

# Couple carving niche for business

TOPEKA (AP) — Standing sentinel outside of Dr. Donald Clark's front door on Southwest 21st Street is a towering totem of St. Francis of Assisi carved from the trunk of a historic tree.

But the artwork wasn't created with the typical chisels, gouges and other tools found in woodcarving studios. The saintly sculpture was cut with chain saws steered by Pat and Vicki Langton, of Perry.

"It was a labor of love," Clark said.

Clark said the pin oak was damaged by storms over the years, and he needed to have the top limbs and trunk cut off to prevent them from possibly falling on his home during severe weather. He had given part of the discarded trunk to a cabinet maker. Another portion went to a Jefferson West High School teacher, who was interested in the tree because of its historical value.

"It's 175 years old," he said. "When we took it to the mill and they cut sections out, the guy estimated this age. It (started growing) shortly after Lewis and Clark went west. It predates the Civil War."

What remained, though, was a 16-foot-tall tree stump sticking out of the ground in his front lawn. He got the idea to have the Langtons carve it after they were recommended by a friend and he saw some of their other chain saw carvings.

"You have to grant them their artistic license," the retired dentist

said. The first thing Pat Langton did was carve the base of the trunk to look like stonework.

Next was the image of St. Francis in his monk's robe and sporting a beard, with a squirrel sitting on his shoulder. But instead of a sparrow on the saint's raised hand, Pat carved a Jayhawk.

"It's a removable Jayhawk," Vicki Langton said. "You put it on when they are winning."

Morning glory vines — with hummingbirds seeking out their flowers' nectar — climb the sides of the trunk. A pair of small bears, a raccoon, a rabbit and an owl take up space on the totem pole, which is topped by a flying eagle with a fish in its claws.

"The birds — they're there just because there's a bird bath nearby. The fish, because the eagle's hungry," he said.

On the back side of the totem is Kermit the Frog and a portrait of Pat carved by his wife, with the couple's initials carved underneath it.

Vicki, who learned how to whittle as a child from her grandfather, said she was the first to pick up a chain saw and try her hand at carving images out of wood. The couple was in Arkansas about six or seven years ago and she saw a 3-foot-tall carved bear that she fell in love with but didn't buy because it was too expensive. After they came home, she told her husband that she was going to create her own bear.

# Park beautification



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Susan Haines, front, Bev Eicher, middle and Joan Calhoun, back, planted flowers in front of the sign at Fike Park last week. Members of Pi Gamma, the club plants and takes care of flowers by the sign and the park's Statue of Liberty.

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