

Longtime Tualatin Gaming Shop Closes Abruptly

BY REID IFORD, TUALATIN LIFE

When one door closes, another opens... hopefully. Longtime Tualatin fixture Ancient Wonders, a board game and comics shop which for 21 years occupied a small building near Clark Lumber, closed its doors towards the end of November. However, it may be too early for its loyal customers to mourn the loss of their favorite location for buying comics and gathering to play fantasy board games.

Tony Rains, Ancient Wonders manager for the last 8 years, has formed a new corporation and made an offer on a Tualatin location in which he wants to open a similar business. Like Phoenix risen from the ashes, Tony plans to resurrect the spirit of Ancient Wonders under a new name.

If all goes according to plan, "Legends of Gamers" will be Tualatin's new go-to place for fans of Ancient Wonders.

"I've done all the state and federal paperwork, and sent in my financials to the property company which manages the building I want," explains Tony. "Now I'm just waiting to hear from the management company. I want to keep it in Tualatin, if possible."

But even the strong possibility of local gamers holding together their social community at a new location could not quell a sense of sadness and loss many felt with the passing of Ancient Wonders, which has seen multiple generations of gamers pass through its doors.

"We've been here so long our customer base is truly multigenerational," explains Tony. "One gentleman was a customer 21 years ago, his son has been a customer, and now his son has children."

"Customers have become employees," Tony adds. "This is truly a family store, and very much part of the community. I started out as a customer."

In the final hours before vacating the structure, Ancient Wonders was abuzz with activity. People were loading inventory into a trailer to empty the building, while a young lady stood on a ladder sawing away at a wall. She was removing a hand-painted mural of a character known as "The Beholder," so it would not be destroyed upon the demolition of the old structure.

Ancient Wonders owner George Harrison - yes, he says, like the Beatle - took time out from the organized chaos to comment on his feelings upon walking out the door for the last time.

"You know," and then there was a long pause before he continued, "there's no part of being here that is so obnoxious I would want out, but I'm looking forward to having a life outside of this place. Short-term, I want to take some time off, and enjoy Thanksgiving. But at some point I'm going to need to put together a resume."

Interestingly, when asked about his most vivid experiences during his two-plus decades at Ancient Wonders, neither had anything to do with operating the business.

"There was the big flood of '96," George says, "and the huge experience was Clarks Lumber burning down... my roommate coming in

and saying, 'George, we've got to go. The lumberyard is on fire.' Then realizing we were not."

"It is good when you can fully believe you have built a great community for 21 years," George adds. "Watch for good things in the future."

Like George, Adam Luchsinger has experiences spanning the entire 21-year history of Ancient Wonders. Adam was the first manager of the store when it opened in 1995, a position he held until 1999. He returned to assist with the closing, and perhaps for some closure.

"Bittersweet is always the go-to word," Adam says. "This was my first real job of importance. Everyone's life goes through phases. It's nostalgia now. We'll all be okay."

The history of the building as a comic book shop is longer even than the history of Ancient Wonders. For 30 years comics were for sale at this location. In the 1980s a business known as Lady Jayne's used book and comics store began the legacy. After that a new company came in specializing in collectible comics, Ron Chott Classic Comics. George took over the building in 1995, expanding to board games and providing a place for gamers to gather and play.

Manager Tony Rains explains the appeal for gamers who gather at Ancient Wonders.

"It's a social activity," Tony says. "It is competitiveness for the mind. People can engage each other in what is basically a sport. They can play against one other person, or a whole group. We provided a place for people with a shared love of games to get together."

Tony hopes that when he opens his new business, Legends of Gamers will provide the same experiences for years to come.



(Left to right) Store Manager Tony Rains, Jett Cat, Owner George Harrison, and Adam Luchsinger.



The shop was a popular spot for the gaming community.



Michael Phelps plays a game of Magic: The Gathering with daughter Chloe in the final days before closing.

