



Jeweler Stan Tait recently launched a new project, inspired by a client who wanted a special gift made for a friend – an angel.

# Angelic celebration

Article by Maria Duncalf-Barber / Photographs by Laura Bombier

**E**very time you hear a bell ring, it means that some angel's just got his wings.  
– Henry Travers to James Stewart in Frank Capra's movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

This year, jeweler Stan Tait is celebrating 30 years of making jewelry with angels – discovering them in his life, then creating them in metal. On Easter Sunday, he launched a new project called the “Angel Pendant,” an endeavor which began with a long distance phone call from one of his clients.

“I had made other pieces for my client and she called and asked, could I make an angel pendant for a friend battling cancer. Her friend loved angels and my client loved her,” he explains. “The pendant would mean a great deal to the woman receiving it but the intention behind the gift would touch her the most.” Tait's eyes fill up as he says, “The real angel was my client, reaching across the miles with her gift of love and encour-

agement for her friend.

“I decided to do something good in the world to enhance the lives of others. So, I have formed the Angel Project. I have put my heart and soul into this project; every piece of jewelry I make is made with love,” Tait states with deep conviction.

“I talked to my minister in Orillia and other close friends, and I have set up a board of directors. I want to help individual groups and not-for-profit agencies to raise money through the sale of the Angel Pendant. I want to help groups locally, provincially, nationally and worldwide.” In essence, this is a way Tait ensures people can live a wonderful life by helping to

*Stan Tait: 30 years  
of creating jewelry*



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support these agencies financially.

"I have been working on this for three years and this is the biggest thing I have ever done in my life."

Tait continues: "We all reach a stage in life where growth and development of yourself becomes the sum total of all of your experiences. This is a combination of a lifetime of commitment and spirituality. I have to give back to the world. I know I have done that with my music. Now I am doing it with my jewelry."

Accompanying each sterling silver or gold angel is a card which says, "Imagine a million people praying, sending loving thoughts of hope, inspiration and encouragement, world wide." That is

what he wants people to do – to connect and pray and be in the moment with their spirituality. Angels are important to many people, who often believe quite strongly in them. Some say we are living in a new age of angels. Statistics in *Time* magazine say 70 percent of North Americans believe in angels, and 46

percent believe they have their own guardian angel.

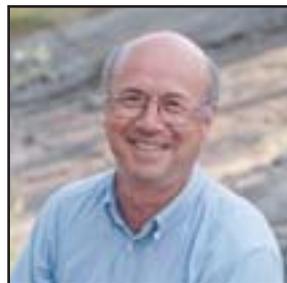
Tait wants people to make a difference by giving angels to their friends and loved ones. Something that started as a long distance phone call from one of his clients has taken off.

Working out of his "cottage in the woods" on four acres of land on Carlee Road, Bracebridge, Tait is happy with his life. His studio, a renovated horse barn, is bright and full of amazing tools that could have been used for centuries, by jewelers in earlier times. He is an artist and cares about each piece, polishing it profusely before handing it over for anyone to look at.



His creativity is abundant, extending into other realms. He has been a musician most of his life and is a published songwriter; he sings and plays drums, piano and guitar. The youngest of five children, Tait was born in White Rock, British Columbia, and moved to Vancouver when he was nine, in 1973, at the time of his father's death

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Photograph: Maria Duncaif-Barber

Music has always been an important part of Stan Tait's life; as a part of the group Fireweed, he played with Chief Dan George.



from lung cancer.

"I was surrounded by women – my two sisters and my Scottish Aunt Evelyn," notes Tait. "I love women and I am not afraid of my feminine energy. Part of my life's journey is to balance my masculine and feminine side. My mother Enid was a singer with a soprano voice and she sang in the choir...I attended choir with her, where the choirmaster was Dutch and played Bach on a full pipe organ. No wonder I love music!"

He went to private school for a while and was taught by the Christian Brothers of Ireland. In high school, he played in the band. Later, he worked as a studio musician, accompanying Terry Jacks of the Poppy Family, and was involved with Bob Brookes of Word Records.

Tait moved on, playing in a group called Fireweed, then was introduced to actor and musician Chief Dan George. "I was very close to him, almost like a companion," he recalls.

