

Call Him Chainsaw Artist

Joe Elmore left behind his fine line pencils years ago. His paints sit in boxes stored in out of the way corners of his Scotts Valley home. His sculpting instruments go untouched for months.

Leaving behind the more traditional tools of an artist, Elmore now gets his message across with a smoke-spitting, gas-gulping chainsaw. Tree trunks now take the place of his canvases.

Joe Elmore calls himself a chainsaw artist — one of only six that he knows of. And when he lays into a log with his chattering saw, he carves out a new member of his family — “critters,” he calls them.

There's an eight-foot high Oakland Raider setting right next to a narly looking cowboy you'd swear is going to draw on you any moment. An Indian chief stands smugly on guard at the front gate to Elmore's yard which sits just off Highway 17 on the way into Scotts Valley. Little gnomes and hobbits stand shyly off in the corner, while eagles and pelicans perch on stumps.

Elmore had a studio on Winchester Boulevard in San Jose before he moved his operation to Scotts Valley last month. His neighbors in San Jose were getting tired of listening to his chainsaw.

“I knew what I wanted to do since I was eight years old,” said Elmore, who is 38.

“I just wanted to paint, draw and create things, but my art teacher told me I'd never be an artist.”

And Elmore has held just about every kind of job on the way to becoming a full-time artist. He's been a butcher, carpenter, truck driver, bartender and bouncer.

“I believe you have to have a destination in life — and you have to get yourself a vehicle to take you to that destination,” said Elmore with determination.

“I want to be a well-known artist and be self-sufficient as an artist.”

That's Elmore's destination; his vehicle is his chain-saw.

Elmore's buzz-saw art is finally afford-

ing him self-sufficiency as an artist. The price of his works ranges from \$100 for some smaller pieces, on up to \$850 for the towering football lineman. It works out to be just around \$100 a foot.

While another chainsaw artist was in the news last week when he unveiled his wood sculpture of the late John Wayne, Elmore has been commissioned by another celebrity who wants his likeness immortalized by Joe's chainsaw.

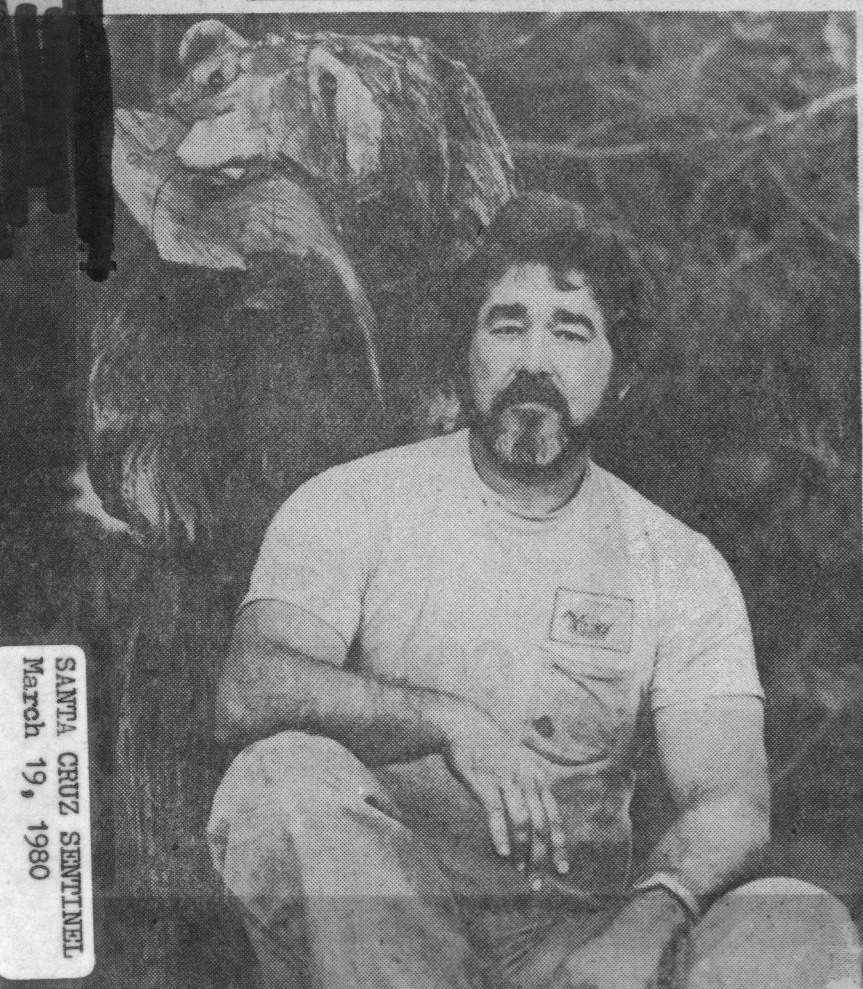
Bo Diddley, one of the founding fathers of rock and roll, was in town recently for a musical appearance when he saw Elmore's work by the roadside. Diddley was im-

pressed with the gunslinging cowboy sculpture and told Elmore, “If you can carve a cowboy like that, you can do the same for me.”

Elmore and Bo Diddley struck up a deal and on the way back to his car, Diddley turned and said, “I gotta have me one of these . . . as soon as Chuck Berry sees this, he's gonna want one, too. Every time I get something new, he tries to get one, too.”

As a critically acclaimed artist, Joe Elmore may be Santa Cruz' biggest sleeper of the year. That's soon to change. You see, Elmore has his own style of sawing logs.

ARTS, CALIFORNIA PREFERENCE



Text And Photos By Dan Coyro

LEFT — A bear of a man himself, Joe Elmore says this Grizzly angler is one of his favorite pieces.

RIGHT — Scotts Valley chainsaw artist Joe Elmore poses for a family portrait with some of his more endearing cut-up “critters.”



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