

SILVER ON THE SIDE

Research Park Director John Millhollon makes a hobby of crafting silver jewelry

By KAREN JANES
 THE BATTALION

Research Park Director John Millhollon cannot be found playing golf or sitting in front of the television on Saturday afternoons. That is because his leisure activities consist of designing and hand-making sterling silver jewelry.

Millhollon, who has worked at Research Park since 1985, discovered silver-making as a hobby six years ago in Santa Fe, N.M.

"My wife and I were on vacation visiting her brother," he said. "He was taking a class in silver-making and showed me around his workshop. When I got home, I bought some hand tools and started experimenting."

For two years, Millhollon made silver jewelry as gifts for his wife and family friends. As the demand for his handiwork increased, he began selling his pieces and making a profit. He then founded his company, Country Sterling.

Millhollon said he learned his craft mostly from self-instruction and experimentation.

"Whenever I have a new idea, I go ahead and try it," he said. "If I don't like it or it doesn't work out, I just

press on and try something else."

He uses everything from red brass to spoon handles and black onyx stones to accent his jewelry. Earrings, pins, rings and bracelets are among his primary products, although he makes items such as money clips and key chains, too.

Millhollon said he is always happy to fill his customers' special requests. He will make a piece exactly as a customer wants it, as long as it is within his capabilities.

Some of the patterns that Millhollon uses come from books and magazines, though most of his styles are original creations.

"I am limited only by my imagination," he said. "I never have to make the same thing twice."

"The watches that I make used to be my favorite, but now I am always thinking that my next creation, the new idea that I will try will be my favorite one yet," he said.

What makes Millhollon's jewelry unique is that it is all handmade. His pieces are not stamped out, like manufactured sterling silver jewelry. No two pieces of his work are exactly the same.

Samples of his jewelry are on display and for sale at his son and daughter-in-law's College Station

nail salon, "Exclusively Nails." Most of the orders that he receives are from the Brazos Valley, though he has customers state and nationwide.

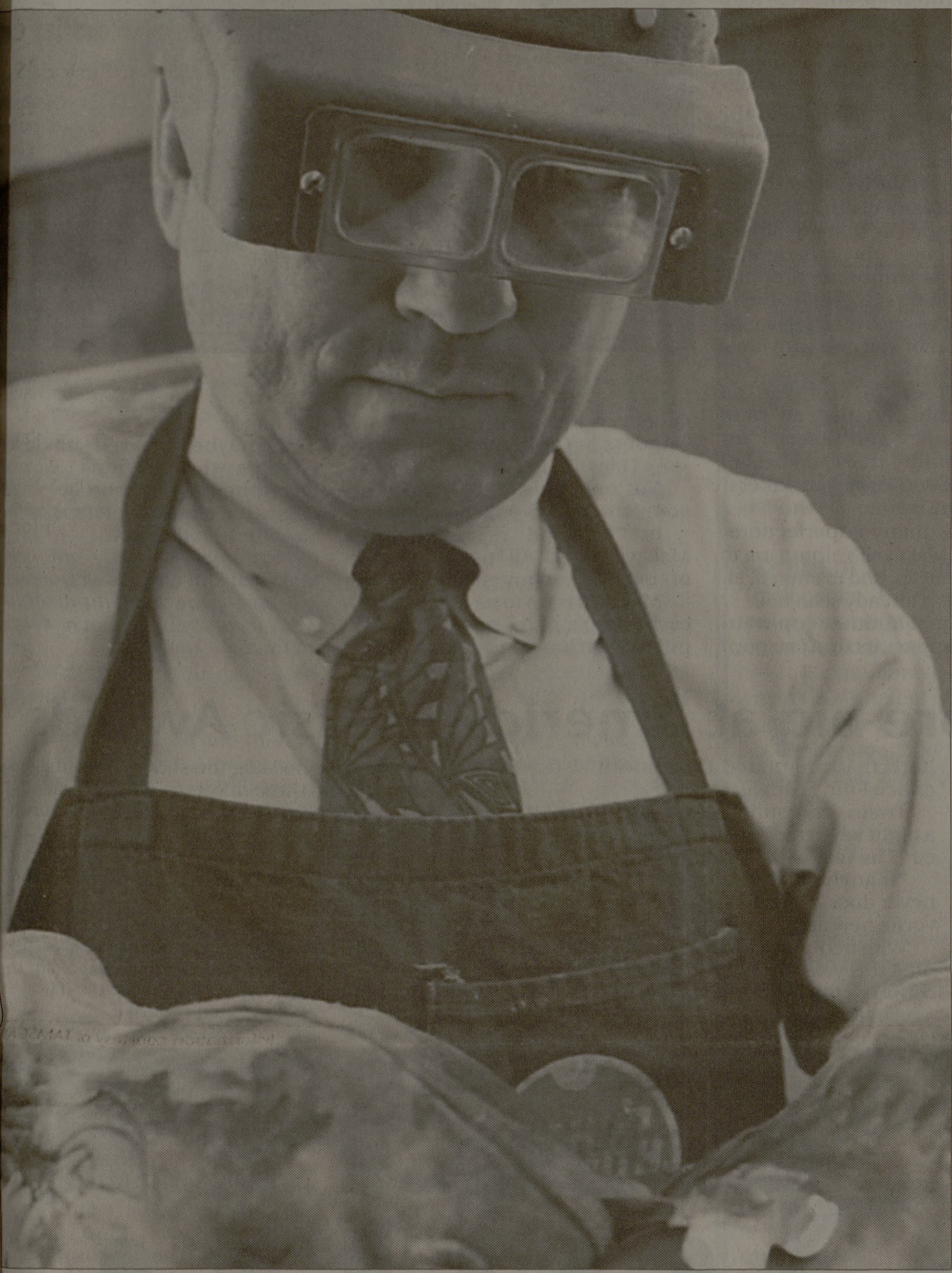
"I participate in about six to eight craft shows and fairs annually," he said. "I meet other silver makers at the shows and pick up new customers."

