

COYOTE & OAK

VOLUME VI

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A PRINTED MAGAZINE, CREATED BY AND SHOWCASING CALIFORNIA ARTISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS.
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STEPHANIE HENDRY IS THE OWNER OF RUBY ROSE – A VINTAGE STORE AT MONTEREY AND JOHNSON STREETS IN SAN LUIS OBISPO – AND SHE'S FANTASTIC. SHE IS EASY, BREEZY, HILARIOUS. WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT HER IS THAT SHE KNOWS HOW TO TELL A STORY, HOW TO GO DEEP, HOW TO OPEN UP AND INVITE YOU IN. SHE'S RELATABLE, AND KNOWS HOW TO LAUGH HEARTILY. AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER, WE EACH ADMITTED WE'D NEARLY CANCELED THE INTERVIEW FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER. BUT IN THE END, WE TALKED FOR MORE THAN TWO HOURS, AND EVERY TIME WE STARTED TO SAY GOODBYE, I HAD TO TURN MY RECORDER BACK ON, NOT WANTING TO MISS ANOTHER MOMENT WORTH CAPTURING. WE COULD HAVE GONE ON FOREVER.

STEPHANIE REVEALS ALL...

Why vintage?

One of my favorite memories is traveling with my family in the sixties. My dad was a laborer; he was a carpet installer. He worked night and day to make sure we all had what we needed, and he lived for those two weeks every summer when he'd throw us in the old Vista Cruiser station wagon – there'd be six of us – and we'd go cross-country. It was always the souvenir shops, the gifts shops, and the trading posts that just made me giddy. He'd give each of us five dollars, and we could do whatever with it. It's funny because that's really my only memory from back then. It's us packing our little suitcases with our little things. So with my retail background and my love of road trips, and being able to go into a store and bring home a trinket – you know, something that makes ya dance – I think that's where it came from. It was natural – just follow your heart.

That's common advice, "follow your heart," and it's a beautiful sentiment; but it doesn't always seem practical in the real world. There's not much glamor in the life of a starving artist. Do you think it's irresponsible to tell someone to follow their passion?

It might be irresponsible to say 'make your passion your living', but you can't suppress it. I do think your extracurricular needs to lead to what you do on a small scale, because your soul has to stay alive. We all need things, but I think there's a way to do it smart, while also pursuing your extracurricular stuff.

Say you like camping. I like camping, and we have an Airstream we go out in, and it's so good – but, you know what? For someone else, put a tent or a teepee in your backyard. It's still the outdoors; you don't have to wait for the Airstream. You can go camping now, on any level. To keep yourself excited about where you want to be someday, don't wait for the someday.





Tell me about your early career. How did it lead to Ruby Rose?

I've been in retail since I was sixteen, so about thirty years. It was always clothing in L.A. I worked in the buying offices, so my background is buying, and the business end of fashion. People think buying is about the fashion and what's going on in it, but buying is a bunch of numbers. It's about the markups and keeping your costs in line. It was a lot of numbers, and I was in a lot of offices, but I learned from all the big corporations – the last one being Nordstrom in South Bay, in Southern California. It wasn't even a decision to be in [fashion]. It was my background. But the first thing you do isn't the last thing you'll do, so I started asking, 'Well, what makes me happy?'

I was probably thirty. I'd carried the ball for other companies. I commuted every day, and worked hard, and I knew the [Central Coast] was out there; the freedom of it, no freeways. I thought, 'If I don't do it now, I'll probably have to wait until I retire from something,' so I started with a small space in a store. But I would always want to straighten up every-one else's area and make it come alive – which was not appreciated. But it grew from there.

In the world of social media, where appearances aren't always representative of reality, people sometimes get the impression that following their passion and achieving their goals will be, or should be, quick, easy, and fun at all times. What was your experience?

It was hard, because at Nordstrom, they were good to me. You get vested in the company after three years, and I was just shy of three years. I was making a nice salary. We had a nice apartment by the beach, the car, the vacations; but I had met my husband, and we decided to take the leap and start our life up here. We went from one life to my husband getting a check and going, 'Here's your twenty and here's my twenty, until next paycheck.' It was really hard.

