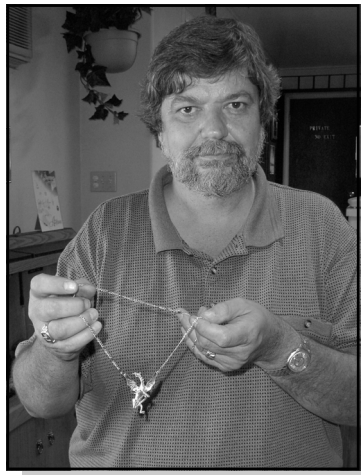


10 minutes with...

Michael Yanase

Jeweler and owner of Yanase Jewelers



Age: 50
Lived in Illinois Valley: 23 years
Secretary of the Kerby Belt #18 Masonic Lodge

How did you get into working with jewelry?

I broke my back and neck in a car accident and I was laid up. A friend's father owned a jewelry supply store and wanted to know if I wanted to shoot waxes, which is the grunt work of the jewelry industry. It just started from there and I have developed a passion for it.

Did you jump right into jewelry making?

Yeah. It was a long apprenticeship. Back then you didn't go to school and get a 'sheepskin' for it. You worked under a master, or two or three.

What is the most outrageous jewelry you've made?

I did the signet jewelry for the DeLorean Motor Company. I've done lots of things from very elegant and petite to 'Oh my God, I can't believe they're wearing that!' It's kind of a personal thing. What's ugly to me may not be ugly to somebody else.

What are some of your hobbies?

I like to travel and my wife and I have a passion to try and see as much as we can see around here. If there is a road and it has two ends we will eventually have driven on it. I also raise exotic dogs and I like music.

How did you get into raising dogs?

I bought a dog and I got a male and they had puppies and I realized that's a way you can make money. I raise poodles and Yorkshire Terriers and Chihuahuas.

What is something you have seen driving in the valley that surprised you?

Everything around here blows my mind. We live in a great place. We're an 90 minutes from anything you want to see. From the ocean to the mountains to the snow, this is beautiful country. I wish the economy was better here because it certainly has everything else.

What else do you like about living in Illinois Valley?

There are some awfully decent people that live here and if you really have a problem they come out of the woodwork to help you. That small town attitude doesn't exist very many other places. You have the small town politics and the rumor mill but that is a small price to pay for the beauty and warmth of the people.

What other types of work have you done here?

When I first moved up here there was no money to be made doing what I do. I became a paramedic and spent 13 years here running up and down the road trying to save the world. In 1994 the climate had changed and we decided to try and open this store. We're not getting rich but we're able to live where we want to live.

What is your favorite metal to work with as a jeweler?

I like gold. Yellow and white gold are my favorite metals. I do work in silver but I rarely work in platinum because I personally don't care for it.

If you weren't a jeweler and business man what would you be doing?

I probably would have gone into the medical field, human or animal.

What is your favorite ice cream?

I'm on the Dr. Atkin's Diet, so none. I guess if I get a craving for chocolate I could probably harp down half a dozen chocolate bars at once, but that doesn't happen very often. I've just never had much of a sweet tooth.

— Interview by Steve Fairchild

Nifty Tidbits

By CHUCK RIGBY

Last week's article discussed spotted knapweed, star thistle and Russian knapweed. The BLM has a booklet that explains noxious weeds of Oregon. Copies are available at the I.V. Visitor Center and at the Kerbyville Museum. The U.S. Forest Service will also have herbarium specimens of these weeds which can be studied at the Kerbyville Museum.

Speaking of the museum, I have recently become reacquainted with the amazing numbers of nifty objects that are on display there. One in particular that caught my eye was a buckskin suit that probably belonged to Ezra Meeker. For students of the Oregon Trail, the name Ezra Meeker has special significance. But let me tell a bit about the first suit.

In 1943 there was a Hill Ranch out on Holland Loop, east of where the Holland Store is located. The ranch area is now called Three Creeks Winery. Bob Hill, who owned the ranch in 1943, was later killed in a car accident.

The Hill Ranch had a large old house that was not being used at the time. Jack Heald, a high school senior, had some spare time and with a friend, explored around inside the vacant house. In an upstairs closet they found the buckskin suit. Inside a pocket of the suit was a picture postcard of Meeker wearing the suit, or one very similar to it. The suit was used at least once in a local parade and was later donated to the museum.

