

Langell: Each work of art has to tell a story

Woodcarver/painter stresses detail

By Gary M. Cates
staff writer

Quietly tucked away in a white house set back from Canton Center Road is Canton resident Charles Langell.

He's a man with a great attention for detail and possess the patience and ambition to bring details to life. He is an artist, a wood carver, craftsman, researcher, and sign painter to name but a few talents.

The 74-year-old man claims to have retired from work 40 years ago, however the vast collection of his handiwork tells of a man dedicated to working.

The desk in his kitchen is being refinished for a relative. The freshly painted lanterns in the workroom are for the Mayflower Hotel. The intricately carved carousel horse on the shelf is one of Langell's ongoing projects.

All about the house are completed works of art; evidence of the painstaking hours spent creating, refining, and finishing. The resulting display is a gallery of history, nature, and memories.

Each of the works compares to a novel, with the intimate details filling the chapters.

"A good piece of art," says Langell, "must tell a story. It's no good if it doesn't tell a story."

The bronze-colored carving of two Indians on horses wrestling with a buffalo tells the story of a father teaching his son how to hunt the powerful animal, he says.

A whaling boat in the living room depicts the struggle of sailors as they strip blubber from a whale. Another work illustrates the dismay of several sailors when an angry whale turns and smashes their dory, plunging the men into the tossing sea.

MANY OF LANGELL'S CARVINGS are related to the sea and ships. Eight of his finest ships, all handmade to reduced scale, are being prepared for display at Canton Township Hall.

Each of the ships, representing hundreds of hours of work, was built from original plans. Langell carefully carved individual wood planks to reduced sizes for the construction.

The many hours spent researching each ship have resulted in unbelievably accurate re-creations.

"Ships are really my heart. I do other carvings, but ships are my heart," Langell says. "All my family either sailed ships or built them."

Langell, a slightly weathered man with a peppered pencil mustache, has

done both. He started sailing on the Great Lakes at an early age instead of going to school.

"I wanted to start out life as a draftsman. Instead, when I reached the eighth grade, my mom and dad put me out sailing," he said.

Langell became a deck hand because he didn't have the money to train as a draftsman at college.

"Life doesn't always let you do what you want to do," he says. "I still got the box of drafting instruments I bought when I was 16. I never used them, but I saved them because that's part of my memories."

At the age of 19 Langell was kicked off the ship, after a bout with the first mate. Dropped off in Detroit, he went in search of a new occupation.

He had watched a sign painter work

at his grandfather's ship building yard and started painting lettering on store windows to earn a living.

This eventually led to a job as a commercial artist at Ford Motor Company for 13 years. He painted lettering on vehicles, as well as doing wall paintings "for the big jobs." But, like sailing, he got restless with the work.

"I got out of art since there wasn't no money in it," he said.

Langell left Ford to work as a mechanic at various car dealerships.

HOWEVER, having one full-time job at a time wasn't enough for him. Many times Langell worked other jobs on the side: building houses, painting real estate signs, and painting houses.

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Each carving must tell a story, the former commercial artist says. Langell's re-creation of a whaling boat depicts man's struggle to capture and strip the ocean's largest fish. Here, several sailors work around the main boat in a dory.



Charles Langell of Canton prides himself on details. As a woodcarver, Langell strives to depict each and every detail. Carving is easy, he says. You simply keep cutting until it looks like a horse, or whatever is being made. Some of his works will be on display soon in the Canton Township Hall.

INSIDE ANGLES

Know someone doing something notable? Let us know. Write: Inside Angles, Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

MICHIGAN HISTORY, the state's official historical publication is looking for old Michigan farm photos for the 1984 March-April issue on agriculture. Photos should be sent to Sandra Clark, Editor, Michigan History, Department of State, Lansing 48918. All photos will be returned after the issue is published. Subscriptions costing \$9.96 annually, may be obtained from Michigan History, Lansing 48918. Checks should be made payable to the State of Michigan.

THE FARMINGTON COMMUNITY Center now has a newly printed booklet of the center's history, dating back to 1889 when Palmer Sherman built the first brick house on Farmington Road. In 1918 that small six room residence was expanded into a 20-room country mansion by Luman Goodenough. The history serves as a guide as one tours the premises and includes vignettes of the Goodenough family before the home was donated to the public as a community center.

DAVID J. STENSON, son of Mr. John F. Stenson of Farmington and a junior at GMI Engineering and Management Institute in Flint, has been appointed to GMI's Management Honor Society. He is a cooperative student with GM Advanced Product Manufacturing Engineering Staff in Warren.

JOHN DAVIS, son of W.H. and Nancy Seldon Davis and a 1976 graduate of North Farmington High School, is among 125 medical students entering the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine this fall. He received his degree in biomedicine from Western Michigan University in 1981. Upon completion of medical school, he will receive the doctor of osteopathy (D.O.) degree and after examination may be licensed at any state to provide health care.

ROBERT ALLEN, Farmington Hills, a student at the University of Detroit School of Architecture, is the recipient of the Alpha Phi Chi School Medal presented by the Alpha Phi Chi Fraternity, the national architecture fraternity, on the basis of ability for leadership, performance of willing service to his school and promise of professional merit through attitude and personality.

GIFT GIVERS can warm the heart of those on their list this year by giving a Summer Fun Passbook from the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission. This \$60 value gives access to dozens of activities at Oakland County Parks at a price of \$20. A breathtaking ride down the Slidewinder water slide at Waterford Oaks or the Rampage water coaster at Groveland Oaks and a round of golf at one of four Oakland County golf courses are but a few of the activities offered in the passbook. The passbooks are available at all Oakland County Parks or by contacting the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission at 858-0906 between 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

THE FARMINGTON/FARMINGTON HILLS Optimist Club has announced the winners of the Youth Appreciation Award for 1983. Selected by their respective schools were: Jean Brennan, Mercy High School; Tim Carothers, Farmington High School; Scott A. Dechant, Harrison High School; and Maria Fornin, North Farmington High School. The awards were presented by Optimist Club president, Harold P. Gordon.

KEVIN COLLINS of Farmington is among 30 members of the 1983-84 varsity ice hockey team at Lake Forest College, Ill. The Foresters have a 2-2 record and are ranked seventh nationally in Division III competition. Kevin, a Forester wing, is a 1981 graduate of North Farmington High School.

LINDA MILKOVICH of Farmington Hills and Laura D. McDonald of Farmington recently completed a course in professional floral design at the Professional Florists' Institute, a Detroit-based private vocational institution. The institute is affiliated with the Wesley Berry Floral Co., established in 1946.

IF THERE IS a skier or would-be skier on your Christmas list, the American Lung Association of Southeastern Michigan (ALASEM) has a great idea for a stocking stuffer that will bring fun for the entire ski season. Just \$20 will buy a lift ticket at 23 different Michigan ski resorts . . . and the \$20 is tax-deductible. Details and information may be obtained by calling 861-1697 or by writing ALASEM, 28 W. Adams, Detroit 48226. All orders must be accompanied by payment. Cards will be mailed within 24 hours of receipt of order.

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