

Chain-saw artist carves out his craft

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Chain-saw artist Kenneth Boshell parked cars, flipped eggs, butchered meat and worked as a janitor before discovering the path to peace of mind.

He was selling hearing aids 11 years ago when he happened upon a home landscaped with Polynesian wooden statues. A tour of the yard served as his inspiration. The result was that he dropped the hearing aid business and picked up a chain saw and began sculpting animals, people and totem poles from tree stumps.

Back then, the finished product wasn't always recognizable and income was minimal.

"The average comment was, 'my three-year-old son could do better,' but here he is to start somewhere," said Boshell, who sells his sculptures at the Ole Toll Shell Service Station at Grand River and Halsted roads in Farmington.

"You have to be proud of whatever rung (of achievement) you're on," he philosophized at that low point in his artistic career.

But it wasn't long after that things began looking up for the artisan — thanks to the interest of ABC Wide World of Sports sportscaster Chris Schenkel.

After seeing examples of Boshell's work in magazine and newspaper arti-

cles, Schenkel contacted the chain-saw sculptor and put him to work at the Deer Creek Country Club in Deerfield Beach, Fla.

An Indian relic buff, Schenkel commissioned Boshell to carve a totem pole from a tree that had been struck by lightning at the golf club in which he has financial interest.

The Hazel Park High graduate went on to earn \$745.81 sculpting a 5-foot high golfer purchased for Bob Hope by the Pensacola Sports Association several years ago. He's now preparing a show to be aired as half-time entertainment during a televised Detroit Express Soccer game Aug. 7.

The life of a chain-saw sculptor isn't all big names and windfall profits, however.

Boshell, who adds the initials B.A.C.S.S. after his name (Bachelor Available, Chain Saw Sculptor) "you can have any degree you want in the school of hard knocks" was recently divorced from his wife who found the family's

unstable financial status intolerable.

"This past winter, things were real bad. Sometimes I didn't know where my next meal was coming from. But things are picking up now," said Boshell, who makes public appearances dressed like the legendary giant lumberjack Paul Bunyan.

Boshell has made a dent into the Farmington area market in spite of the ailing economy.

Adorning lawns in local subdivisions are sea captain mailboxes, totem poles, rabbits and owls. On the eighth hole at Farmington Country Club is a squirrel salvaged by Boshell from a tree stump.

Down Haggerty Road from the golf club at Farmer Johns Nursery are still more examples of Boshell's wooden creations.

Boshell says he "charges as much as I can get" for his work but most pieces start at \$75 and go up from there.

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Kenneth Boshell prepares the wood for sculpting by using his chain saw to even the end of the log.



A wooden Gooly grins in the greenhouse.



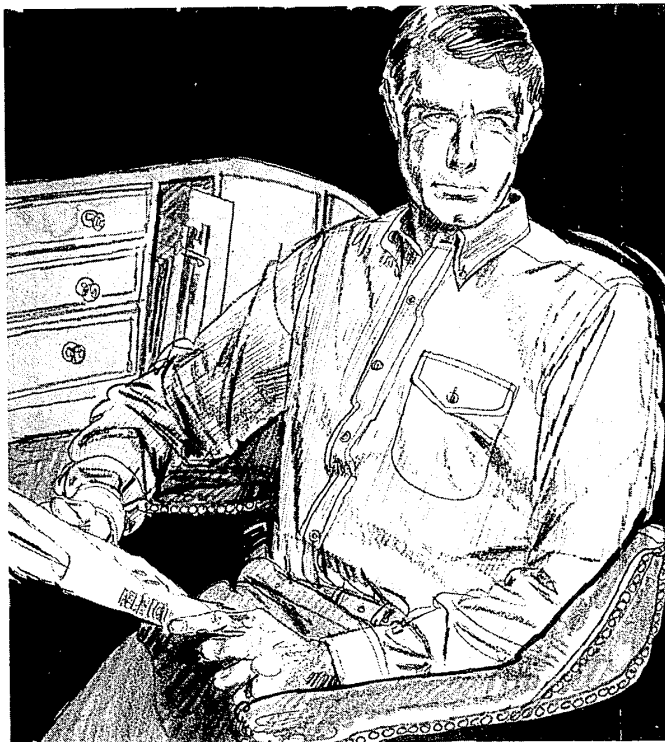
'People ooh and ah because what I do is natural.'

— Kenneth Boshell



This eagle, more than 5 feet tall, stands at Farmer John's nursery on Haggerty Road.

Staff photos by Randy Borst



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