Although the business is growing, Millhollon said he does not plan to let it get so big that he cannot keep up. He said it is only a hobby, and limits his time in the workshop to Saturday afternoons and two evenings a week. However, after Millhollon retires, he plans to keep making jewelry and to spend more time with his craft.

"Right now, I am limited by time and money," he said. "In the future I would like to do some engraving and maybe even work with gold."

Millhollon said his favorite part of making jewelry is the satisfaction he feels when someone likes the finished product. His biggest customer, his wife, is also his biggest fan.

"I love it when I bring something to my wife that I just finished, and she tells me that she loves it," Millhollon said. "That's a nice feeling."

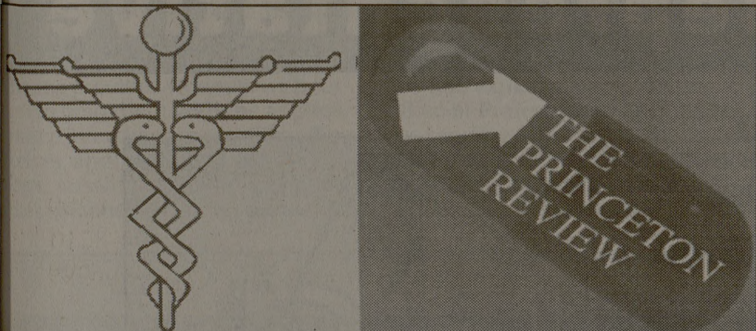


Amy Dunlap, THE BATTALION



Amy Dunlap, THE BATTALION

Millhollon is shown above and to the right creating sterling silver jewelry in his workshop at his home. The director of Research Park began making jewelry as a hobby, but now he also sells some through his company Country Sterling. Millhollon said working with silver allows him to experiment freely with design. "I am limited only by my imagination," he said. "I never have to make the same thing twice."



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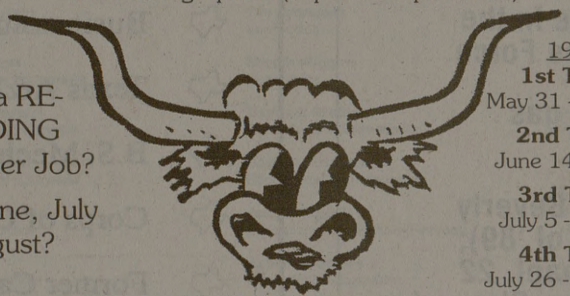
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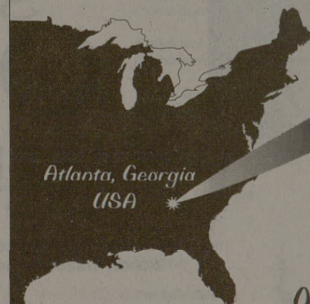
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