

Carving My Niche

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A few years ago I was playing around with a small jack hammer I had repaired and carved our street number in a rock. I was surprised at how easily it went and being pleased with the outcome, I showed my lovely wife Lydia.

She placed it at the end of the walk up to the house. The 911 commission immediately changed our street number from 658 to 663. We flipped the rock over and went on to other things.

I had forgotten about the whole thing, when she asked if I could carve another rock for her. She and her friend Kathy had arranged for a Christmas gift exchange. The rules were that the gifts had to be hand made, without spending any money.

I had 2 weeks or so to come up with something. I cast around for ideas and came up with a fairly nice rock to work with. (Christmas! SNOW everywhere. What was she thinking?) Using my Dremel rotary tool and a dozen or so abrasive wheels, I had engraved the rock with "Kathy's Garden". I finished it with a small daisy and a few curlicues around the border to frame it, just in time for Christmas.

It was a big hit with Kathy and I thought that was the end of it.

My next commission was a rock for Lydia's garden. Are we seeing a pattern here?

Lydia's rock was to say "Follow Your Bliss". She had picked out a rock of just the right type and kind. Following her careful direction, I laid out the letters on the rock and began carving. The rock is a type that locally is called Pudding Stone. It's a sedimentary rock made of limestone with smaller rocks embedded in it like raisins in a pudding. Just under the "F" was a piece of Calcite. I didn't know it until I started trying to cut the stone but Calcite is HARD. 20 diamond points, and a day later, I had finished Lydia's rock.

Now I was hooked. I had a process, the tools, and the talent. All I needed was an inspiration.

My sister Peggy asked me for a marker for her dogs resting place. I completed it and she was very happy with it.

I have a collection of old farm equipment, mostly tractor related, but quite a varied group. My favorite one is my old Ford tractor so I engraved a rock to commemorate it.

I went on to engrave rocks with other trade names, the International IH logo and name, a couple of John Deere's running deer, and an Oliver shield and name. By now I had engraved rocks scattered all over the yard, and several in surrounding counties. Just to see what would happen, I put all of them up for sale at my sister's and her husband's greenhouse, except the Ford Rock, and sold them all to unsuspecting customers.

I dabbled in base relief with a robin and a squirrel, but didn't like the outcome

Lydia liked them and put them at the entrance to the sidewalk.

Lydia again called on my talents for gifts for her seminary class members. They had all signed a mouse pad for each of the class members so for Christmas I engraved a small rock for each of them with a copy of their signature. The rocks were small so we could mail them rather than shipping them freight. J

My biggest engraving project to date was putting the name of our farm on a 4 foot tall rock that sits in front of the barn.

I'm waiting for my inspiration to overcome my laziness before I tackle the "Next Project" What ever that may be?