

Mid-America Jewelry News

Serving the Jewelry Industry in America's Heartland

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Marlen Jewelers - Deeply rooted in the Ohio community since 1914

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(ROCKY RIVER, Ohio) - Ohio, "The Buckeye State," known for its abundant supply of buckeye trees, which due to its diverse qualities and hardy nature was regarded as a wonderful source for building material. Unfortunately, with time the community moved on to better resources, leaving the tree merely rooted in the minds of Americans as a historical motto. However, one tree that has prospered with time, improved with age and is known for having a solid foundation is the Eilberg tree. This tree is a family tree and has thrived as the community's distinguished

jeweler - Marlen Jewelers.

History began when Grandfather Eilberg, a former watchmaker, founded Marlen Jewelers in 1914; it wasn't long before this family tree began to sprout. The store was named by combining his two Grandson's names, Martin and Leonard. They sought to provide "quality jewelry at a fair price" and opened two stores in the Cleveland area which supplied such items as costume jewelry, toasters, and cameras.

They became well known in the community for their superior customer service, integrity, and quality products. Eventually, Marlen Jewelers ventured into new territory taking residence at a fresh



Eight years ago Marlen Jewelers moved into this luxurious 4,700 square foot building.

American concept known as West Gate Mall. Situated in a strip of stores overlooking a grassy lawn and blooming flower gardens,

Marlen Jewelers' community continued to spread and the young entrepreneur's emphasis became fine jewelry. They remained original tenants until their last and final move eight years ago.

Today, Marlen Jewelers remains as hardy and steadfast as

ever. After purchasing a piece of land in the bustling downtown district of Rocky River, Ohio, 3rd generation owner Frank Eilberg built an expansive 4700 square foot building. With the clean, fresh lines reminiscent of Rodeo Drive architecture this impressive building leaves nothing to the imagination. Marlen Jewelers offers 35 cases of bridal jewelry, a children's play room, a private viewing area, and an on-site workshop where a goldsmith, gemologist, and watchmaker do repairs or create custom jewelry while classy jazz music croons softly in the background. Marlen Jewelers offers designs by John Hardy, Mark Schneider, A Jaffe, Martin Flyer and Bashoura.

While the business has certainly flourished, Eilberg and his wife remain "hands on owners" Please see **Marlen** page 28

Sumner Engraving - Surviving and thriving amid great tribulation

Amy Minnick
Staff Writer

(GRETNA, La.) - Recently we remembered the one year anniversary of the most destructive and costly natural disaster in the history of the United States - Hurricane Katrina. Although the memories of devastation and sorrow are still fresh, Paul Sumner, owner of Sumner Engraving in Gretna, LA, has a story only he can tell.

Amidst the rubble and shattered dreams of more than 900 miles of devastation, one small jeweler remained standing. Sumner Engraving, a jewelry manufacturing company located 2 miles outside of New Orleans, proved to have more determination than Katrina ever thought about producing. Paul Sumner and his eight employees refused to 'go down with the ship.' Their dedication to the company and to each other

Katrina Statistics The Numbers Tell It All

- 81.2 billion dollars in damages
- Responsible for at least 1,836 deaths
- Left 3 million without electricity
- Deadliest hurricane since the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane
- Third-strongest land-falling U.S. hurricane ever recorded
- New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin ordered the first ever mandatory evacuation of the city
- Federal disaster declarations covered 90,000 square miles of the United States, an area almost as large as the United Kingdom.
- In late January 2006, about 200,000 people were once again living in New Orleans, less than half of the pre-storm population.
- Because of the large loss of life and property the name Katrina was officially retired on April 6, 2006 by the World Meteorological Organization at the request of the U.S. government.

is the backbone of their existence today. And, it is the human side of their story that makes each one of us proud to be in the jewelry industry.

The Evacuation

One week before Hurricane Katrina struck the gulf coast, Paul Sumner, owner of Sumner Engraving, headed to a jewelry industry conference in Monroe. When evacuations were mandated, Paul's employees banded together to load up the entire contents of the shop into a trailer. Ricky Deleo, manager of Sumner's, recalls Please see **Sumner** page 29

James Cleland... Artist, Jeweler, 'The Real Thing'

Amy Minnick
Staff Writer

In the jewelry industry there are very few true visionaries. Many people design jewelry. Many people create unique, one-of-a-kind pieces. But no one creates true-to-life 'wearable nature' like James Cleland. With the vision, intricacy

wearable nature pieces in the early '80s. Believing that no detail was too small to reproduce, his finished pieces leave even the most veteran industry members impressed. With movable parts, accurate details



Photo by TPicarella



Photo by TPicarella

No detail is too small when James Cleland is creating his "wearable nature."

and artistic ability unlike anyone else in the industry, James Cleland has found a way to use metals, colored stones and his hands to bring to life what previously was only found in your backyard.

Wanting to portray in jewelry the beauty and intricacies of butterflies, beetles, lizards, turtles, mushrooms, fish and other life forms, Cleland began designing

and astonishing life-like characteristics, customers can count on a Cleland piece to measure up to its real-life counterpart.

