



Artist Emanuel Enriquez engraves artwork on a memorial stone. Design Memorial Stone Company works with its clients to create one-of-a-kind personal tributes.

MIRROR PHOTO BY NANCY GAGNET



Ron Maxwell adds custom designs to products at Design Memorial Stone Company, adding artwork such as portraits to memorial stones and markers.

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Company Sets Open House For Saturday

Design Memorial Stone Company Marks 30 Years In Business

BY NANCY GAGNET
MIRROR REPORTER

For the past 30 years, Butch Krueger has been helping clients preserve memories by designing personalized memorials intended to withstand the test of time.

Founded in 1978, his company, Design Memorial Stone Co., manufactures and sells granite monuments and markers, bronze plaques, pet markers and monuments, memory bricks, address blocks, granite and limestone signs, garden art, final date lettering, diamond etching and custom engraving on natural stone products.

"Pretty much anything you can think of we can engrave on stone nowadays," Krueger said.

With 10 employees, the company strives to maintain a large inventory and uses sophisticated specialized equipment to provide quality service with low prices.

"We stay right at the top of our game always with regard to design work and engraving capabilities, while at the same time maintaining a large inventory so someone can always get a stone fairly fast," Krueger said.

Prices begin at \$450 for markers. The most expensive monument Krueger ever sold cost \$45,000 and was purchased jointly by four families.

Often, those purchasing items are grieving from loss.

Alice, who purchased a marker shortly before her husband passed away after a two-year illness, said she found solace in working with staff members.

"They help you make a loving tribute to your loved ones and the way they do it,



Design Memorial Stone Company of Maumee is celebrating 30 years in business. The staff includes (from left) Pat Markland, Ron Maxwell, Pat Braun, Emanuel Enriquez, owner Butch Krueger, Jeff Lannen, Maureen Jacobsen, Jonathan Brinkman and Larry Lannen.

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it's almost like a comforting feeling," Alice said.

She said her husband wanted to pick out his marker, but was too sick to go to the showroom.

Maureen Jacobsen, company operations manager, came to their home to show him the drawings.

"Both Butch and Maureen were just so nice," Alice said. "They never hurried me and I strongly recommend them to anyone who asks."

"I felt when I went away from there that I had a quality stone that would last for years and years."

Although markers and monuments have commonly sold through the years, other items have recently grown in popularity including fund-raising bricks.

Design Memorial has

completed several fund-raiser brick projects for local organizations including the Toledo Zoo.

The company can add engraving to fund-raiser bricks and other personalized stones even after they're set in place.

"We can go out on the spot and engrave right on location with our mobile vehicle," Krueger said.

Many changes have taken place in the stone industry over the past 30 years, especially in terms of technology and the use of computers.

"When I first got into business, we had to hand draw every drawing we showed a customer for approval," Krueger said. "If I could do three drawings in a day I would be pretty satisfied with that day's work."

"Now it's not unusual to

have three drawings in an hour if we're pushing hard. Computers have really helped us keep our labor hours down and keep our monuments and markers very affordable."

Although computers have dramatically changed the industry, staff artists are still a large part of the custom-made process.

Emanuel Enriquez is an artist on staff who is also known for other local work including the bronze sculpture "The Knothole Gang" at Fifth Third Field.

"It's fun to have him on board because he is quite talented," Krueger said.

Graphic artist Ron Maxwell also helps with custom work through graphic design and freehand artistry.

"He is talented in his own right and he is capable

of handling diamond etches, which are freehand etching that we would put on a stone such as a person's portrait or a favorite dog or whatever," Krueger explained.

Both domestic and imported granite is most commonly used for the products, and the company stocks granite from all over the world including China, Africa, Norway and India.

"If people want something that's a little extraordinary as far as unique coloring or unique striations in the grain, we'll have it because we bring stone literally from all parts of the world," Krueger said.

The rise in popularity of natural stone such as granite in building products has also allowed him to start a spin-off company called

Granite Design, which operates out of the same location, but serves the needs of customers seeking building supply products such as kitchen countertops.

Although located in the same place, it is separate from the monument business and has a separate office. Granite Design stocks 50 types of stone that can be used to manufacture building products.

Krueger is the third generation of family to work in the stone business. His father owned Toledo Cut Stone Company and his grandfather was also in the business.

"I got more interested in carving and intricate stone and I began delivering stone for other companies with the thought that if I ever learned that part of the business, I would start my own company," he said.

After operating his business from a Toledo location for the first 10 years, he moved to Maumee in 1988.

"I really enjoy being part of the Maumee community," he said.

Located at 722 W. Sophia St., Design Memorial Stone Company is a member of the Maumee Chamber of Commerce and supporter of the Maumee Summer Fair.

To celebrate 30 years in business, Design Memorial Stone Company will host an open house on Saturday, April 28 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Refreshments will be served, and the event is open to the public.

For more information regarding Design Memorial Stone Company or Granite Design, visit the Web site designmemorialstone.com or call (419) 891-9100.