut the computer down at midnight and went to bed. When the computer was turned on at 8 am to start the new job, nothing happened. Dead. No computer working. Obviously a dead power supply? No? Actually yes. The computer was two weeks old, under total warranty, but nothing could be done warranty wise over the weekend. So Loring called around to every computer business in the area and found one open on a Saturday morning, drove there, found a power supply that looked exactly like the one in the computer at home, made a deal to "rent it" for a week until a replacement could be gotten on warranty, took it home and put it in the computer.

It worked! The job began, a few hours late but on the day it was supposed to begin. And a new career was launched, even though we didn't know it at the time.

Calling upon his 20 years of experience plus lots of long talks with the Custom Computer Builder who had sold them their first computer, Loring slowly learned about computers and how to build them. Then, in 1992, a friend of a friend wanted a new computer. Loring "custom built" a computer for him, a brand new 486 CPU "screamer" type. The client was well satisfied. Time passed. Friends later in the year wanted computers, so Loring built them new computers. By 1994 Loring was building 5-6 custom computers a month, most months, in the "high profit" days of computers when they paid \$400 or more profit per computer.

One of the biggest things was finding wholesale suppliers for a new computer builder to purchase quality components from. With a little help from their original computer salesman, i.e., making careful notes on everything he told them, June and Loring developed a list of possible suppliers, then applied for re-seller status. And sure, there were periods when no computers were sold as well as months when 6-8 were sold. It was obviously a struggle, but a good one.

Networking became a way of life. June joined all the women's networking groups and Loring joined all the missed networking groups. Both made presentations and work came in, both desktop publishing and new computers. From 1995 to 1998 Loring sold an average of 25-30 computers a year. However, by 1998 the profit margin was falling out of computers, the days of \$400 were gone. By 1999 the margin was down to \$100 a computer and when you are servicing a computer for 3 years warranty service on a total of \$100 it starts getting pretty old pretty quick.

The sales kept up for a while, but by 2001 new technology, low profits and pending retirement for June and Loring caused a re-think of priorities. By the end of 2002 building custom computers was a thing of the past and a new era of life &ndash; retirement &ndash; was upon us. But the trip to and through building computers has been a fascinating one.

## LORING WINDBLAD'S PHOTOGRAPHY VENTURE

Way back when Loring first met June he learned that June knew how to not only take pictures but to develop and print those pictures in her basement darkroom. Never one to take a back seat when he could be learning something new, when Loring a few years later went to Vietnam in the Army he took up photography, including learning how to develop and print his photographs. This was 1965 to 1967. And in 1966 Loring helped to establish and run the unit photo hobby shop in Vietnam.

When Loring returned to the US he became an electronics instructor at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and he quickly made contact with the Post Photo Hobby Shop and got a part time job, thus learning more about photography for himself but also helping to teach others the fine art of photography.

Loring's next posting was to Panama where he continued with the local Post Photo Hobby Shop as a Photo and Color Printing Instructor for 2 ½ years, and also picking up work as a free-lance photographer. Loring soon began photographing such things as kids visiting with Santa, then developing and printing and delivering the photos, Then action work such as youth Karate matches, Pop Warner football games, Little League baseball games, and both team and individual photos. And, of course, weddings. All these photo endeavors paid surprisingly well, and Loring was soon not only very busy but making enough money to more than support his photography needs. And teaching helped keep Loring up with everything in the photography field so soon everyone with a question about cameras and photography was coming to him.

Being around military bases there was always opportunity for youth sporting event photography. And wedding photography. From 1970 thru about 1977 Loring did a pretty brisk business in photography, made a lot of friends and took a lot of pictures. And made a pretty good "extra income" that not only paid for all his cameras and supplies but provided a lot of extra money supplementing his income.

But it was hard work and long hours and Loring's son, silver smithing and rockhounding were getting in the way. The transition was made leaving photography behind and embracing a new business — jewelry making and silver smithing.

## LORING WINDBLAD'S SILVER-SMITHING BONANZA

Loring was always a rock collector. This gave him an eye for rocks that were different everywhere he went. As a soldier in the US Army he managed to live in France for four years, Panama for five years, and Southeast Asia (Vietnam) for 2 years, as well as extensive periods from coast to coast across the United States including California, Georgia, New Jersey, Kansas and Arizona.

Loring was divorced while he was in Vietnam when his son was three. Eight years later, in August of 1975, his ex- called and said, "I can't handle your son any more. You've got to take him!" Without getting into gory details, "Well, ok", and his son came to Arizona to live with him.

Loring, Jr., was an excellent artist and got straight A's in art in school. He was now in a new environment and Windy, as a way of keeping his son's interest up in the arts and new things, began taking Jr. and his friends out on camping and sightseeing trips in the Arizona desert. Loring also was taking Geology courses with the local Junior College, and began imparting that knowledge to his son and his son's friends while on their outings in the desert and mountain country of SE Arizona, the Basin and Range country.

Rockhounding gave the desert jaunts with his son extra meaning. Identification of various kinds of rocks and geological formations soon were followed with explorations of the old turquoise mines and an education in the copper-related gemstones of turquoise, malachite, azurite and chrysocolla. Use of the Army's lapidary hobby shop led to cutting slabs of the stones, revealing hidden patterns, then cutting the stone slabs into cabochons enhancing the pattern intricacies.

What are cabochons without jewelry? Silver smithing classes followed and then Junior turned his cabochons into some jewelry pieces for his mother and sister. Then came wax carving and lost wax casting, running the full gamut of classes and skills available. In order to keep expenses down Windy located wholesale outlets which supplied him with components to assemble jewelry such as chains, pendants, findings, etc.

After two years, Junior decided it was time to move back with his mother and Windy was left with all sorts time, of jewelry skills and pieces of original jewelry building up, some pieces rather unique. He turned to the local flea market and soon established himself as a regular jewelry maker, attending almost every weekend. Sales increased, and soon Windy began his jewelry business, The Stonewerkes, Southwest Originals in Wood and Stone. He was attending weekend flea markets and Art in the Park and Craft shows all over Arizona to sell his products. And he built up a chain of 8 businesses in two states which also handled his jewelry on consignment.

Loring actually took his "rockhounding" hobby turned jewelry business a large step further. He subscribed to all the commercial and trade magazines as well, and then combined his talents as a photographer and as a writer, photographed his silver smithing and lapidary projects, wrote photo-journalism articles on "how to" silver smithing projects and then sold them to the magazines.

Loring says "You never know when what you do as a hobby can end up being a very profitable business. Over the past 40 years I have had the rare pleasure of turning three hobbies into professions: photography, electronics and now rockhounding. And using other skills such as technical writing and typing in those endeavors. From humble beginnings&hellip;&quot;

### About the Author

by **Loring A. Windblad** About Loring: Loring Windblad is a published author, columnist, freelance writer and successful HBB entrepreneur over the past 40 years. His latest HBB involvement is with Organic Greens.

<http://www.organicgreens.us> [Contact the author](#)

Source: *ReprintArticles.com*

Source: <http://www.browsenet.info>