

'Scent'-imental journey continues

After 40 years, Perfume Shop owner will close his store, work from home

There are dog whisperers and horse whisperers, and then there is Knud Tinglev-Hansen of Madison. Tinglev-Hansen is the whisper whisperer.

DOUG MOE



University Avenue, was saying Wednesday.

Tinglev-Hansen's customers — and after nearly 40 years in business in Madison, he has many loyal ones — haven't been whispering lately. Ever since Tinglev-Hansen sent out a letter a few days ago with a startling first line — "It's time to retire!" — he's been hearing from them, and several have had a touch of panic in their voices.

Tinglev-Hansen specializes in high-quality, hard-to-find fragrances. That, and customer service. His people have come to count on him, and they come from all over.

Wednesday morning, early, Tinglev-Hansen had a voice mail from Texas. A dentist, who used to live in Madison, needed for his wife a European fragrance, Creed, that's famous, expensive, and apparently not readily available in Dallas.

Tinglev-Hansen will get it for him, and here's the thing. Everyone should calm down. They should have read past the headline of Tinglev-Hansen's recent letter. He's not really retiring.

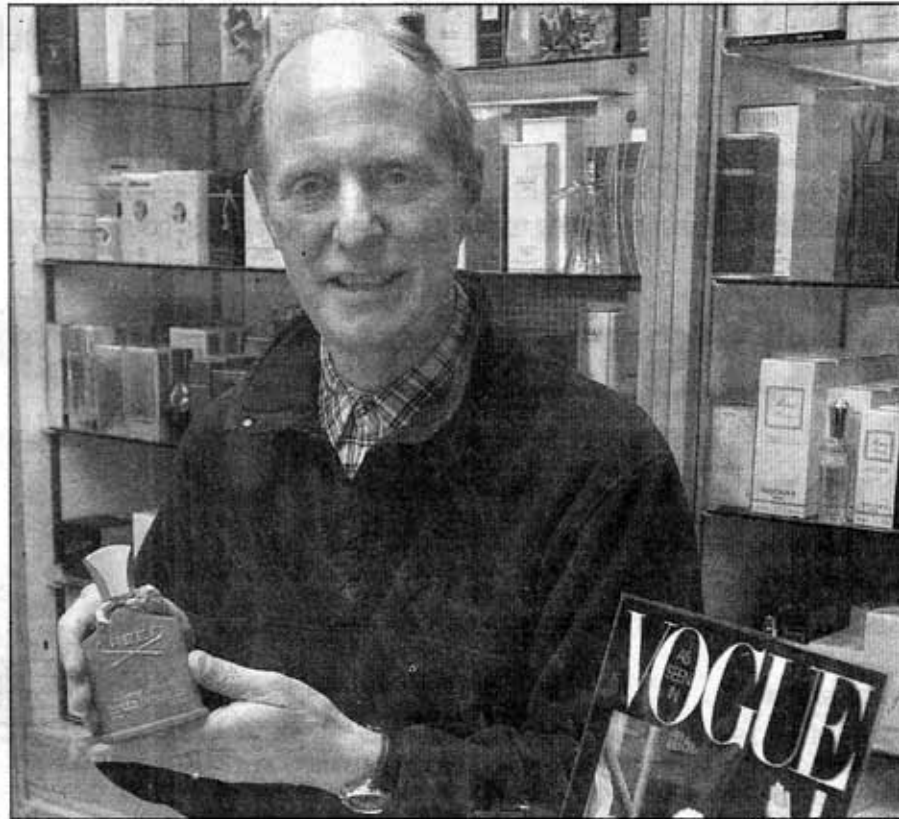
"I'm turning a page," he said.

Tinglev-Hansen, 70, will close his retail store at the end of August, when his lease expires. But he will continue to service customers at home through direct mail. He enjoys the business, and he can be lyrical on the subject of quality fragrances, calling them "a sentimental journey," and "a calling card" and "liquid flowers" that can "heighten your spirit."