Intricate, exact details, such as the angle of head movement found on an insect, for instance, don't just happen, even for someone as knowledgeable as Cleland. Instead, it takes enormous effort to Please see **Cleland** page 22

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Cleland

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reproduce these images with astonishing accuracy. From miniscule hairs on the legs of a bug to the exact length of the mandibles on another, large amounts of research and observation are involved in the creation of each piece.

Using a combination of field books, preserved samples and his enormous knowledge of 'all things nature,' Cleland's pieces are so realistic that even the insects themselves can get confused.

"I enjoy duplicating natural forms and nature. I especially love bugs because there are so many different parts to each one of them. And their bodies are so varied. Natural forms, after all, stimulate emotions and artists want their work to elicit emotions," states Cleland.

How it all began

Cleland's inspiration sprang

from his early love of nature. Originally from Mascoutah, Illinois, his childhood was rich with memories of 'travel[ing] a lot in the West and I'd keep yelling at my Dad to stop the car so I could pick up some great rock I'd seen.'

Another childhood contributor was a present he received for eighth grade graduation - a rock grinder. Fostering an already avid love of stones and precious gems, Cleland quickly learned "to cut cabs and free forms and set them in findings," using his new present to make "birthday and Christmas gifts for my friends and family."

Earning a degree in biology, Cleland dreamt of becoming a paleontologist. Participating in digs and searching for lost remains inspired him. Although a biology degree would prove to be invaluable later on, it was necessary for him to obtain an undergraduate degree in geology in order to gain acceptance in the Ph.D. program

for paleontology.

It was during this transition time of going back to school that he opened a small gem and mineral store to help fund the additional school expenses. Hiring a metalsmith to help make the jewelry he sold in the shop, he quickly decided metal working wasn't that difficult.

"As I watched the metalsmith work I decided it wasn't that complicated. Once I tried it myself, I became intrigued. And customer demands became so great that I decided to start doing it full-time."

The self-taught metalsmith applied his renowned perfectionist nature to learning the intricacies of working with metals. It wasn't long before he was asked to establish and train the instructors at SIU-Carbondale, a local lapidary school, foreshadowing what was to come.

After meeting and marrying Ginger, his wife of 19 years, the

couple decided to move to a larger city, St. Louis. Ginger, who began to handle the business side of the organization, knew there were more opportunities for her husband in a big city. They opened and ran their own store for a while, while taking in freelance work from other shops before opening Designs In Gold eleven years ago.

Located in an upscale, fashionable part of the city, the business represents all that Cleland is, and has become. With a workshop in the back stacked with tools, workbenches and volumes of books like *Field Geology*, *Wildflowers* and *Reptiles*, it's not surprising this amazing, albeit compulsive creator will work late into the night perfecting his creations.

Although each piece is beautiful in its own right, Cleland's collection of fish has been one of his most popular. Crafting each one with the complexity and enthusiasm that has become his

hallmark, the fish collection of pins includes the striped gourami, black tetra, carp, angelfish and Argentine pearlfish, all made with stones such as agate, red jasper, black onyx and quartz. Anticipating the mass appeal of the pieces, the Cleland's chose *Smithsonian* and *Accent* magazines to highlight the series. The response was tremendous.

Latest Project

With a collection of pieces as varied as the customers Cleland serves, it is impossible to predict what will catch his interest next. We do know, however, that he is currently engrossed in interpreting the traditional Japanese designs found in Mons.

Japanese 'mon' is an ancient badge, emblem or crest typically used in decorations, ceramics, textiles and wall coverings. Cleland, who always remains faithful to the original, regardless of the subject, creates his pieces by adding color, dimension and motion to each one.

It's not surprising that these ancient designs intrigued him since they flow out of natural elements that include animals, floral, geometric, or combinations of these patterns, all subjects Cleland is passionate about.

"I enjoy these pieces because each one has a surprise effect. Some spin, others have optical illusions but they are all three dimensional. The domed shape lends itself to creating a light, moveable piece where intricately connected strips of thin metal form beautiful designs. And they are as beautiful on the underside as they are on top," states Cleland.

"I believe my future is to produce, produce and produce more pieces. I'm sure I won't be discovered until after I'm gone. But you'll be able to pick a piece up, turn it over and know whether I did it or not because my pieces are equally intricate whether it's the front or back."

When asked what he considered his greatest achievement to date, Cleland quickly responded "I have yet to get there. I'm constantly perfecting... always experimenting."

Cleland's work has been featured in *Lapidary Journal*; the *St. Louis Dispatch*; on KMOV St. Louis, Channel 4; and at the St. Louis Art Museum's "Art in Bloom" exhibition. He was invited to show his work at the "Best of Missouri Market" at the Missouri Botanical Garden October 7-8, 2006 and was recently featured in a PBS documentary called 'Living St. Louis.'

You can view Cleland's work by visiting his web site at www.designs-in-gold.com or by going to www.jcleland.com.

Contact Ginger or James at their retail store, Designs In Gold, by calling 314-567-3530. 