

## 5 Minutes with... John Swayze

Get to know John Swayze, a metalsmith and silversmith whose work is on display at the Gilbert District Gallery on Broadway. Swayze recently moved to Seaside from La Grande to get established as an artist.

**Q:** How did you get into your work as a silversmith?

**A:** Well, to start — when my parents retired and they moved to Mesa, (Arizona), my mom was bored, so she took a silversmithing class. She silversmithed for a few years. I was down visiting in 1973 or 1974 and she had a big order. She said, “Do you want to learn how to do this?” And I said, “Yeah, sure!”

**Q:** Did you enjoy it right off the bat?

**A:** Oh, yeah. From the very first ring I ever made. I’ve been artistic all my life. When I graduated from high school, I had 11 semesters of art. Eight semesters of school, but 11 semesters of art. I used to paint when I was younger.

**Q:** Is this the same Navajo style your mother was doing?

**A:** Exactly. It’s the style they started using in the 1940s. I start out with flat-sheet silver and wire. A simple ring — from beginning to end — takes about two and a half hours. The more complicated ones take about four and a half hours. I’m using the exact same components that the Native Americans used, so really what I can do with my designs is limited, and that’s why it comes out looking like theirs, because it basically is.

**Q:** Did you get any formal training?

**A:** No, just my mother sat down and taught me how to do it. And from there, I started out with what



KATHERINE LACAZE/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**John Swayze joined the Gilbert District Gallery in March to display the jewelry and sculptures he crafts as a silversmith, a skill he learned from his mother.**

she taught me and went out and did my own thing.

**Q:** Do you have a favorite thing to make?

**A:** Actually, the red brass accent sculptures are the most enjoyable thing that I do. I go out and buy vases and bowls, and it’s basically

just a canvas. It’s the same as if a painter bought a canvas to paint on. The sculptures generally take anywhere from 50 to 90 hours, to actually cut each piece and solder it together. The metal pieces are actually fitted to the vase. So there’s actually engineering involved in it.

**Q:** Are the sculptures custom-made?

**A:** I design them myself. What I do is I get the vase, and a lot of times, it’ll just sit around for a while. And I’ll sit and look at it. It takes me a while to come up with a design. There are only two I’ve ever actually sat down and drawn the design, and then tried to make it after I’ve drawn and designed it, just to see if I could do it.

**Q:** Did you like that process better or do you prefer letting the art develop organically?

**A:** It’s still becomes organic because, even if I draw it out, what I can actually put on paper and what I can actually assemble, what I can really make, are two different things. So there are always changes.

**Q:** What tend to be the most popular items?

**A:** Rings, bracelets, earrings. Actually, here, bracelets. I can’t believe it. When I moved here, I had bracelets I made eight years ago that hadn’t sold yet. As soon as I got here, I can’t keep the bracelets in the shop. I’ve only been in the shop since March and this is the second time I’ve had to turn over my bracelet collection, or make them all over again. There is nothing original here that I came with.

**Q:** Do you have certain designs or shapes you tend to reuse in your work, like this gecko, or do you try to vary it?

**A:** I do. If you look at these two rings, it’s really basically the same. But no two are exactly the same, even though it’s the same design. Of course, they’re hand-made, so I can’t make them exactly the same. Everything I make has my maker’s mark on it. And it is a gecko, because geckos are survivors, for one thing. They’re colorful, they’re very adaptive — that’s pretty much what it takes to make my jewelry so that’s one reason I picked it.

## Letters to the Editor

### No bypass will lead to worsening gridlock

I have now read Cleve Rolfe’s open letter to the Seaside powers-that-be regarding the Seaside bypass (or lack thereof) twice, first in The Daily Astorian and secondly in the Seaside Signal. As a resident of Seaside, I believe his observations are spot on. I do not know the actual statistics, but I am sure that a large portion (perhaps as much as 50 percent) of the traffic on Roosevelt Drive is pass-thru with no intention of stopping in Seaside. Why are we forcing these folks (including Mr. Rolfe), who simply wish to go past Seaside to endure these horrible traffic snarls? There is, as well, the residents of Seaside (like myself) who hunker down during these periods to avoid getting caught up in this for even a simple trip, say to the library.

Last Monday I was in Beaverton on business when, in learning that I live in Seaside, the proprietor’s wife described to me how, on a recent Saturday, she came out to the coast to drop off her daughter with her grandmother in Gearhart when she came upon stop-and-go traffic some distance out on Highway 26, caused by backup from Seaside. Apparently, her relatively brief trip turned into one of several hours. All I could do was to extend my condolences and commensurate with her a bit on our city’s lack of consideration for passersby like herself by not vigorously pursuing a bypass.

I understand that projects of this magnitude take years from the onset to fulfillment, with many players (ODOT, the county, the city, and, perhaps even the Feds) involved. However, if we, the residents of Seaside and our elected officials, do not seek this and plan for it, it will never happen and the traffic will simply get worse.

Do we really want Seaside weekend traffic like rush hour on the Interstate 5 bridge in Portland? Gridlock? That’s where we are headed if we don’t pursue a bypass.

Rod Dawson  
Seaside

### We must inform our visitors of tsunami risk

Nancy McCarthy’s column in the Aug. 7 issue of the Seaside Signal dealt with The New Yorker article on the potential impact of a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami. She poses the question, “Will The New Yorker story make any difference in our urgency to prepare for this event?” To be frank with regard to local residents, their reaction to

anything is the same, “I don’t pay much attention to anything besides going to work and watching my television programs.” Many, of course, know a little something about this issue, but find it difficult to discuss. It is much easier to blame the government, politicians and big business than to actually get involved in making their community safer.

The question regarding out-of-towners visiting our area being advised by the article’s author, to stay outside the tsunami zone is considerably more interesting. Seaside, in its vacation rental program, requires property owners to post evacuation instructions. I am not aware of hotels having any such requirement. The hotels appear to be primarily owned by persons from out-of-town and there are no evacuation instructions

except at Trendwest. Certainly, most of the staff at these hotels has little awareness of the problem, much less what to do for the guests. During the summer, there are more than 6,000 overnight visitors with virtually no chance of reaching high ground. The six-hour power outage during Fourth of July created virtual chaos. An addition to the convention center combining much needed convention exhibit space, visitor parking and an emergency evacuation center sits in limbo as city government argues about pot, panhandlers and spending several million dollars on improving a street which virtually carries no traffic. The Plan B proposal for a new school that would cost each resident the price of a single cigarette per day also sits in limbo with the school board explaining that they

“are powerless to act” because their \$128 million proposal was turned down by voters.

Local voters should ask these officials to step aside and elect leaders who will actually do things. Local papers should furnish the community accurate complete information, not just retell what local leaders want its community to hear.

John Dunzer  
Seaside

### My neighborhood seen through new eyes

Way past a pleasure to journey with you on our one-day tour of the Coast Range near Elsie, courtesy of County Commissioner Lianne Thompson and accompanied by a carload of enthusiastic travelers.

Seeing my neighborhood through the eyes of first time viewers was surprising. I saw our beau-

tiful K-12 school as a shining Jewell in this still green valley. The homes along the Nehalem River leaped out and shook my hand when the oohs and ahs began. Even the tasks of getting ODOT to install double yellow lines in front of Bakers Store and the Elderberry Inn on Highway 26 to prevent cars from passing in that congested area seemed conquerable in our vehicle of enthusiasts.

Thank you R.J. Marx for caring enough to ex-

plore the secret sanctuary of the Coast Range.

Diane Jette  
Elsie

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