

# Celebrating 30 Years—Hear Sam Naito’s Reflections on the PDX Clocktower

[portside.portofportland.online/2018/06/clocktower-30/](http://portside.portofportland.online/2018/06/clocktower-30/)

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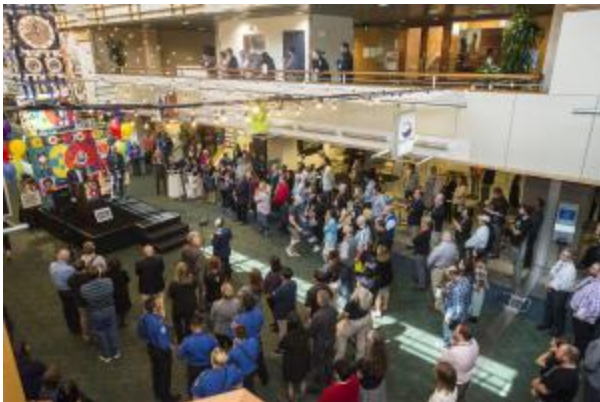
Opening Event 1988



Circa 2001



Circa 2008



30th Anniversary.

To coincide with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PDX's Clocktower, Sam Naito, founder of Made in Oregon stores, shares memories about the store's beginnings at Portland International Airport.



### **How did Made in Oregon stores get started?**

I began in retail by opening Import Plaza stores in 1962, which were scattered all around Portland. I went on buying trips around the world and noticed the long lines at the duty-free stores at most airports. They would sell whiskey, cigarettes and small gifts items. While traveling, I began to think that a gift shop at the Portland airport would be a great addition.

I went to then Executive Director Lloyd Anderson and pitched the idea. At that time, I was told the news stands had exclusive rights to manage the stores at PDX, so the idea was not heard. However, I later convinced a Port commissioner that a store selling only Oregon merchandise would be the perfect store for an airport environment. Made in Oregon opened in 1975 as one of the original tenants of the Oregon Market (now Clocktower Plaza).

At that time, it was more difficult filling the store exclusively with Oregon merchandise, but as time went on, Oregon artisans became more creative and diverse. We now have over 500 vendors and sell everything from local foods to pottery.

### **As one of the original shops in the Oregon Market (now Clocktower Plaza), did you feel that you were a retail pioneer?**

When I look back now, I see that we were a catalyst that started airport retail. I believe we were one of the stores that helped trigger the local focus.

### **Today your stores carry everything from Oregon wine and specialty treats to quirky local finds such as Sasquatch or PDX carpet themed items. What are your best sellers? What type of items were popular when you opened 30 years ago in the airport?**

When the store was first opened, we carried many Pendleton items such as blankets, gloves and men's shirts. We also had many of the food items you see today – hazelnuts, salmon, and beef jerky.

Today, we sell approximately 100 bottles of Oregon Rain water per day at the airport. It is our top seller. Other popular items include Moonstruck Chocolates, marionberry jam, McTavish shortbread cookies (shaped like Oregon) and t-shirts. The offbeat local items didn't become a thing until the early 2000s.

**What are your personal favorite items in the shop?**

I love Portland Ketchup, Moonstruck Chocolates and the Hydro Flask.

**Did you ever think when you opened at the airport more than 30 years ago that your store would be so popular today?**

The airport store was the first and helped set the stage for all the others, making the brand more recognizable. We have nine stores and a website now, with some Oregon brands that are green and eco-friendly. I'm proud to have grown my idea—which started from seeing shipping containers of countries on the side that said, "Made in Hong Kong" or "Made in England"—into a concept that supports local products and gives customers a true Oregon experience.

For more information on the series of unique experiences and tasting events planned throughout the summer at the airport and to enter to win a prize package from Travel Oregon, go to [www.flypdx.com](http://www.flypdx.com).