It's just that he's been doing it six days a week for all these decades, and he wants a few more hours for himself. Tinglev-Hansen will spend a little more time on his beloved BMW motorcycle — he's just back from a trip to the Ozarks in Arkansas, and leaves Friday for a weekend in Door

Actually, he's in the fragrance business, but it's the same thing.

"A fragrance should be like a whisper," Tinglev-Hansen, who owns The Perfume Shop in the Walnut Grove Shopping Center on Univer-



State Journal archives

Knud Tinglev-Hansen, longtime owner of The Perfume Shop in the Walnut Grove Shopping Center, will close the store at the end of August, while continuing to service customers by direct mail out of his home.

County — and he wants to visit his native Denmark, where he still has relatives.

It was from Denmark, in 1970, that Tinglev-Hansen first came to Madison. His brother had come to UW-Madison on a scholarship and met, through Downtown Rotary, a man named Marius Hansen, who owned two Perfume Shop retail stores, one on State Street and one on Mifflin Street.

The Madison Hansen — no relation, despite some accounts to the contrary — was looking to get out of the business. Back in Denmark, Tinglev-Hansen, who was selling fragrances after a decade in the clothing business, agreed to come to Madison for a look. He stayed at The Edgewater, saw the bustling pedestrian traffic around the Capitol Square, and on Jan. 1, 1972, he bought both locations of The Perfume Shop.

The Mifflin store eventually moved to Pinckney Street, beneath L'Etoile. Tinglev-Hansen also opened — in 1981 — the store in Walnut Grove, and by the 1990s

he'd closed the Downtown stores.

Tinglev-Hansen estimates he currently has around 200 fragrances in the University Avenue store, most of them from Europe, where the quality is highest. He keeps detailed files on his customers, and lets them know when their favorites are available. He encourages people to find a fragrance that is like their personality, preferably something not too harsh or overwhelming.

After 40 years, as he transitions into working out of his home, Tinglev-Hansen expects his business will continue to include a lot of referrals. They even come from other retailers. The other day Tinglev-Hansen heard from someone who went to a big store looking for a somewhat obscure fragrance and was told: "You should really try that old guy in Madison."

Contact Doug Moe at 608-252-6446 or dmoe@madison.com. His column appears Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

FOOTNOTE

The State Journal's Footnote will try to explain the often heard, but perhaps not widely understood, phrases, ideas and controversies in the news. It runs weekly on Thursdays.

Incentives help lower solar cost

Q Last week, Madison's solar consultant Larry Walker said bulk buying and state and federal incentives can lower the cost of installing a home solar power system. What are the up-front costs to a system and how do the various incentives make it more affordable?

A It's not cheap. Jeanne Hoffman, the city's facilities and sustainability manager, estimates about \$10,000 at the low end. Kay Schindel, an engineer in her department, estimates the average home-based system costs between \$16,000 and \$22,000.

Let's split the difference on the average system and say it costs \$19,000. Schindel said a state Focus on Energy rebate will give you about 15 percent of a system's cost back — in this case \$2,850. And there's a 30 percent federal income tax credit on the system's after-rebate cost — in this case, \$4,845. Now the system's cost is down to \$11,305.

The system will produce between 2,400 and 3,600 kilowatt hours of electricity a year. A 10-year Madison Gas and Electric program will buy every hour of electricity the system produces for 25 cents an hour. Say the system produces 3,000 kWh a year; that's \$7,500 over 10 years. Now the system's cost, after 10 years, is \$3,805. Meanwhile, you pay regular rates for electricity, currently at about 13 cents an hour, Hoffman said.

Nevertheless, "everyone recognizes that the up-front costs that you have to come up with to install solar is an issue," Hoffman said.

To deal with it, the city is considering two programs, which could be used together, to mitigate the cost:

- A property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program would loan city money to homeowners or businesses who want to install solar and allow them to pay it back, at low interest rates, as part of their property tax bills, typically over 20 years.

- Soliciting bids from solar installers to install solar across a whole neighborhood in order to get a lower per-property cost in exchange for guaranteed work in the same geographical area.

— Chris Rickert