

## “Horizontal” Chainsaw Carvings

Randy Boni does chainsaw carving like no one else. His nestled turkeys, bears, foxes, owls and raccoons are lined up across big logs laying flat on the ground. What makes his story even more amazing is that Boni was legally blind until just over 20 years ago.

He and his twin brother, Rick, were both born with cataracts. They weren't able to have them removed until they were in their 30's.

The 60-year-old, Parrottsville, Tenn., artist has been making chainsaw sculptures ever since. He had a good reputation for his work locally but things really took off about a year ago when someone put pictures of his work on the internet.

“I don't know who took the photos, but God bless 'em,” Boni laughs. An email spread throughout the U.S. and overseas. The phone started ringing, and he received so many orders he had to turn some of them down.

Boni got started with horizontal carvings when a client wanted two logs on the ground on both sides of his driveway. Boni had two 42-in. dia., 28-ft. long Engelmann spruce logs to work with. Each log took about 12 days to complete.

Carving horizontally creates some challenges.

“I make sure water has a way to drain off,” Boni says. And although it's impossible to keep the wood from cracking, he turns the animal heads with the long grain of the logs so they aren't as fragile.

Two big commissioned jobs Boni received from the email were for a fish-themed log for a Florida restaurant and a cougar/deer log for a Calgary businessman.

The Tennessee carver creates mostly vertical pieces. Much of his past work has been carving support beams and intricate mantels in log homes built in the Smoky Mountain area, and he likes to travel at least twice a year to do large commissioned pieces.

Boni also does “tourist bears” starting at about \$500, but admits he is happier creating art pieces than carving for production.

“It's challenging to keep growing with the art form,” he says. “There's always, what do I do next to outdo this?”

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Randy Boni's nestled animal carvings are lined up horizontally across big logs laying flat on the ground.



Boni got started with horizontal carvings when a client wanted 2 logs on the ground alongside his driveway.



His horizontal carvings include turkeys, bears, foxes, owls and raccoons.

## “Snow-Mower” Fools Deere Lovers

When people first see Wyatt Kram's garden tractor snowmobile, they often ask when Deere manufactured the machine.

He then explains that he got the idea from a digitally altered photo he saw on the internet. The 23-year-old manufacturing engineer spent 7 months of his free time building his Deere Snow-Mower out of a 1980 Deere Liquifire snowmobile and a worn out garden tractor.

His hybrid works better than he thought and has turned lots of heads and won People's Choice awards at vintage snowmobile events he has attended.

The lawn tractor's high seat and muffler jutting up from the lawn tractor hood definitely sets Kram's machine apart from other snowmobiles.

“It's higher and feels tippy at first,” Kram admits. “Since I can't move my feet, I'm at the mercy of the trail and the suspension.”

Fortunately he spent time designing the suspension with a 3-D computer program. With the help of a fellow vintage snowmobile collector, he came up with a blend of vintage bogie wheels and modern long travel type suspension, which allows him to ride on grass as well as deep snow.

“I got my suspension set up right. A rear shock supports my body weight, and the front shock puts enough weight on the skis so it's easy to handle. This is the best turning snowmobile I own,” Kram says, crediting the extra weight on the front and the carbide wear rods on the skis.

Kram started with the snowmobile's drive train and used the lawn mower's gas tank, grill, hood, seat, fenders, dash and other parts. A 440cc liquid-cooled, 2-stroke Kawasaki engine powers the machine. The conglomeration of parts boosted the snowmobile's weight from 400 to 580 lbs., enough to make Kram cautious about getting stuck, though he discovered late last winter that the machine goes through deep snow and climbs hills quite well. It travels up to 45 mph, which isn't bad for a vintage machine. Its mileage isn't quite as good, however, and with the lawnmower's 3-gal. fuel tank, he needs to carry extra gas for the 20-mile vintage rides.

For Kram, the most challenging part of the project was making the side covers. He hadn't worked with sheet metal before, and he spent a lot of time making cardboard

patterns before hand cutting side panels, a clutch cover, toolbox, and other pieces out of 19-gauge aluminum. A couple stainless steel bowls made perfect covers for the clutches.

“All the side covers can be quickly removed to access the engine area,” Kram says.

For the finishing touches he had the machine powder-coated and accented with customized decals. He can interchange two mufflers — a tractor style with a flapper or a straight pipe.

Altogether Kram spent less than \$1,200 on the project to rebuild the engine, pay for laser cutting, wiring, aluminum sheeting, etc. He repaired one of the Deere mowers and sold it to help fund the project. He credits his wife for her support and patience as she cared for their 3-year-old while he spent hours in his workshop.

The Snow-Mower makes the sixth piece in Kram's vintage Deere snowmobile collection.

“It's definitely the most interesting machine,” he notes, and he looks forward to taking it to shows in the region. It won't stay on the trailer just for display, he adds.

“I built it to ride around and have fun,” Kram says.

To see photos of the building process check out a forum on the Snow-Mower at <http://www.vintagesledders.com/forums/index.php?topic=966.0>.



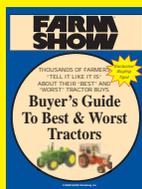
Wyatt Kram built his “garden tractor snowmobile” out of a 1980 Deere Liquifire snowmobile and a worn out garden tractor.

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Lawn tractor's high seat and muffler, jutting up from the tractor hood, sets Kram's machine apart from other snowmobiles.



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