

15 MINUTES

Rainbow Records lives on in Cape Coral

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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A stretch of Del Prado Boulevard in Cape Coral is crowded with strip malls with mundane offices to more eclectic eateries, tattoo parlors and coffee houses.

Also in the mix, in a stand-alone building, is a music store called Rainbow Records. It was started in 1977 in Fort Myers, and is one of last remaining, non-chain places to buy or sell your favorite music, be it on CD or vinyl.

"Somebody brought in some vinyl the other day and it had an original Rainbow Records sticker on it," said owner Jane Roberts in her British accent. "That must have been from more than 20 years ago. It closed down a long time ago in Fort Myers."

When Roberts and her husband left England six years ago, they bought the business from the original owners. She usually teaches swimming lessons at her home in Fort Myers, but was running the store on Monday because her husband had a cold.

"We wanted to live in the United States and we had to buy a business to live here," said Roberts. "We came here on vacation and we just loved being here."

Her husband had a stressful job working for a big fertilizer company in the U.K., she said, so "we just decided we would change our life, sell everything we had and buy a CD store."

On Monday, Roberts was using a disc cleaner to prepare DVD box sets to be shipped to e-bay customers.

"We have a really good store on e-bay,"

she said. "So that takes up a lot of our time." Weekends are the busiest time at Rainbow.

"We have a mixture of customers, from young people to elderly people," she said. "A lot of people you've never met before say 'I remember that place on (U.S. 41).' And I think that's why we're still here. It brings back good memories for them."

One of them, on Monday morning, was James G. from Muse (near LaBelle). He was in Cape Coral to see his father, who was being treated nearby for cancer. He wondered if there was any connection between this store and the one he remembered from Fort Myers.

James walked through the isles as Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler screamed "I'm back! I'm back in the saddle again."

Rainbow Records also carries a good selection of DVDs, and there is a vinyl room in back, about the size of a closet.

"Vinyl is coming back," Roberts said.

James found a CD by Mother Love Bone. Before leaving, he took a good look at the well-lit room with clean, ordered shelves. It clashed with his old memories.

"There were just cats everywhere (at the old store)," James said. "It was cool and dark. When we walked in it was real warm. It had cats, incense burning. It just kind of reminded me of CD shops in New York City."

At times, Roberts also longs for a city — London. She lived about an hour from there before moving to Florida with her husband and son, who is 17 years old.

"I miss being in England," she said. "I miss the seasons and being near my family,



EVAN WILLIAMS/FLORIDA WEEKLY

Jane Roberts looks up at some of the old Beatles albums on display at Rainbow Records

because it's just the three of us here. But we have some very good friends... It was so different being here on vacation than actually living here. If we wanted to go see something at the theatre, really special, we could just go in to the city."

Near London, she taught swimming classes to adults. Now she teaches children, in the pool at her home. The walls in the office at Rainbow Records are crowded with articles about her swimming lessons, most of them from English newspapers and magazines.

"I've been teaching swimming over 25 years," she said. "I've taught hundreds and hundreds of people."

"I love to swim myself. I love to go up to that big pool at FGCU... I like to swim in the ocean, and dive. The first place I ever dove

was in Australia, in the Great Barrier Reef, so it's kind of hard to top that."

Meanwhile, for the Roberts, the future isn't mapped out. She still has connections overseas — her mother and brother live in England, her father in Ireland. And the family is waiting until their son graduates from high school to decide if and where they'll go next.

"We may end up back in Europe somewhere," she said. "We spent lots of time in Greece, so we may end up somewhere like that."

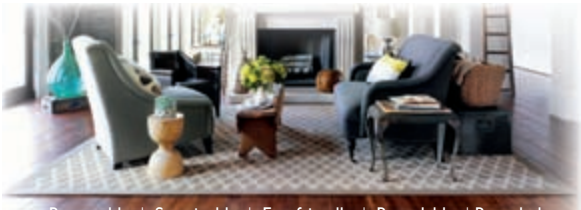
To inquire about rare records or for more information on Rainbow Records visit www.myrainbowrecords.com or call (239)458-4000. For information on swimming classes visit www.floridaswimmers.com or call (239)267-9728. ■



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Pete D'Alessandro, vice president and market manager, devotes his efforts to LARC Inc. and other area organizations, balancing his time between serving his clients and serving his community.

(Pete is pictured with members of LARC Inc., serving people with developmental disabilities)

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