

Walter Methner and the Sandblasted Sign



Walter Methner is recognized by many as the man who introduced sandblasting to the sign trade. He began promoting the sandblasted sign in 1967 at his shop in Newport Beach, CA. Walter owned and operated Walter's Sign Studio there for over twenty years. He is now carving, blasting and casting signs in Quincy, CA.

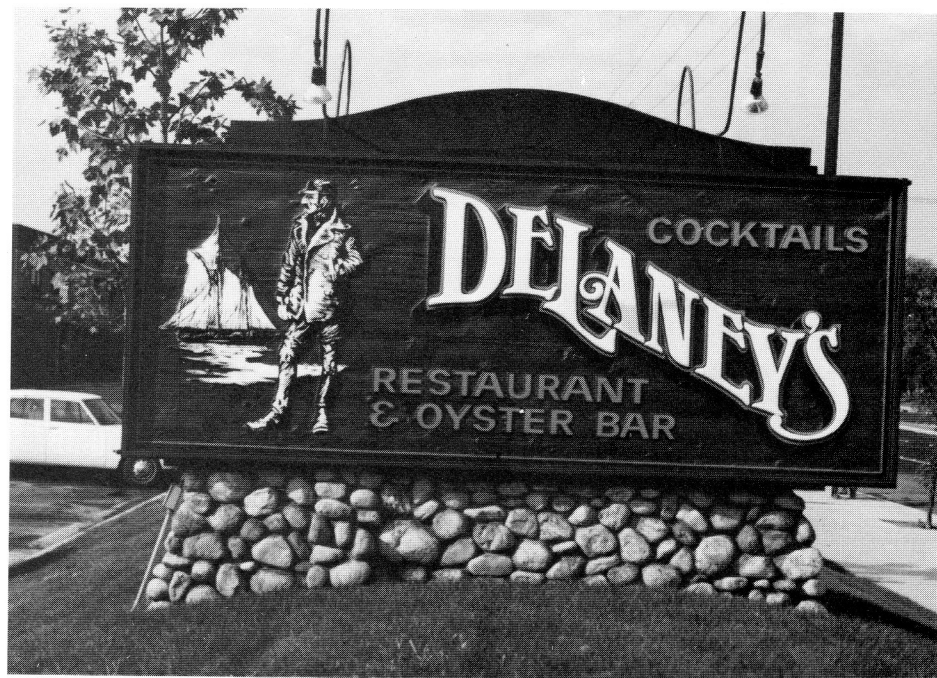
In 1954 the army let me out of its fold. I was working in a liquor store in New York for 80¢ an hour. One day, in the spring of 1955, I jumped into my little fourbanger import and headed west to San Francisco. Gas was 17 - 25¢ a gallon and the great move cost less than \$75.00, and that included a mule trip into the Grand Canyon and a short stop in Las Vegas! While working for a display company in San Francisco, I met my first

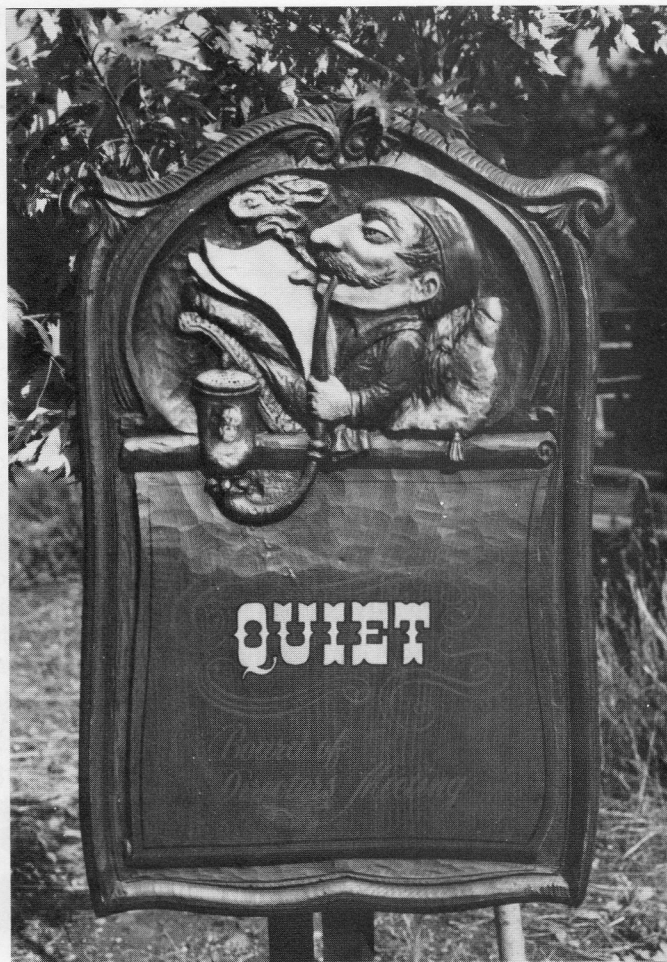
“real” signpainter. “Wow” I thought, “what he does looks like more fun than stapling up cardboard displays”. I got the boss to assign me to him as his helper.