But I knew it wouldn't be forever, and it wasn't. I think when you're your authentic self, and you know that things don't make you happy, they will eventually come. If you want something, I think you can have whatever you want. I knew I wasn't going to be poor – I'm willing to work three jobs to get what I want. Today, we're both doing what we love, my daughter's in school, and we get to live in a beautiful place. It was the right decision at the right time.

What's the vibe at Ruby Rose?

We definitely have a vision. We're definitely seventies, which is totally relevant right now. I dedicate a section of the store to Ralph Lauren (he's my idol) and denim. We have a little farmhouse prairie going on up front, and in the back, we're a little more boho. I think we try to stay relevant, but not lose a sense of who we are.

What I love about vintage is that every item tells a story, and it's magical how those stories intersect with our own, as we pass these articles from person to person.

You're right. There's so much story there. The things that people surround themselves with, they're all stories. What I also love is that things were truly made so much better back then. Like a coffee table made back in the 1950s or '60s; the bones are good, the patina's good, and it's lived a life and will go on.

So what cherished vintage items do you surround yourself with? Are you sentimental about your possessions?

Sometimes [I am]. I had my grandma's ring. I barely knew my grandma, but my mom would wear [the ring], and then I got it. It was the best old ring, probably from the forties or fifties; it was so authentic and so good. I loved it; I just cherished it so much. Anyway, I lost it at a hotel in L.A. They said they never found it, and who knows, maybe it fell out of my bag or whatever; but I just couldn't rebound. I was consumed with trying to find this ring. I'd look in my car, I'd look on my dresser, and I decided one month that I was going to look somewhere different all the time. And then all of a sudden it dawned on me that it was just an item I was holding onto, not my grandma. I decided, 'I'm going to get another ring, and act like it was my grandma's ring, and treat it the same way.' It was a lesson to me that we put too much emphasis on the thing, when the thing really is just a representation.

Some things I let go, and it's fine – other things, I think, 'What was I thinking? I needed that!' – so I also have this little side obsession with trying to buy back things that I had in my youth. Like when my dad passed, and I sold his old Eames chair. I probably sold it for like twenty bucks, because I didn't know what that was. So now I have this mission: I'm going to keep saving money, and when my daughter graduates school, I'm going to buy that chair back. I keep





trying to buy all this stuff back, not because it's a "thing", but [because] my dad sat in that chair. I remember him sitting there, and it just feels good. [The chair] could be a knock-off – I don't care – but I want that back. At the same time, things come and go. There's always more.

With your great love of vintage, do you ever buy things new?

I rarely do. I'm not anti-buying new, but it's about quality. And I'd like to see U.S. jobs come back. But if a new trend comes in, and you have something that's eighty percent good bones, that's great. It can act as your artwork, your linens, table top. That's when you go to Target or World Market, and you enhance. There's a time and a place. But the bones of this old stuff are so good, and it lasts longer. This stuff is made better; it's made by craftsmen. It makes me crazy to go into a mass-marketed store with hundreds of the same shirt. It's like, do we need all of that? Sometimes less is more, you know, and more is less.

What do you enjoy most about Ruby Rose?

The best part about having the store is definitely meeting people and hearing their stories. It's the social part of it. I love the people I work with, the crew, and the neighbors. It gives the staff and me a forum. We just keep it light, keep it fun. And I love when people tell me, 'Oh, I bought something from you twelve years ago, and I still have it. I think of Ruby Rose all the time.' That's good. It means it wasn't silly. Your purchase meant something to you, and we acted as a conduit. We connected you.

You can find Ruby Rose at www.rubyrose805.com, and on Instagram at [@rubyrose805](https://www.instagram.com/rubyrose805). Shop the vintage treasures and get the full experience by visiting Stephanie's storefront at 1235 Monterey Street, in San Luis Obispo.