

Local man carves his own art niche

By **RACHEL JONES**

Where most people would simply see a chunk of firewood, self-taught artist Earl Deemer has always been able to see the opportunity to create something unique. Deemer first began carving wood with an X-Acto knife as his first tool when he was in high school in 1945.

As Deemer progressed in his carving and further developed his skills, he found that the knife wasn't cutting it anymore. He began to purchase better equipment as his carving styles evolved. Along with finding the perfect tool for each design, it is also important to find the best wood to use for each project.

He eventually joined the International Wood Collectors Society in 1984 and rose in the ranks to the position of president, which he held in 2000 and 2001. In the society, members from all over the world would gather for yearly meetings and bring along pieces of wood they had salvaged from wherever they were from to be auctioned off.

Over the years, Deemer gathered a wide variety of wood from all over the world including some from Mexico, Africa, Brazil and Malaysia to name a few. After looking through a wood carving magazine, he came across a design for making thumb tacks in the shape of actual thumbs. Over the years, he has accumulated more than 1,200 "thumbs" that he has carved from wood from all over the world. He also makes thumb drives.

"It's a treasure to pick up an odd piece of wood and sink your knife into it and create a thumb," he said. "This is just a sample of the many woods all over the world."

Deemer appreciates the unique and this shines through in his work. He has various chain pieces with intricate shapes and designs that are all carved from one piece of wood. According to Deemer, he always likes to take things one step further in his work. Another piece carved completely from one piece of wood features an open square with several moving balls trapped within the four walls.

He will be donating several carvings to the Penn State Wood Science department including a wooden quilt piece that features an intricate and delicate form of carving called chip carving. Other pieces are created using a technique called intarsia which means that different colors of wood are used rather than paint and are put together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Deemer will also have several pieces on display at the Blairsville Historical Society in July, August and September. The dates are still to be determined.

Some of these items include a piece entitled balls in a cage, a vintage train complete with tiny seats and furnaces inside the passenger car, an eagle, a Chevy car, tractor trailer truck, wood quilts, an Indian and a rose carved from holly wood.

