

Views from the Rock

# Where ukuleles fly off the shelves

Only in Cannon Beach would a music store move its stock by pushing a piano down the street. Michael Corry of Michael's Music had a little help from his friends — among them city manager Bruce St. Denis, a guitarist — last month as he moved inventory from his Sunset Boulevard location to a new spot on South Hemlock.

Corry, a professional musician most of his life, is best known locally as a teacher, performer, studio engineer and shop owner.

Corry, originally from Santa Monica, California, played in garage bands from the age of 11. After graduation, he continued his love of music, with a year at Mount St. Mary's Conservatory. His interest in world music beckoned, and he considered studying in Hawaii with the great guitarist Gabby Pahinui.

"I thought about going to Hawaii and knocking on his door but I didn't have enough money to get to Hawaii," Corry recalled. "I thought about going to Mexico and playing in a mariachi band because I liked that, too. Then I heard about the Ali Akbar Khan School in San Francisco. It was the easiest to get to from Santa Monica."

It was there Corry studied with the great Indian musician and sarod master. "I went there just to learn a few more licks on guitar," Corry said. "I was only going to stay for the summer. I got hooked — I was there four years."

Corry specialized in the sarod, an Indian stringed instrument with a goat-skin resonator. "You're actually playing with your finger and your fingernail at the same time," he explained. "I used to practice so much that my fingernails wore back until I was bleeding."

After leaving San Francisco, Corry went on the road "for a lot of years" before settling in the Lewiston-Clarkston area of Idaho.

Corry raised a family and opened a music store, living and working there for more than two decades. When his father died, he took a vacation to Cannon Beach.

"I was sitting at what used to be Dooger's — now Pelican — and looking at that building and thought: 'That would be a nice place to have a music shop.' I thought it would cost so much to have a shop there. But I went and talked to the landlady and the price was pretty good."

In October 2001, Michael's Music opened its doors.

It was a hit right away, Corry said. "The store was really supported by the locals. A lot of businesses will open during the summer because they're tourist-oriented, but I wanted to open during the off-season so people knew I was supporting the locals."

During the economic downturn, he fought skin cancer. "I had to keep working," he said. "The doctor told me it's \$1 million to build a nose and it doesn't always work."

Corry said he is not in pain and breathes better. "I keep getting things cut off, here, and on my back. It doesn't even hardly hurt."

## A building change

In December, Corry's landlord asked him if he would be interested in renting the nearby Hemlock location.



Michael Corry of Michael's Music at his new location.

## CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX

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Michael Corry

"This happened real quick," he said. "I think if I had thought about it I would have chickened out. It just about killed me. But this is a much better location. It's cleaner, I can be more organized and I get a lot of foot traffic."

As in the old location, he teaches more than 20 students of all ages at all skill levels. He says he loves teaching, from beginning students to advanced, and adults returning to music.

Corry said unlike other methods, he teaches students to play music right off. Corry gets students playing "real songs" right away, "not kiddie songs and dumbed-down stuff."

The method works, he said. "I've got people I've turned into pros. But I'm happy to sit on the beach and play Jack Johnson stuff. I've taught all the way from ages 3 to 87. The love never goes away."

Corry plays in the group Blue Jug and manages a recording studio where he plays backup on projects from the Beatles to Beethoven — literally. He recently performed on a recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony where he played piano, bass and guitar.

As a songwriter and lyricist, Corry uses local themes. "I did an album called 'Codger Pole,'" he said. "It's a place over in Colfax, Washington, I used a lot of local references."

His song "Little Bird of Falcon



Michael Corry and Daron Patton move a piano to Michael's Music new location.

Cove" employs a Hawaiian motif, a carryover from his longtime love of world music. But as much as he looks outward, he keeps his heart close to home.

"Mourning Dove" was written in the aftermath of the death of 2-year-old Isabella Smith, murdered by her mother Jessica Smith in a Cannon Beach hotel room in July 2014.

"The whole story of 'Mourning Dove' was really about the little girl who died trying to figure out what happened. She's stuck in between purgatory. That incident had a great impact — there were some kind of spiritual things going on with it. I was already working on the song and there was this mourning dove singing outside. Then the little girl died and the bird was gone. I thought, that's what this song's about. It was such a difficult time."

So far, the store's 1347 S. Hemlock St. location has proved a winner for Corry, with new customers and stock. Ukuleles are flying off the shelves, he added.

Other hot sellers are guitars, sheet music and books.

Corry is trying to provide services for what "everybody needs," he said. "I repair all instruments. If it's out of my league, I've got some better guys who know what they're doing."

# The ghost in the lamp

For a long time I ignored the niggling observation that the cord on a lamp I've had for 30 years was being held together with duct tape. In the interest of full disclosure, before the duct tape, it was Scotch tape. The duct tape was a step up. For a long time, every time I turned on the lamp, I half expected it to burst into flames. It didn't. Just in case, I never left it on when I left the house, lest it cause an electrical fire. Weeks and months (OK, two years) passed before I decided to do something about it.

A month or so ago, I took the lamp to an electrician. The place where I took it said repairs aren't really their thing, but if I wasn't in a rush, they would do it. I wasn't. Much to my surprise, about a week later, I got a call saying the lamp was ready.

