

one+one Ross and Eva Heath



RELOCATED:
Eva and Ross
Heath are back
in business in
Bangalow after
a four-year
sabbatical.

Ross and Eva learn not to let their own business own them

By Megan Kinniment

Heath's Old Wares was a Ballina landmark for 13 years. After a four-year break from the shop, Eva and Ross Heath recently relocated to Bangalow and hung out the old shingle.

Ross: I met Eva when I was 19. I remember her eyes. We'd gone to Maitland for the weekend and I met her at the show. I used to visit her on the weekends and I'd sleep in the back of the ute.

Eva: It was probably love at first sight. I'd just left school. After three months we moved in together. It was a shocking thing to do. My step-mother wouldn't talk to me.

Ross: I wasn't allowed in the house - I had long hair.

Eva: We moved to Ballina in 1990. I'm anti-cold and this area was a rabbit warren of opportunities because of its proximity to Brisbane. I got a job working in Hagan's Harmony House in Ballina and when they downsized the shop Ross started taking a lot of the old stock to the markets to sell.

Ross: I didn't start seriously collecting until we moved over here.

Eva: Ross has always been a hoarder. His dad had a turkey farm and had a museum on it, so Ross was brought up with an appreciation of old things.

Ross: My father had old guns, telephones, even an old stuffed penguin. He wasn't as obsessed about it as I am though. I've always collected things.

Eva: At one stage he had a VW

engine stored in the roof. My attitude is if you can't use it don't bring it in the house. I have a library of books, that's my only vice. But they're all well-used.

Ross: Eva's a minimalist and she doesn't like clutter.

Eva: We had the shop in Ballina for 13 years and it was seven days a week. We were plain exhausted. If you're not careful a business can own you. We were both so close to burning out.

Ross: I needed to rest. It had come to a stage where it stopped being a pleasure. After I'd had a rest I was ready to start again. You have to make a living.

Eva: Last July we opened up shop in Bangalow. Our kids had left home and it was our time. We'd always wanted to be in Bangalow. We have a new rule this time: that the business doesn't own us. If we want to go to a family gathering, for example, we hang a closed sign on the door. It was a big lesson to learn.

Ross: To me work is like my playroom. Instead of playing cards or something, I go to work to do my research and clean things. I love old things, the history of them. And people who collect things are generally pretty interesting.

Eva: It would be a crime for Ross not to do this work. It's his passion. So many of the old customers have followed us to Bangalow.

Ross: We argue over little things like where a sticker should go on an item or the prices. When I walk out of the shop she'll sometimes move the stickers and change the price. In this game I see a lot of divorce, people splitting up. It makes you more determined with your own marriage.