

Local couple's water worth weight in gold

They're going national with Nature's Tears, their bottled eye spray

By Susan Goracke
of the Daily Courier

Worldwide, water is big business, and Sharon and Bill Kleyne hope some of its profits flow into their small but growing Grants Pass company, Bio-Logic Aqua Technologies.

Unlike multinational corporations that bottle drinking water with designer names such as Evian and Perrier, Bio-Logic is after the pharmaceutical market, butting heads with the likes of Bausch & Lomb and Pfizer, which have been around more than 100 years.

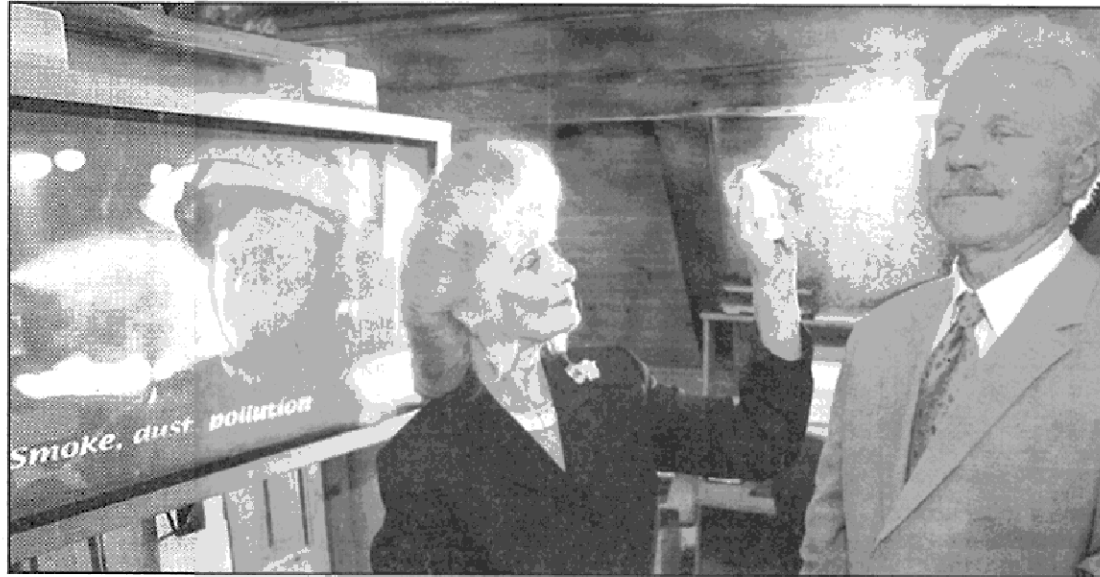
Bio-Logic — the world's first pharmaceutical-water bottling company, according to its founders — produces Nature's Tears EyeMist, a patented spray which uses pure, sterile, tissue-culture grade water to relieve dry, irritated eyes.

It's a product whose time has come, said Sharon Kleyne. Today, dry eye affects millions of people and causes stinging, burning and itchy eyes. The condition often is caused by staring at computers all day, wearing contact lenses, taking certain medications or by other environmental or medical conditions.

Bio-Logic's slightly acidic water, with its pH of 6.4, originates in southeastern Oregon and flows in two underground aquifers beneath the Kleyne's 24 acres along the Rogue River's northern banks west of Grants Pass.

The Kleyne's discovery of their underground artesian spring has proved better than striking oil. With their product selling for between \$6 and \$8 an ounce — and therefore more than \$400 a gallon — even \$2-a-gallon gas prices seem like a bargain.

Yet, each 1-ounce canister of Nature's Tears provides about 100 one-second sprays, close to the equivalent number of eyedrops folks can expect from a similarly-priced bottle of Visine.



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Above, Sharon Kleyne sprays Nature's Tears EyeMist on her husband, Bill. A slick TV commercial will soon begin touting the product, below, which is already available across the country.

Company director Sharon Kleyne first tapped into the water in 1978 for a cosmetic product, Nature's Mist, which she found could help replenish moisture in the skin lost through dehydration.

But, as she demonstrated the spray-on product at Neiman Marcus and other high-end department stores around the country, customers kept telling her it made their eyes feel "so good."

To find out why, Kleyne approached two Oregon eye doctors — William Mathers of Oregon Health & Science University's Casey Eye Institute in Portland and Philip Paden, a Medford ophthalmologist in private practice.

Mathers discovered the water contained dissolved ions that produced its slightly acidic pH. When sprayed in ultra-fine droplets, the water restored moisture to the eye's tear film without disrupting the film's delicate structure.

"The delivery system is half of



what makes the product effective," Mathers said.

Paden explained that the gentle mist allows people to put 1 micro-liter of water into the eye's tear film and

produce sores on her hands and fingers, plus red, itchy eyes, among other symptoms.

"He used (Nature's Tears) on me and gave me a bunch of cans," said Edmonds, a former nurse. "It works great. Now, I use it all the time."

Shirley Kleyne said Nature's Tears is helpful for people who have had LASIK eye surgery and for people with arthritis, who find it difficult to use eyedrops.

"In a sampling of 86 patients who previously had been using artificial tears-type eyedrops, more than 80 percent said Nature's Tears was equal to or better than anything in the marketplace," Paden explained.

Following several years of research, in 2001, Bio-Logic began introducing its product to eye-care professionals around the country through articles in trade publications and appearances at medical trade shows.

Next, the company concentrated on educating pharmacists. With positive acceptance, the company placed its product in several large retail outlets, including Fred Meyer, Save-on Drugs and Albertsons.

In Grants Pass, the product also is available at Grants Pass Pharmacy, Service Drug and Sunshine Natural Foods. Today, Nature's Tears can be found in several thousand drugstores throughout the country.

Next month, Bio-Logic Aqua Technologies plans to launch a national media campaign with a 30-second TV commercial that will air on most cable channels.

In addition, the company has purchased 5 acres in the North Valley Industrial Park in Merlin, where it plans to break ground on a new 60,000-square-foot bottling facility during the first quarter of 2004. Currently, Bio-Logic contracts with a bottling company in Indiana.

Sharon Kleyne expects the new facility will add about 60 new employees to the company's current local workforce of 15.

For more information about the company, call 474-0950 or visit www.naturestears.com.

□ □ □

Reach Susan Goracke at 474-3725 or sgoracke@thedailycourier.com