The search for sunshine and happiness led me to Southern California that same year. After a period of repainting faded-out signs on car lots, I found my first job as a helper in a neon shop at \$2.55 per hour. Digging holes, spray painting and watching the journeymen gave me a pretty good basic education. I went on to work in outdoor advertising and a couple commercial shops, and by 1963 opened “Walter’s Sign Studio” in Newport Beach, CA.

Those were the days of housing tract signs and 18 x 24’s for the real estate people. By 1967 I had grown into a two man shop with a “go fer” lady, and moonlighters coming in on Saturday’s. Somewhere around that time I saw some

“You know, in the sign business there are so many things you can do. I think it is one of the most versatile fields around. You can develop so many things of you just take the time and have the interest.”

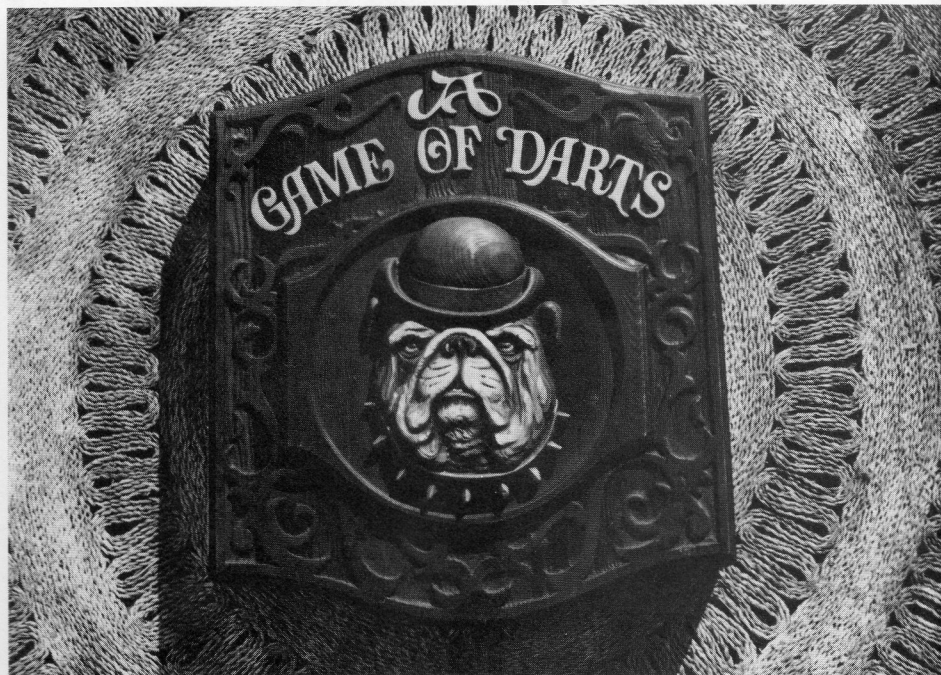




"There are a lot of ways to make a sign. I encourage others to use carving, casting, blasting, glass work and so on. If you limit yourself it's going to get boring, especially if you plan to do it your whole life."

sandblasted designs at an amusement park. About the same time my good friend "Woody", a local restaurant owner, walked in with two small pieces of wood, covered with duct tape. "How about sketching out 'Men' and 'Women' on the tape?" he asked me, and then went on to tell me that he intended to cut the tape and have the background sandblasted. "Sure," I said, "I'll do the layout, and let me know how the sandblasting comes out." Well, that's how I found out, and soon began to offer the new type of sign to my customers. This also meant I had to learn about woodworking and I bought my first clamps at this time.

The new product brought growth and more employees, and that required more sales. So, in 1970 we created the poster and mailed out several thousand. For a while our studio looked like a post office. After that the work really came in, even from far away. We had a lot of fun doing it, and developed the techniques used today, like double blast, antiquing and the use of the brayer roller to color the letters. By now local sign shops were





catching on, and it was the beginning of the rat race. I now had a front office and a C.P.A. I traveled a lot and drank plenty of Maalox. My insurance folder was an inch thick. I must admit I liked the success, but certainly missed the simpler life of running a sign shop, and being in production.

By 1975 I'd had enough and moved my operation into the mountains of northern California to continue on a reduced scale. A couple of my old fishing buddies already lived there and helped me build a house on 3 acres with creek, mountain view and all that. I am still here today. I have a partnership now, and my partner, Robert Conover, and I are thinking about cranking up a company that is somewhat larger again. In anticipation we are calling it "Sandstorm, Inc." Among other things (like casting) we are going to offer wholesale work to sign shop who prefer to sub-out their sandblasted work, or are looking for that extra bit of snap.

Walter Methner

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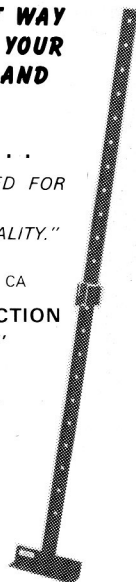
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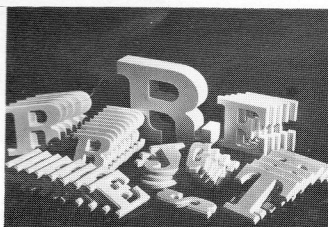


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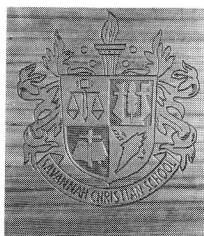
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