A year after playing with Chief Dan George, Tait decided to leave the music business, though he loved it. His sister, who ran a gift shop on Robson Street in Vancouver, introduced him to some Native artisans, among whom were Robert Davidson, Bill Reid and Phil Janzel – a bracelet by Janzel caught his eye. These artists taught him the basics of jewelry making. He then began to design his own line of rings and earrings; within 10 months he sold enough to buy a house. That was the start of a decade of selling his work wholesale.

Tait moved to Ontario in 1984 and lived in the small village of Rosseau, where his wife's parents ran



**Stan Tait's hands are a blur as he works on a piece of jewelry, an assortment of his handiwork and implements strewn before him. His angel pendants will raise money for various causes.**

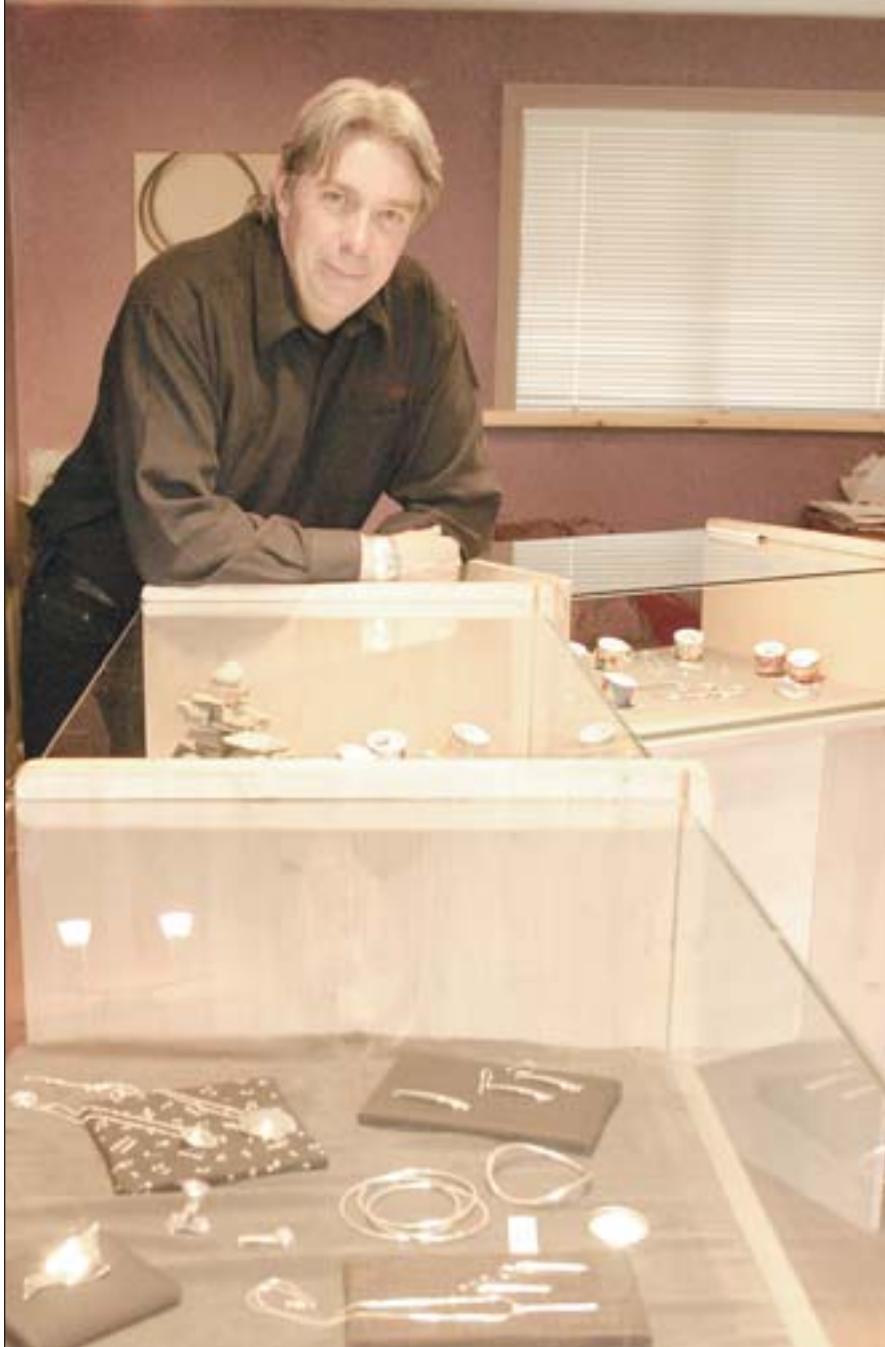
a family farm based on biodynamic farming developed by the Austrian-born philosopher Rudolph Steiner. Steiner is famous for devoting his life to building up a complete science of the spirit, to which he gave the name anthroposophy. Steiner also developed and founded the Waldorf

