

# Any Time Works for Jimmer

*Jimmer Tillman keeps many irons in the fire with his jobs and outdoor pursuits*

*By Victor Bobb*

For a man so energetically engaged in the present and optimistic about the future, Jim Tillman spends a surprising amount of time up to his elbows in the past.

Whether it is working on the painstaking restoration of a house that has been in his family for more than 70 years, playing music originally performed by musicians of his father's generation, or managing the business founded by his grandfather, Jim—better known as Jimmer—revels in his connections with those who came before him.

"We're surrounded by rich traditions," he says. "It would be foolish to let go of the good things that the past has to offer us."

Past and present are sometimes tangled in complicated ways.

Jimmer's family developed the Elmer City water system when nothing impeded the flow of the Columbia River, where the dam now looms.

The town bought the water system from the Tillman family in 1974. Today one of Jimmer's tasks as a city employee is taking care of the water system.

To assure public health, Jimmer has received training and certification from the Washington State Department of Health.

Although he is a third-generation resident of Elmer City, Jimmer has not spent his entire life within sight of Tillman's Store, the business founded by his grandfather.

He went to junior high and high school in Oroville, and spent three



*Jack-of-all-trades Jimmer Tillman with his wife, Cortney.*

years working in Alaska—much of that time crab fishing.

"I love Alaska," he says, admitting the grueling and dangerous work on the crab boats did nothing to diminish his love for the activities available there.

Experienced in dredging for gold, an avid gold panner and a lifelong outdoorsman, Jimmer found much to enjoy in the north.

Although the family business was something he always was involved in, Jimmer worked other jobs in the area.

He is a certified lumber grader with plenty of mill experience, he is a volunteer firefighter, he drove a bread truck from Creston to Republic every day for five years, and his love of music has resulted in a vigorous after-hours career singing with the classic-rock band Love Stitch.

Being a professional bass player is one of the things Jimmer most

enjoys. Love Stitch has what he refers to as "a good following"—good enough the band is booked a year in advance, has regular gigs in venues from Oroville to Wenatchee and Spokane, and is hired for weddings and parties all around the area.

With bandmates Jerry Palmer and Jimmy Jackson, Jimmer has patiently built up a couple truckloads of good sound equipment and an increasingly sophisticated recording studio.

He says he appreciates the recently enacted statewide ban on smoking in all kinds of businesses, including the venues Love Stitch plays.

"The no-smoking law makes it much easier to scream rock 'n' roll," he says with a smile.

In another mingling of past and present, Jimmer was re-introduced to a woman he had known long ago. This time, however, there was



*Tillman's Store in Elmer City is the oldest family-owned business in the area. It was founded by Jim's grandfather.*

chemistry. In February, Jimmer and Cortney Logan were married.

Cortney—whom many know as the office manager at Nespelem Valley Electric—has joined Jimmer in restoring the old family house, which was built for his grandfather.

As that project is gradually completed, Cortney helps out with another part of the traditions of the family into which she has married, lending her bookkeeping expertise to operation of Tillman's Store.

"It's the oldest family-owned business around," Jimmer says, noting part of the reason for the store's survival is due to the owners' willingness to change with the times.

He explains Tillman's used to be a full hardware store, but increased mobility of potential customers—coupled with increased competition from Omak, Spokane and online suppliers—led to a large drop in local demand for such goods.

The store competes well with distant businesses by supplying what locals want. It has expanded its deli services. With a whole

turkey or roast cooking on site, Tillman's offers a variety of sandwiches and other high-quality edibles. The business prospers.

Jimmer and Cortney love outdoor activities. The couple fish, hunt, camp, ride and cycle across over the area.

Both subscribe to Jimmer's view: "It's a joy just being a part of this community."

Jimmer says his work ethic can be traced to having worked as a teenager on a cattle ranch near Oroville.

"You didn't eat till the animals were fed," he recalls, "and that taught me a lot."

Making music, raising horses, fishing, keeping a water system safe and efficient, running a store, renovating a house, camping, raising kids, gardening—Jimmer's and Cortney's activity list is long.

"You've got to enjoy what God gives you," he says.

Jimmer would be the first to say he has been given a great deal—and he enjoys it to the hilt. ■



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You've got to enjoy what God gives you."*

*—Jimmer Tillman*