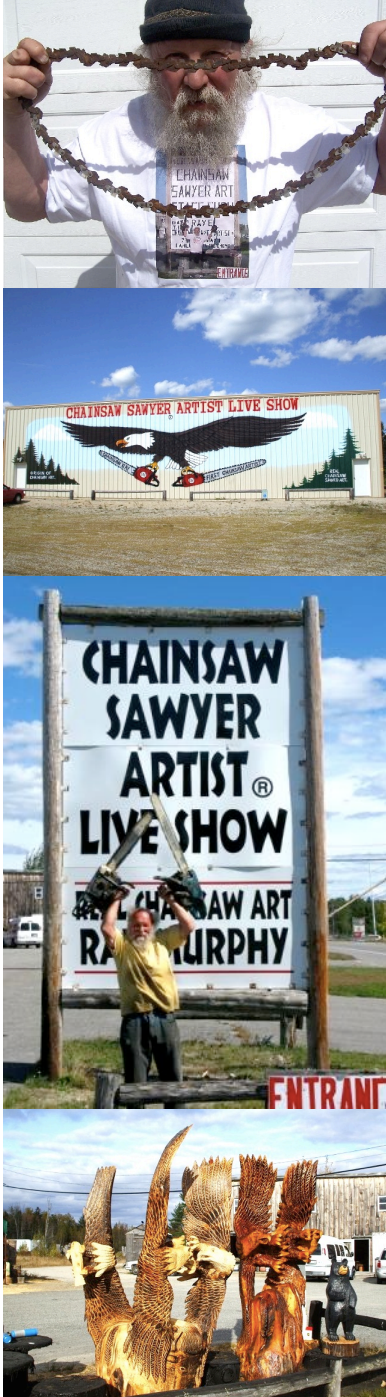


Chainsaw Michelangelo



Ray Murphy is a master of the chainsaw. And an artist. He is, he explains, the man who invented chainsaw art in the early 1950s, at the age of ten, when he borrowed his father's chainsaw to carve names and faces for his brother and friends.

Ray performs every night of the summer, in Hancock, Maine, in an auditorium he built just for this purpose. "God gave me a talent to share not to goshdang hoard." In a sound-dampened booth with a projection screen to show the details of his work, he saws figures and letters, toothpicks and pencils. He invites a member of the audience to join him in the booth where he saws a belt buckle from a piece of wood strapped around the waist.

He is a master technician. He set a record for sawing a chair from a log (in less than ten seconds). He can saw the entire alphabet on a pencil. This past summer he sawed 19 numbers on a single toothpick.

But Ray is more than a showman or a craftsman. He sees himself as an artist, a creator who has chosen the chainsaw as his brush. And he doesn't like being mixed up with the chainsaw carvers who use carving tools and sanders. "Don't call me a chainsaw *carver*. I'm an artist. A real chainsaw artist. I use nothing more than the chainsaw."

Ray tells a fascinating story of his life. Born and raised on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, he treasures his Shoshone heritage. But his childhood in Wyoming was a difficult one. He confronted alcoholism & violence. Four of his ten brothers and sisters have passed away. He spent years barnstorming the country in an old Greyhound bus, giving chainsaw demonstrations. Ray has lost some fingers, but he's quick to explain that these were from work in lumber mill, not from chainsaw art. He calls himself the Wild Mountain Man, a nickname he picked up in the 1960s. With a long white beard, a devil-may-care smile, wielding two chainsaws over his head, he looks the part. He is in his seventies but has no thoughts of slowing down. He wants, he explains, to saw what hasn't been sawed before.