

Veteran massage therapist calling it quits

By Kathryn Reed

In another week there are going to be a whole lot of aching bodies on the South Shore. That's because certified massage therapist Rosemary Manning is retiring after 30 years in the business – all of which were spent tending to bodies in South Lake Tahoe.

“She has radar in her fingertips” is how longtime client Virginia Glenn describes Manning. “She knows when to dig deep and when not to. I'm going to miss her thumbs and elbows in my muscles.”

Glenn, like hundreds of others, isn't quite sure whose hands they'll trust next.

Manning doesn't know how many clients she has worked on through the years, but many have been with her for decades. And it's a local clientele. She would only work on visitors if they came via a referral from someone she knew.



Rosemary Manning is retiring after 30 years as a massage therapist in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Manning didn't set out to be a massage therapist. She was getting her master's degree in clinical psychology to be a marriage counselor when she met Gil Ralston who owned a massage school in Carson City. He mentioned a workshop he was offering. She went. And soon she was on her way to being a massage therapist.

"I've always been interested in the mind-body connection," Manning told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I believe most illnesses and injuries have an emotional component to them. This allowed me entry into hands-on work with people."

Manning finished her master's, and while she never became a counselor, in some ways a massage therapist does more than body work. It's about listening to what the client says as well as what their body says.

"I think that Rosemary has that intuition. She knows what you emotionally need and what you physically need," client Melissa Bornstein said. "Maybe it's a gift others don't have. They go through the motions. She has an inner sense."

Many of her clients have become friends outside of the office. She has watched young women become moms, and has seen clients go through all the good and bad that life brings.

"You are so intimate with clients. You know so much about them. I will miss that trust," Manning said.

"I'm not suggesting massage is medical, but so many times when you go see a medical professional they have not read our chart, they don't know who we are. When a client walks in they are the only thing matters for that hour or 90 minutes. They are my world."

She asks if they are still being bothered by an ailment they had at the last visit, how vacation was, inquires about family.

“I want them to feel listened to and taken care,” Manning said. It’s all part of tying the mind, body and spirit together.

“When I work I can visualize tissues in my brain. It’s like sculpting. I can see what I want to achieve. It’s like an art form,” Manning said.

She has seen quite a few changes in her three decades as a massage therapist. Twice Manning worked with a group of massage therapists to rewrite the South Lake Tahoe ordinance for practitioners.

“I’ve seen (massage) become more accepted by the general population and by the medical community,” Manning said.

Before becoming a massage therapist Manning worked for Voluntary Action Center as the executive director. She surprised quite a few people when she left that job to work in a casino as a massage therapist.

She started at what was Caesars Tahoe, then went to a chiropractor’s office before opening a practice with another therapist. For the past 16 years she has been the sole proprietor of Tahoe Health Touch on Emerald Bay Road.

There was a time when she did six or seven massages five days a week. In the past couple years she has cut back the days and hours.

“After 30 years, it’s hard on the body,” Manning said. “You are standing, you have to use body mechanics. I’m fortunate I don’t have carpal tunnel. That’s what a lot of massage therapists get. There’s a lot of pushing, heavy work ... it can affect your neck and your back.”

The 61-year-old said she just knew now was the time to walk away from massage.

Manning intends to continue her emotional freedom technique

work, which uses tapping on pressure points and conversation to assist with fears, grief and other issues clients may have.

She will also have time for scrapbooking, drinking wine, cross country skiing and reading.