

FROM EARTH, WIND AND FIRE TO FATHER SERRA, A TOUCH OF PAINT CAN'T HURT

AS A young boy, Jon Stuefloten lived in the Carmel Highlands and attended Bay School. When he was in fourth grade, his family moved to Carmel to be closer to his father's work — helping to build Comstock houses. As soon as Stuefloten was old enough, he started working with his father.

In time, he apprenticed with a painter. "This was before there were latex paints and rollers. When the first rollers came out, we



Small job, big honor: Jon Stuefloten applies gold leaf to Father Junipero Serra's grave.

repair damaged surfaces.

Despite the good word of mouth, every year, he'd get a booth at a local home show to promote his business. It was there he met John O'Neil of the Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers. O'Neil told Stuefloten there was lead-based paint that needed to be removed at Point Sur Lighthouse.

Stuefloten bid for the job against abatement specialists — people who remove and dispose of lead and other hazardous materials for a living. His extensive research led him to a chemical being sold in Nyack, N.Y. It converted the lead in the paint to lead sulfate, which could be safely and easily removed and disposed of.

As a result, Stuefloten's bid was lower than his competitors', and he got the job, beginning an enduring relationship with the CCLK. He's worked on the lighthouse keeper's home, he's matched colors so they're historically correct, and now is preparing to repaint the lighthouse dome.

Other memorable jobs for Stuefloten included painting the former Mediterranean Market. He remembered that as they were washing the exterior, they exposed the Carmel Dairy sign, and he decided to restore it to its original glory.

He's also worked on Point Pinos Lighthouse and Crespi Hall at the Mission.

The former Hart Mansion, now home to White Hart Tearoom in Pacific Grove, is also a recipient of Stuefloten's TLC. The colorful 1893 Queen Anne's exterior was redone with period-appropriate colors that Stuefloten researched before beginning.

Current projects include Casa Amesti in Monterey, also known as the home of The Old Capitol Club. He's already restored two solariums and is waiting for approval from the Department of the Interior to do the exterior of the historic building.

Probably one of the smallest jobs he's ever done is also the one he's proudest of, though. He said he was honored to be asked to clean and restore the graves and two altars inside the Mission, including applying copper leaf to all the names.

"It's such a thrill to be working on Father Serra's grave — and he's going to be a saint! I wish my folks were alive to see it."

At age 74, he doesn't plan to put the finishing touches on his career anytime soon.

Great Lives

By ELAINE HESSER

He recently became a Certified Painter through Fine Paints of Europe in Vermont. The program requires recommendations from other professionals and completion of a two-day seminar at the company's headquarters.

Although Stuefloten enjoys historic restoration, he also keeps up with what he calls "bread and butter" jobs. He's loyal to his workers. And they return the favor — the newest among them has been there for 12 years. "My crew is so deserving. I want them to have all the work they can possibly handle, long into the future," he said.

To suggest someone for this column, email elaine@carmelpinecone.com.

A holiday for barbecuing shopaholics

YOU CAN'T believe everything you read on the Internet. I read online that Memorial Day was started after the Civil War to honor fallen soldiers. That may be true, but these days, Memorial Day is a national holiday to honor those who shop.

This is the weekend Americans are lured away from their backyard barbecues by one thing only — major price reductions. If you believe the sale ads, it's your last chance to save on swimsuits, mattresses, graduation gifts and automobiles. It's now or never. Or at least until the Father's Day sales.

One year I bought a car on Memorial Day weekend. The dealership advertised a once-in-a-lifetime deal on a new Mustang, a car known back then as a "muscle" car. I didn't have any muscles, but they let me buy it anyway.

I remember the new car smell as I drove it home. I parked in front of my house and ran inside to get my camera. When I came back 2,000 swallows had decided to fly back to Capistrano and made a direct detour over my new car.

After a trip to the car wash for a sand-blasting, I parked up the street in a safer spot. I took a few snapshots of my gleaming new automobile. Good thing, too, because it was the last time I'd ever see it in showroom condition.

Two hours later, a teenager in a driving school car backed into the spot where my car was parked. I was coming out of my house when I heard the crash. I ran over to the instructor and said, "Did you see what your student just did?"

"I certainly did," he said. "He just flunked parallel parking."

I said, "He demolished the entire left side of my car!"

"That's nothing," he said. "He also ran a red light, knocked over a stop sign, cut off an ambulance, and he's still got 40 minutes to go on his lesson."

So my car was towed away. I had no wheels. I called a buddy. He said, "Larry, I'm going out of town. Drive me to the airport and you can borrow my car for a couple of weeks."

He had a vintage auto. A hearse. It was so old and decrepit, the whitewall tires had varicose veins. The back seat was piled high with junk. But at least it was transportation.

After dropping my pal at the airport, I parked near my house. I lived on a steep hill, so I set the emergency brake. Which was a good thing, because two minutes later I had an emergency. I was unlocking my front door when I saw the driverless hearse go barreling down the hill. It crashed into somebody's

backyard. They were having a barbecue.

Luckily nobody was hurt. The hearse was barely scratched, slowed by a fence, a hedge and a charcoal grill. Wieners flew everywhere. The hostess was in shock, but she stayed calm. Nice lady. While waiting for the police to arrive, she served me a plate of hot dogs and potato salad.

The police officer said, "Is this your car?" "No, sir, it belongs to a friend of mine." "What's his name?"

I said, "I don't think you would know him."

He said, "Try me. I used to work at a psych ward." He wrote up an accident report and advised me to get a lawyer.

Wilde Times

By LARRY WILDE

I was a nervous wreck. So I decided to go to a late movie to relax. While I was in the theater, somebody stole the front seat out of the hearse.

That's when I discovered that it's practically impossible to operate a car from a kneeling position. But I was determined to drive myself home. I gathered a bunch of debris from the back — mostly fast food wrappers and dirty laundry — and made a makeshift drivers seat. The perch was so low I barely cleared the steering wheel.

I was poking along nice and slow when I got pulled over. It was my friend the cop who wrote up my accident at the barbecue.

He said, "You again. We clocked you going 5 miles an hour in a 35-mile-an-hour zone. What seems to be the problem?"

I said, "Officer, somebody stole my front seat."

He said, "Step out of the car, buddy. I want you to blow up a balloon."

I said, "You don't think I've been drinking?"

He said, "Noooo, it's the squad car's birthday. We're gonna have a little party."

The money I saved on my new Mustang barely covered the deductibles, legal fees and fines. And the nice lady at the barbecue who gave me the potato salad? She got even with me. One word: salmonella.

No matter what the ads say, some Memorial Day sales are no bargain.

Larry Wilde is a former standup comedian and author of 53 humor books with sales of over 12 million copies. The New York Times has dubbed him "America's Best-Selling Humorist." E-mail larry@larry-wilde.com.

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