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Dal Grooms photo

She Carves Pictures on Mushrooms

By Dal Grooms

"Decay is not the end of things in nature; it often forms a new beginning." This is how Rose Peterson of Storm Lake, Iowa describes her art.

Mrs. Peterson carves bracket mushrooms. The bracket mushroom has a woody top and light buff underside and has no gills on the bottom. It grows on dead or decaying trees.

Many people paint on mushrooms, but Mrs. Peterson has not found anyone else who actually carves into the mushroom. She and her husband, Aaron, and their two children, April and Scott, usually go together on mushroom hunts.

"It gives us a chance to get away from it all," she says. "Collecting them is half the fun."

The Petersons use two tools to collect the mushrooms — an ax and a large knife. The knife is used to pry the mushroom loose. The ax is used to chop the mushroom and bark off the tree if it can't be loosened with the knife.

After collecting, Mrs. Peterson lets the mushrooms dry for a couple weeks in a protected area, such as their garage. If they are left outside, or do not have enough air circulation, they become moldy and are unusable. She says the best time to collect is during the winter because they are "freeze-dried."

Once they are dry, she cleans the backs or tops with a brush. She does not use anything on the carving surface because any abrasive would scar the surface permanently. The deeper she carves into the mushrooms, the darker the color becomes.

If there are flaws in the face of the mushroom, she tries to use them to her advantage in the carving. For example, one mushroom had knots on its face similar to those found in trees. So, she carved a picture of a tree around the knots.

After she has carved into the mushroom, she covers the back with a urethane varnish. She tried many types of protective finishes on the face of the mushrooms before she found one that would not blacken the face. (This is her only trade secret.)

The largest mushroom she has worked on was about 3 ft. across and 2 ft. tall. Most are about 8 in. by 10 in. or smaller.

She takes her mushroom art to about six shows a year which are sponsored by the Iowa Arts Council.

The price of a carved mushroom ranges from \$2 to \$100, depending on size and amount of work invested in it.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mrs. Rose Peterson, 315 Parlina Lane, Storm Lake, Iowa 50583 (ph 712 732-3794).

(Reprinted from the Iowa Farm Bureau Spokesman)

An Inventor's Service That's Really "Free"

Operators of inventors' services that charge an up-front fee to evaluate a new idea before any attempt is made to market it have been convicted of fraud in many states. In states where they are allowed to operate, they rarely, if ever, produce revenue for an inventor.

But now there is a new inventors' service that doesn't cost a cent unless a market is found for the invention. Worldtech, a new service developed by Control Data Corp., works with inventors on a non-exclusive basis so that even though you may submit an idea to the company for evaluation and possible sale, you can continue on your own to try to sell or develop the invention.

Control Data, a multi-national company which operates in 35 countries, has been involved with inventors for several years through their unique worldwide computerized listing of new inventions which was first featured in FARM SHOW six years ago. Attempting to find markets for new ideas was the next logical step, according to Worldtech marketing coordinator Connie Hansen.

"In our first months of operation, we've received inventions ranging from a new-style crutch and a new design in garbage cans to new technologies for the aerospace industry. We have experts in nearly all fields, including agriculture, who evaluate inventions which are brought to us," says Hansen.

Here's how the service works: First, a prototype of the invention should be built and, while it's not necessary to patent the idea, it must be proved that it will work. Second, the value or

"KING WHISKERS"

North Dakota Farmer Grows Remarkable Crop

By Erling N. Rolfsrud

Many years after his death, a North Dakota farmer's accomplishment has been listed in the Guinness Book of World Records because Hans Langseth, of Richland County, grew a most remarkable crop.

Born in Norway in 1846, Hans came to America in 1876, a young man eager to make a fortune in the new land. He worked briefly in Iowa and Minnesota before homesteading in North Dakota. Here he prospered and became a wealthy man.

But it was not his prosperity that brought this farmer the attention of an admiring and curious public.

Like most gentlemen of his day, Hans Langseth grew a beard. Being an observant fellow, he noticed that the hair on a man's face would break

off at waist length, but that which grew from under the chin had much greater durability. So, at the age of 30, Hans decided to find out how long a whisker crop his chin could produce.

Those luxuriant strands lengthened until they got into his way. Industrious farmer that he was, Hans could not let the experiment handicap his work. So, he wrapped the whisker ends around a little stick, put the coil into a protective bag, and tucked the whole within his vest or shirt.



Photo courtesy North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo.

Langseth's beard grew to be a whopping 18 ft., 6 in. long.

Well, those whiskers grew and grew. After attaining nearly half a century of growth, the coil inside Langseth's shirt bulged so large that, spare man though he was, he bore a paunch.

When his beard reached 17 ft., 4 in. in length, Hans joined the Ringling Brothers Circus to display the "longest beard in the world." His career with the circus did not last long, however. People hurt his feelings when they viewed with disbelief a beard so genuine. Furthermore, the chin got sore, for every crowd would have some smart-aleck who would reach over and jerk the end of the beard as it lay displayed in full-length glory upon a table.

Hans, therefore, made quick return to North Dakota, where honest folk respected the genuine article. Once though, he journeyed to Sacramento, Calif., to compete in a "Days of '49" whisker contest. As might well be expected, Langseth shamed all contestants and was crowned "King Whiskers" and presented with a gold slug suitably engraved.

When Hans Langseth died in 1927, the beard had attained 18 ft., 6 in. in length. The beard was presented to the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., in 1967, and is there preserved.