

"Some carve their careers; others just chisel"

CHIP & CHATS

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Modeled after a Russian toy, bears by Sharon Vang charmed visitors at the Omaha, Nebr., show. (See page 34)



Carving out a safari

By ERIC M. SAPERSTEIN

WHEN the time comes to commemorate your passions, there are a variety of ways to immortalize them into an heirloom. Some people decide to commission a portrait, others take photographs; people write songs or tell stories. Then there are some who find that carving or sculpture is more suitable to their mindset.

This piece is a "Safari Chest," a solid cherry locker with hand forged custom black iron hinges, designed to not only house the prized possessions of its master, but to provide a venue of memories, conversation, and mystique.

This particular commission required us to portray the favorite game (white-tailed deer, elk, and bear) of a lifelong hunter and

outdoorsman. We developed three panoramic scenes portraying each of these great beasts in its natural habitat.

Commissions of this kind require us to analyze our client's personality, and utilize the skills of pattern development, furniture design, joinery, carving, finishing, wood burning, and tinting. These pieces demand creativity, and once we have been engaged and define our initial working parameters, the artistic freedom takes charge once the commission gains momentum.

The patterns are a composite consisting of extracts from Lora S. Irish, with original sketches by Stanley and Eric Saperstein of Artisans of the Valley. The scenes are complete with primary foreground creatures, background plots, plant life, horizons, and transitional features to define depth and perspective.

All carving was completed by hand with a relief depth up to one half inch. Detail features such as fur, leaves, grass, bark, ripples, and shadows were highlighted using a woodburning pen.



Chest created and hand signed by master craftsmen Stanley and Eric Saperstein, January 2007.

THE PARSIMONIOUS CURMUDGEON

By FRED COGELOW

Befur i even gets to reviewing my "Fred'sHex; Reliable, High-Quality Delivery Circuses" competition at the '08 Congress, there is one matter of higher priority. Roughly one and a half decades ago, i wrote a letter of congratulations and encouragement to a young feller from North of the border who had just submitted his first entries, pieces evidencing considerable promise, to the Congress. Many times in the years intervening i've posited that, despite having taken more than my share of awards in that competition, my continuation was in some sense an obligation, helping to lend credence to the level of competition, and assuring some prestige to both those who might best me and those who'd come close.



"On Time, On Target!" by Sandy Smith. — Photo by Sandy Smith

Well, i finally got my come-uppance, but good. That little green-behind-the-ears Canadian upstart came back, and whupped me but good, knocking me out of the top three for the first time in about twenty years, if memory serves. (Judging years and other absences not included.) Worster yet, he took all three of the top spots at the show himself, something never achieved before.

The knowledge that my best pizza hadn't bin retrieved for the competition was consolation for a while, but then my Sweetie went cruising the web one night and shoved the Fred Zavadil web-page under my nose. It was thoroughly disillusioning. Had my best bin entered and his best bin entered, he still wood've taken all three top spots. Zavadil is one heck of a carver, and should be roundly saluted and congratulated. We can only hope his continued involvement will lend credence to the Davenport and other competitions for years to come.

That having bin said, i fail to understand why his cel-list didn't take the top spot instead. Had i bin able to stick around for the judicial review, some enlightenment might have occurred. That unfortunately meant that i also left without pictures of the entries in my little competition.

Naive as i be, there was a presumption that those who took cash awards in the Fred'sHex competition wood dispatch letters expressing overwhelming gratitude to myself, complete with a photographic depiction of their pizza. As the months went by with only one such missive in receipt, it occurred to me that the preceding presumption was rather arrogant on my part, that i instead, despite the cash outlay, owed them the first expression of appreciation. They had put a considerable effort into their pieces without much promise of a market for the final product, unless one considers this tight-fisted Norskie-American a noteworthy market.

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The chest is tinted using acrylic washes, sealed using shellac, and finished with a hand-rubbed tung oil varnish. The use of color and con-

trast in our pieces develops a unique visual array where the features of each scene become realistic with all sorts of obvious and hidden details. ■

Artisans of the Valley, 103 Corrine Dr., Pennington, NJ 08534; (609) 637-0450; www.artisansofthevalley.com. For carving patterns by Lora S. Irish, visit Web site www.carvingpatterns.com.