I paid for the repair and took the lamp home. While I was at it, I also bought a new shade. Every shade in the store was for sale as the electric company no longer wants to be in the shade business. They still have quite a few very nice shades on sale, 50 percent off. At home, I screwed in a bulb and turned the lamp on.

Nada. Nothing happened.

The next day I took the lamp back to the shop and said it didn't work. I said I thought it entirely possible that I'm a person who can't even screw in a light bulb.

The lamp disappeared to the rear of the shop. Meanwhile I babbled idiotically to the woman who works in the electrician's office about the lamp.

"The lamp belonged to my mother who inherited it from her third husband," I began. "This guy had been married before and his first wife liked antiques. This lamp base is old Wedgwood," I said. I could see from her expression the word "Wedgwood" meant nothing to her, but she kept a game face.

"The truth is, I don't even much like the lamp," I said. She looked surprised, like why would I bother fixing an old, admittedly somewhat ugly lamp I didn't even care for. "But I'm afraid to abandon it because my mother might come back and haunt me about it."

Her eyebrows raised. I explained my mother has been dead a long time. Thirty years, but who's counting?

"I'm not really sure how attached she is to this lamp, but I'd rather be safe than sorry," I said. "When she died, I inherited all of her furniture. Some of it I sold. Some of it I gave away. One of the things I kept besides this lamp, and — by the way, there are two of them; the lamp has a twin — was an old midnight blue mohair velvet camel back sofa. My mother was very fond of this sofa. She slept on it most nights. When we moved long ago from New York to L.A., I had it reupholstered. It was kind of ratty at that point and who in L.A. wants mohair velvet? So I had it reupholstered in a much lighter tapestry fabric. My mother was furious."

The woman at the electrician shop looked confused. Hadn't I just said my mother was dead?

"She came back to haunt me," I said. "She came back as a ghost to tell me in no uncertain terms I'd made a dreadful mistake because that sofa only looked good in mohair velvet."

"What happened then?" the woman asked. "Well, we lived with the sofa for 10 more years and then I gave it away," I said. "I gave it to the guy who did odd jobs for us around the house. He's got a huge family who cooks a lot of food and there's a warm hubbub and I think my mother was a lot happier. It was too quiet at my house for my mother anyway. I think my mother's ghost followed the sofa because after I gave it away, she didn't bother me again for years."

A few days later I went back and retrieved the lamp. Paul, the very nice man who fixed it, explained what the problem was the first time, but the info went straight over my head. I have a poor understanding how electricity works anyway so I leave it to the experts. While I was there, I bought a second shade for the lamp's twin. I'm pretty sure the people in the shop think I'm a nut and hope to never see me again, but I am eternally grateful they got the lamp to work and my mother's ghost hasn't come around to inform me I bought the wrong shade.

## VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



EVE MARX/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

The Wedgwood base lamp the author fears has a haunt attached to it.

# Little and big: A story about a town

By Ursula K. Le Guin  
For Cannon Beach Gazette

Author Ursula K. Le Guin, a part-time resident of Cannon Beach, died Jan. 22. "Little and Big" was originally printed in the Cannon Beach Citizen in 2003. It is reprinted with the permission of Charles Leguin.

Once upon a time there was a little town by a big ocean. It was a wise little town. Long ago it had looked at its dunes and beaches, its big trees, its marsh where the redwing blackbirds sang, in little streets and little grey shingle shops and houses, and said: This is all good. My people like me, my visitors like me, and I like me. This is what I am and what I want to be.

Busy people kept coming to the little town and scolding it. You are foolish, they said. You don't understand progress. You don't even have neon! There are no corporations here! We will bring you golden arches and make you rich!

No, thank you, said the wise little town. My people own my shops. People come to me because they like those shops, and because at night my streets



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Filmmaker Arwen Curry, producer and director of "The Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin," with the author in Cannon Beach.

glimmer very softly in the dark.

But busy people kept coming to the town and scolding it. Look at you! they said. All these little funky shingle homes! You should be ashamed. You need immense houses.

What for? asked the town.

For rich people, said the busy people. People like us. We cannot live in funky cottages with gardens. Let us tear these down and build many immense houses, surrounded by immense rocks, and then everyone will see you are a town of rich

people and admire you immensely.

I see, said the little town, and it thought about this. It thought long and hard. It had no objection to rich people. Rich people had done it a lot of good, over the years. But then, so had not-rich people.

My people, thought the little town, whether they are artists or cleaning maids in motels, whether they work or are retired, whether they live here or come here whenever they can, all have a big love for me, a big love for the little grey houses, the quiet streets, the great beach, the marsh where the blackbirds sing. My houses are little, but my people are big. I wonder if making the houses bigger might make the people smaller? And how will immense houses fit my little, quiet streets? Do I want to be rich, or do I want to be what I am? Do I want to be admired, or do I want to be loved?

The sea of course paid no attention to such foolish questions, and the blackbirds had nothing useful to say. All the little town could do was ask itself, and hope that it was wise enough to find the answer to its questions. It was not a little question, and the answer would not be a small one, either.