

Art Carved



Pete Leverentz rips into a log that will eventually become a red-tail hawk. Top, Leverentz's "The Osprey" earned a first place prize in an art contest hosted by Carnegie Council for the Arts in Three Rivers.

Lake dweller creates a different kind of art

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY JAYMES MACDONALD

Pete Leverentz has a gift — a gift for putting life back into things that are dead. With unrivaled skill, Leverentz pours his heart and soul into creating life-full pieces of art out

of wood.

Leverentz, who resides on Fishers Lake in Three Rivers, spends most of his days delivering syrup for soda pop to area businesses.

It wasn't until recently that Leverentz re-awakened the artist within. And it started as somewhat of an experiment.

"When I was in school, I was

an art minor, so I had some background in sculpture and I had always seen the guys at the fairs and I thought it looked like fun, but I never really had a chance. I didn't go into art, I went into the family business," Leverentz said. "One day, I was cutting up some firewood and decided to make something, and I carved an Indian head. It was fun."

From there Leverentz began making rustic furniture. His neighbors are from Chicago and he decided to make them a chair with a bear's head on it.

People throughout the neighborhood caught sight of Leverentz's work and offered to buy some of the pieces.

"I would set stuff out by the garage and people would stop by when they were walking and they'd ask if they were for sale," Leverentz said. "That's kind of how it took off."

Leverentz's work, which began as somewhat of an experiment, evolved into much, much more and has gained renown throughout the area.

His most well-known creation, "The Osprey," earned him a first-place finish in an art competition held at the Carnegie Center Council for the Arts in Three Rivers.

"I entered the Carnegie show more as a whim to see if what I was doing was any good and I took first place," Leverentz said. "It got critiqued by actual artists instead of your friends and neighbors. I got some really positive feedback from people that do it professionally."

Winning that competition sparked a creative fire within Leverentz and he hasn't looked back. The osprey he carved was only the beginning of a vast array of

award-worthy carvings.

"I don't really like carving one particular thing, but birds of prey are kind of my favorite thing," Leverentz said. "I'm not afraid to tackle different ideas that people have."

And it doesn't matter how big the ideas are. Recently, Leverentz carved an 8-foot bear that sits outside Nottawa Gas. But he doesn't limit himself to animals.

"I'm not afraid to tackle things beyond the normal bears, birds and fish. I like to do other things too," Leverentz said. "Some people think you have to have a log in your own yard. I have plenty of big logs to carve into stuff, but I will come out to their location, too."

He carved "Sparty," Michigan State University's mascot, for Jim Wise, who owns Wise Motors in Mendon.

It goes without saying that Leverentz has a talent for giving life. And doing so gives Leverentz a certain type of fulfillment.

"It's a way of expressing yourself. It's a release from everyday stress. It's hard work, it's physical, but there is a reward at the end because you have something there that will last. It's kind of a legacy."

If you would like to add a unique piece of art to your property, contact Leverentz at www.carvingsbypete.com.