

Charley Arent: Red Feather Lakes’ “energized bunny”

By Linda Bell

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Charley Arent has built so many houses and cabins in and around Red Feather Lakes during the past 30 years that he can't quite remember how many.

“There have been over a hundred, at least. Big ones, small ones, fancy ones, simple ones, add-ons and garages – I've built them all, even a yurt,” Arent said.

To prove it, Arent's wife Carol displayed an extensive photo album of most of the homes Charley and their two sons, Randy and Paul, have constructed. One photo features an impressively long rattlesnake. Arent explained that he was having lunch one day on a construction site and threw his banana peel down right on the snake, which was coiled under the deck where he was sitting.

At nearly 77, Arent still is actively working on construction and carpentry projects, both his own and for other people. Asked if he thinks he'll retire any time soon, Arent said, “Sure, like I am now!”

Commenting on his active life, Arent said he stopped smoking 15 years ago and that he and Carol belong to the Aspen Club sponsored by Poudre Valley Health System.

Arent uses his “spare time” for his hobby, creating stained glass hangings and other objects. But first, he said, he had to make a cabinet and workbench for his projects when Carol suggested he get the glass of the kitchen table.

Arent brought his family to Red Feather Lakes from Nebraska in 1971, after they used a friend's cabin in the resort during the summer of 1970. He had worked as a farmer in the summer and a carpenter in the winter in Stockville, Nebraska.

Both Carol and Charley were born in Nebraska. They have four children, three boys and a girl. Two of their sons live in Loveland, while the other children are in Nebraska.

Carol said she saw only a lot of rocks and trees in Red Feather Lakes that summer when they came to visit. Arent said he liked the climate and the beauty of the area, and started to think of the opportunities in the small resort town. They looked at a house shortly before returning to Nebraska and bought it over the phone a few weeks later, he said.

When the Arents arrived in Red Feather Lakes, most cabins had names. They intended to name their place "We Arent Inn," but their youngest son, Paul, just 13 when they moved to Colorado, beat them to it by erecting a sign over the entrance to their cabin that read "Capital (sic) Hill." When they asked why Paul had named it that, he said to his parents, "Because this is where the president, the vice president and the free labor union live!"

It was a dig, Arent said, because they often asked their son to help out the older women residents around Lake Hiawatha – to get a boat or canoe launched, or carry in a suitcase or grocery bags. Paul had decided he was the "free labor union," Arent said with a laugh.

Arent has many endearing memories of 30 years in Red Feather Lakes. He remembers working on a house just west of the village, when a 5-year-old boy named Jimmy Thomas joined him almost every day around lunch time. The boy's grandparents would try to get him to come back to his own place for lunch, but Jimmy insisted he preferred sharing Charley's fried chicken.



Charley with one of his stained glass hangings in the Arent home