



Bennett carved this 8-ft. long wagon hitch, out of a single piece of wood using only a common jackknife.

## Old West Lives in His Carvings

When Bill Bennett gave up ranching in the early 1970s, he found work in the mining industry as a "powder monkey", jamming explosives into holes drilled in solid rock.

Understandably, dynamite made him nervous, especially since there was a lot of downtime between setting the charges. To keep his mind busy and his hands steady, he began whittling. That's when he discovered he had a talent for carving.

Dubbed "the Michelangelo of Medicine Bow" by one publication, Bennett has since

carved hundreds, maybe even thousands, of pieces ranging from individual small horses up to a large tribute to the great chiefs of the Plains Indians, involving many figures.

Bennett carves in almost perfect proportion but uses no drawings and doesn't measure anything. He never uses power tools to remove larger pieces of wood. Everything is done with a common jackknife (he prefers Case or Old Timer knives). In the 30 years or so he's been carving, he figures he's worn out more than 100 knives.

Bennett has carved just about every kind of wood, including ironwood and osage orange, two of the hardest woods in the world. "People sometimes bring me wood. I've carved walnut, most kinds of oak and pine, and even mahogany and rosewood," he says.

Bennett has much of his work on display at his bar in Medicine Bow called "Old Diplodocus", or simply the "Dip Bar". He sells many of his pieces.

When he's not busy with customers or carving, Bennett is up on a scaffold painting the bar's 2,400 sq. ft. ceiling with historic Wyoming ranch scenes he remembers from his boyhood and from photos he and his wife JoAnn have collected.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Bennett, The Old Diplodocus, 202 Lincoln Hwy., Medicine Bow, Wyo. 82329 (ph 307 379-2312).

## "Corn Babies" Ease Aches And Pains

"They can be used either as hot or cold packs to ease your aches and pains," says Marsha Gillis about her cuddly Corn Babies". She makes them by sewing ordinary shelled corn inside swatches of soft velour fabric or heavy cotton.

"Corn Babies" measure 11 in. high by 7 in. wide and weigh 2 1/2 lbs. Gillis makes them in a variety of shapes including pigs, cows, and dogs, as well as babies. She also makes plain corn bags that are equipped with removable covers for washing. She decorates the bags in different cover designs including a Christmas print, Teddy bear cover, floral cover, a patriotic print with stars and stripes, and a country print that shows grazing cows and barns on a farming background.

Warming a "Corn Baby" in a microwave for two minutes will keep it warm for 2 hours. Placing it in the freezer for a few hours allows it to be used as a cold compress, too.

"People love them because they're so

cuddly and warm, and because they help ease their aches and pains and sore muscles," says Gillis. "I got the idea after I received a corn bag as a gift, and my daughter liked to warm it up so that she could carry it around like a baby. It was so cute. She would just cradle it and hold it."

That gave Gillis the idea to create designs as babies, pigs, cows, and dogs for which she has received federal copyright protection.

According to Gillis, Corn Babies make great bedtime companions. "Parents have told me they can't go to bed at night until they warm up their Corn Babies, and that the second they get up in the morning, they warm them up again. An elderly man said I saved his marriage because now his wife warms her cold feet with the bag instead of on him.

"A lot of people ask if the corn will pop in like popcorn once it's placed in the microwave. The answer is no, because ordinary field corn has a different starch



"Corn Babies" make cozy bedtime companions, according to inventor Marsha Gillis.

content than popcorn and its seed coat isn't as thick."

Gillis started making Corn Babies 3 1/2 years ago and has bought more than six tons of corn since she started her business. "I think it's a great way to support farmers," she notes. Included with each corn baby is its own named birth certificate. If you desire to

personalize the name, simply type in your name choice in the shipping instructions.

Plain Corn Babies sell for \$8.95 plus S&H. All other models sell for \$14.95 plus S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Marsha Gillis, Iowa Corn Baby Co., Box 54, New London, Iowa 52645 (Website: [www.cornbaby.com](http://www.cornbaby.com)).

## Miniature Power Shovel Looks Like The Real Thing

Like a lot of people his age, Bill Briden read "Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel" when he was in elementary school.

"I never forgot that story and later in life I got a chance to buy a real 30-ton steam shovel," says Briden, Crookston, Minnesota. "Years later, my son, Jim, restored it."

Briden recently decided to also build a miniature steam shovel patterned after the big one. He says it was one of the most sophisticated shop projects he ever undertook. When it was finished, he named it Mary Ann, after Mike Mulligan's steam shovel.

It looks like it's full sized counterpart, from the top of the boom right down to the tracks. But appearances are about all the two have in common. The big Marion shovel weighs 30 tons, while Mary Ann weighs in at a mere 2.5 tons.

"Mary Ann runs on two-speed reversible electric motors from power drills," he says. "I got a good deal on some old Milwaukee

electric drills. They were designed to drill 6 in. holes between 16-in. rafters for plumbing."

One drill runs each of Mary Ann's tracks. Another raises and lowers the boom and a fourth one controls the cable that raises and lowers the bucket arm.

Above the tracks is a turntable that Briden made from a flywheel off an 830 John Deere tractor mounted on ball bearings. It's powered by a variable speed electric motor from a junked DeWalt drill.

Mary Ann's tracks came off a machine Briden found in a junkyard. The sprocket wheels he had cut from steel plate by a company in Fargo, N. Dak. The front idlers are the races from a couple of huge Timken bearings. The track rollers came from the scrap heap at a sugar beet processing plant.

The stack, which makes it look like Mary Ann is steam powered, is the boiler from an old coal-fired water heater. Briden made the boom from steel plate and angle iron and the



Bill Briden recently built this miniature steam shovel patterned after a 30-ton model.

bucket from plate steel that he formed by rolling and hammering into shape.

While there are levers inside the shovel's cabin, they, like the mannequin he usually keeps inside it, are dummies.

"It plugs into a regular 110-volt outlet and runs on a 20-amp fuse. I operate the shovel from about 30 ft. away using push button controls on a tether," he says. To make the tether, he bought a 3/4 in. garden hose and

pulled the wires through it to his control box. When he operates his "big toy" out of reach of an electrical outlet, Briden provides power with a diesel generator. "When I set it up at equipment shows, people don't usually notice me at first. It looks like a dummy is at the controls," he says.

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