schools which, besides using their own educational curriculum, also teaches about the physical and spiritual well being of students.

Tait and his wife built a log home and had three children; life was good for the young family, at that time, he says. He became involved in his first

jewelry store, in Rosseau, in 1990. Then, he started to get involved in craft events like Toronto's annual "One of a Kind" show.

In 1992, he became one of the artists on the Muskoka Artists Studio Tour. He is still involved with this group and loves to have visitors come



Stan Tait's studio is now located near Bracebridge. He has lived in Muskoka for most of his 30-year career as a jeweler.



into his studio to see his work. Located in Port Carling at one time, in 1997, he moved his studio to Taylor Road, Bracebridge, then relocated to Carlee Road two years ago.

Here, the walls in his cosy home are covered with art from friends and his cat, Maestro, playfully jumps from table to chair, as Tait chats about earlier times and looks at photographs from Vancouver. In those days, when he was a young impressionable man, he says he learned a lot. "Those times helped me to grow."

In 1997, Tait was instrumental in gathering local musicians together to celebrate the Segwun with a CD compilation called, *Songs of the Segwun*. These days, he plays regularly on Sundays to a nondenominational congregation that gathers at St. Paul's United Church in Orillia, and he is compiling a new CD.

"Music has always been a form of expression for me," Tait comments. "It allows me to open spiritually to my beliefs; it opens windows to my creative outlets." Tait loves music and writes his own songs, now singing

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only those he has written.

"I love songs; I write them, intact – I wake up at 4 a.m. and I just have to write; it comes pouring out of me I wrote 'God Lives' in just that way. The lyrics say, 'God lives in a cabin in the mountain, God lives in you and me.' I love Muskoka, back to the land, back to nature. It helps me be in the moment. It is an imprint place to be – we all have to live in the body. I am driven by the questions in life regarding spirituality and philosophy such as, 'what is the big picture?'"

Tait is always thinking. He says, "To me the big question is, 'Who are you on this planet?' We all have to take responsibility for ourselves and the planet."

There is a saying about there being an angel in all of us, waiting to get out. Perhaps Tait has released the angel in himself by connecting with his spirituality, coupled with his creativity. He has incorporated this into his daily routine, loving the life he lives.

The jewelry he designs and makes are timeless pieces that can adorn arms or fingers or necks. His art is truly inspired by Muskoka. The silver waves and twists of the jewelry he creates speak a language of shapes and curves that calls to people, offering beauty.

Yes, Tait is truly living a wonderful life in Muskoka, surrounded by all the things he loves most – his family and music included. "Muskoka's landscape is similar to White Rock, B.C.," he says, "and I love the land. I love the people, the cottagers and the guests that arrive from all around the world. They bring accents and flavors to Muskoka. There is a vibrant

life energy here and the locals are good souls.

"I love being part of the artistic community here. The artists are highly dedicated and committed to their craft. There is an excellence amongst the artists here. Even though I was born in B.C., I feel like I have grown up in Ontario.

Tait loves Muskoka with a passion. In 1999, to celebrate 125 years

of Bracebridge, he wrote a song called "Our Little Town" and presented it to the mayor. The chorus goes like this:

*We've got newspapers run by folks we all know*

*We've got tourists and cottagers who come and go*

*To the 45th parallel where all summer long*

*You can see Santa Claus mowing*

*his lawn.*

Tait incorporates meditation, prayer and song into his daily life, smiling as he comments on this, "Living is a miracle, my spirit is alive and I am happy to be alive."

With angels all around him in Muskoka, Stan Tait knows he is in heaven on earth, living a wonderful life – and he would not trade it for the world. **M**

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