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Jane Pauley, host of 'Your Life Calling' on NBC's 'Today Show,' interviews Santa Cruz resident Kirk Rademaker, who quit his project manager job to become a professional sand sculptor.

SANTA CRUZ SAND ARTIST LANDS SPOT ON 'TODAY'

Art & Artists - 2000

NBC's Jane Pauley interviews sand sculptor Kirk Rademaker at the Dream Inn

By SHANNA MCCORD

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SANTA CRUZ — In her nearly 40 years of broadcast journalism, Jane Pauley had never interviewed anyone with no shoes on before meeting Santa Cruzan Kirk Rademaker.

Pauley spent several hours at the Dream Inn on Wednesday digging into Rademaker's background and what led him to become one of the world's most acclaimed sand artists for her monthly "Your Life Calling" segment on NBC's "Today Show."

Throughout the interview inside a hotel conference room a view of Cowell Beach, Rademaker, 61, sat a couple feet from the petite Pauley in well-worn jeans, a long-sleeved collared shirt and no shoes.

"I believe this is the first time I've interviewed anyone barefoot," said the famous Pauley, wearing casual tennis shoes, an orange cashmere sweater and jeans. "It says a great deal about you."

Rademaker will appear on "Your Life Calling," a segment sponsored by AARP that highlights people across the country older than age 50 who are trying dramatically new things such as starting a different career or changing how they live.

Pauley picked Rademaker, the show's 25th profile since starting two years ago, because of the way he reinvented his life by ditching a long-



Santa Cruz resident Kirk Rademaker, an acclaimed sand sculptor, created this Wednesday at Cowell Beach before an interview with NBC journalist Jane Pauley for a 'Today Show' segment.

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time career as a project manager at a high-end cabinet shop in Oakland and making a name for himself with large, impossibly detailed sand sculptures. Rademaker was miserable at his project manager job, about to turn 50 and going through a divorce when he decided to escape to Stinson Beach north of San Francisco one day in the late 1990s. There, he built a sand castle that awakened a deep-rooted passion for turning sand into art.

He began entering sand-building competitions and eventually quit the cabinet shop to make a go at professional sand sculpting.

It wasn't an easy or prosperous beginning, but in time Rademaker honed his sand skills and is now sought after worldwide and paid handsomely.

Clients include Yahoo, Facebook and Google.

Requests for his sand creations have taken him to France, Turkey, Portugal, Puerto Rico and other international spots. He made a sculpture for Dustin Hoffman's wife's birthday party.

This year he was a regular on the Travel Channel reality show "Sand Masters."

"It is a job," Rademaker told Pauley about his new vocation. "You have to perform. Where there was nothing there has to be something."

Pauley, who spent Tuesday night at the Dream Inn, said stories like Rademaker's are inspirational.

"He experienced something a lot of people do," she said. "Life was not very sweet. He had an epiphany, I think, and broke through to a new life. I think his story validates the disquiet and dissatisfaction I think is universal."

Rademaker's story is expected to air on the "Today Show" on July 17.

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