Meeker probably did not live in Illinois Valley. But he may have visited the area, or at least his suit was brought to Holland Loop where it stayed until 1943. Meeker, and his suit, had become well known along the Oregon Trail and as far east as Washington, D.C. and New York City from 1906 until his death in 1928.

Meeker was born in 1830 in Ohio and moved with his family to Indiana in 1837. His father was a miller and part-time farmer and meeker, spending little time in school, worked on his father's farm.

He married Eliza Sumner in 1851 and that same year the young couple headed west to Council Bluffs, Iowa. The next spring the Meekers and their newborn child were on their way to Oregon with an ox team and covered wagon.

Instead of Oregon, Meeker and his family, along with his brother, went north and settled at the south end of Puget Sound. He helped to start the town of Puyallup, Wash. And became the first mayor. This is near today's Tacoma and there is a nearby town named Sumner, possibly named for his wife's relatives.

Meeker eventually became a hop farmer and by 1885 he was known as "Hop King of the World." The Meekers also became very wealthy until 1891 when the "hop louse" destroyed their crops.

He then tried other crops, gold mining in Alaska and perhaps Illinois Valley, and wrote some books. In 1906, at age 76, he decided to publicize the Oregon Trail. He obtained and wagon and two oxen, 'Dandy' and 'Dave,' and headed east along the path he had followed in 1852.

Along the way he wrote articles for newspapers, made speeches to local groups and encouraged area citizens and towns to set up monuments and markers to commemorate the trail.

In the East, he met with President Teddy Roosevelt and called on Congress to mark the trail across the country. He repeated this trek in 1910 by ox team but with more publicity. He traveled the Oregon Trail later by automobile and airplane to repeat his efforts.

His time and troubles eventually were successful and in 1930 a nationwide celebration concerning the Oregon Trail took place. However, Meeker made his last trip in 1928 and became ill. He spent time in a Detroit hospital and then returned to Seattle where he died on Dec. 3, 1928 at age 98. His efforts to bring recognition to the importance of the Oregon Trail throughout the USA were a great contribution to an understanding of our history.

IVCRT Insights

By RON PHILLIPS

One of the important services provided by the Illinois Valley Community Response Team is the Community Grant program, which makes available \$500 grants to area organizations or groups undertaking a worthwhile activity that will benefit the valley.

The grant application is a simple two-page form and turnaround can be quite short. After review by the appropriate CRT committee, a recommendation is presented to the board at the next business meeting for a vote.

This is the third year for this program. The board decided last September in adopting the annual budget to increase the amount available from \$5,000 to \$7,500.

Sixteen grants were awarded since last October, including two from last year, totaling \$7,655. The remaining \$835 is still available.

A variety of different projects were assisted by the program: The first award of the year was to the Rough and Ready Buyout Association to use as a match for a state grant to assist in feasibility studies and developing a business plan for a possible Employee Stock Ownership Plan. Lorna Byrne Middle School received two awards; the first was for the Wise Guys After-School Program and the second to support the library enhancement project to update books for the accelerated reading program, research reference and classics. The other award for education was to Dome School for the Hope Mountain Barter Faire to raise funds.

Two awards were made to support youth sports teams. I.V. Little League received funds to help with the purchase of a banner to be displayed in Downtown Cave Junction to increase community involvement in and awareness of their activities. With cutbacks in school sports because of the state budget crisis, the IVHS Booster Club received a donation to its campaign to restore the junior varsity and Lorna Byrne football programs.

Tourism got a boost through several grants. Funds went to the city of Cave Junction to help fund the welcome sign and fountain at the South end of town. Wildland Tiger Trax received support in its effort to form a nonprofit organization, making it eligible for grants and tax deductible donations. Two festivals received financial assistance to help with their events. Funds to the Wild Blackberry Festival were used to help with procuring bands to provide music during the weekend to increase the drawing power. Shining Stars which is in the process of forming a 501 c3, promoted its second music and craft festival this summer. Proceeds from all its fund-raising events will go to supporting programs for all valley young people. The Art Walk received a grant to help cover costs for its third season of bringing music to the valley and highlighting valley

(Continued on page 14)



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