

LIFESTYLES

New York cobbler fits all feet

By Mary Esch
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ONEIDA, N.Y. — Some of the photos in Gary Barlow's files are a cobbler's nightmare: feet that are gnarled, knobbed, flat, arthritic, mismatched or missing toes.

The owners of these feet don't come to his tiny shop to help them hobble. They seek him out to help them hike. They want to climb rocky mountain trails and trudge through miles of rugged forest terrain.

They want to do it in blissful comfort to boot.

Barlow is one of a handful of craftsmen around the country who make fine leather boots by hand. He designs every hiking boot to precisely fit the person who will wear it, whether their feet are odd or ordinary.

It can be a lucrative trade. "The potential market is enormous (for custom hiking boots)," said Randy Merrell of Vernal, Utah, who is considered a guru among bootmakers.

Fancy Western-style boots sell for up to \$4,000 or more, said Merrell, who has trained 340 people at his bootmaking school. He said the market is smaller for handmade hiking boots, which sell for \$500 and up. But the demand is growing.

"There are many people who go to the woods and aren't satisfied with their boots," Merrell said. "They don't realize what's available."

For Barlow, bootmaking is a labor of love.

"I'm a hiker. I'm an old diehard woodsman," said Barlow, 50, whose rugged, bearded visage and flannel shirt fit the classic image of a lumberjack. "When you're in the woods, you're in God's country. You feel the living spirit that's there. It renews life for me."

But it's hard to find serenity when your feet hurt.

"I was always frustrated by the hiking boots," Barlow said. "I'd pay \$350 for a pair of boots and they'd be clumsy, they were like glorified sneakers." People he met on the trails also suffered foot fatigue.

That was 15 years ago. He had been working for 20 years as a roofer, but wanted to be a cobbler. He got a job at a shoe repair shop to learn the trade, then set up shop on a side street in his hometown of Oneida, a small city 25 miles east of Syracuse. After several years of fixing shoes, he spent \$4,000 to fly to Utah to learn how to make them at Merrell's school.

His boot business grew by word of mouth until a year ago, when Barlow put an ad in the magazine of the Adirondack Mountain Club. Don Capron, a retiree and avid hiker, bought a pair of Barlow boots and was so impressed he wrote an article for the magazine.

"Pictures of my feet have been used in podiatry and orthopedic foot surgery textbooks as examples of the worst possible feet for outdoor activities," Capron wrote under a photo of his gnarled feet. He had seven hammer (clawed) toes amputated.

Standard shoes don't fit Capron's feet. But his Barlow boots fit perfectly, allowing him to hike 12 miles painlessly the day he got them.

"His finished boots fit my feet like extensions of my legs," wrote Capron, who climbed the 111 highest northeastern peaks in 1995 and, with his new Barlow boots, hiked the Appalachian Trail in 1996.

"Since that article came out everybody with bad feet's been calling me," Barlow said. "That's good." "I want to do something for people," Barlow said. "It feels good to know I can build something for somebody that enhances their enjoyment of our natural surroundings."

Keep New Year's resolutions simple

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Wednesday marks the dawn of 1997.

It will also usher in yet another season of resolutions — from promises to finally win the battle of the bulge to getting personal finances in order.

Whatever the resolution, in most cases, they don't make it through the first week of the New Year.

As the holiday hysteria fades away, New Year's resolution become like "Tickle Me Elmo" next Christmas — obsolete.

"My goal is to lose 50 pounds," says Terry. "I just don't know how to start. All I know is that I have to lose the weight. That is my resolution."

Terry asked that her last name not be used, but her resolution mirrors that of thousands of Americans. She has made the same resolution five times, she says.

"I just can't do it," she adds. "That makes it all even worse."

New Year's Eve almost always ends in a resolution; most will bring disappointment.

"I think (making resolutions) it is part of our tradition," Charlotte psychologist Wanda Webb says. "We always hope that we can be a little better than the year before."

According to Webb, most resolution makers have every intention of keeping their promises, but don't realize how difficult it is to change behaviors.

"We are creatures of habit," she said. "In a crunch, we will almost always revert back to the old ways of functioning. We have the best of intentions, but we don't think about what it takes to change. We minimize what it takes to accomplish our goals."

Losing 50 pounds means a change in eating habits and your attitudes about exercise and food, she adds. Resolvers don't think about their goal long range.

"We know what we need to do," Webb adds. "We often just don't know how to get started."

Webb offers the following tips to setting the New Year off right



and living up to resolutions.

- Acknowledge the pattern of behavior that needs to be changed.

- Acknowledge that it will be difficult to change.

- Set aside time in the day to work on the behavior, whether it be daily exercise or meditation.

"The bottom line is that people have to realize they have to do something," Webb said. "And they have to realize that it will not be easy."

Webb agrees that it is a good idea to set goals.

"I think that people have to have goals to be highly functioning," she said. "The trick is to set small goals. Take small steps instead of huge ones. Most people set too large a goal that dooms them to failure."

According to Webb, small victories merit celebration.

"Every time you do something good that you didn't do yesterday, you're making progress," she said. "If your goal is to exercise in the morning, celebrate the first day that you wake up 10 minutes earlier even if you

don't exercise that day. It's a step in the right direction."

According to Webb, the most popular resolutions are:

- Cleaning up debt.
- Living a more wholesome life.

- Losing weight.
- Being more religious.

"Resolutions are good things," she adds. "It is the magnitude that makes it hard."

Webb has set her own goal for 1997.

"I want to find out what I really want to be when I grow up," she says with a laugh. "At the age of 46, I am still trying to figure it all out."

Tips for losing weight from the American Heart Association and WeightWatchers.

- Work on modifying your diet; try keeping a daily log of what you eat.

- Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily. Not only is it filling, but it keeps the body functioning properly which aids in weight loss.

- Stay away from buffets and all-you-can-eat; they encourage

overeating.

- Limit fried foods.

- After consulting a doctor, begin an exercise program. Go slow, you didn't gain the weight overnight so don't expect it to go away overnight.

- Don't weigh yourself daily.

- Find someone to modify your diet with; share your triumphs and setbacks.

- Realize that weight loss is a modification of diet and exercise.

For those who kept last's year goal of losing weight, exercise is the key. According to a two-year study at Baylor University's DeBakey Heart Center in Houston, people who exercise without following a strict diet maintained their weight.

"This confirms what we have known all along — people who diet fail at it because they feel deprived," says Dr. Ken Goodrick. "By overcoming negative attitudes about exercise, people can learn to enjoy it and appreciate the benefits."

Big bash in works for 2000

By Helen O'Neill
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — If things seemed relatively tame this New Year's Eve, rest easy.

Three years from now, the world will romp into an end-of-the-century birthday bash the likes of which have never been seen.

The planning and the countdown have already begun.

Iceland will light bonfires, England plans a nationwide pealing of bells, and Sri Lanka will hold a gigantic beach bash in Colombo on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Brazil also is planning a party in Rio de Janeiro, on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

In New York, Times Square will be transformed into a

kind of cultural crossroads on Dec. 31, 1999, with giant television screens conveying millennium celebrations from each of the world's 24 time zones.

Even though, technically, the new century won't begin for another year, the lure and symbolism of the year 2000 is much too seductive for the world to ignore.

Even the Vatican bowed to emotion over mathematics, declaring 2000 a Jubilee Year — the church's 27th since the first in 1300 — and planning a yearlong celebration expected to attract some 20 million pilgrims to Rome.

"There's no dispute that the new millennium actually begins in the year 2001," acknowledges Edward

McNally, co-chairman of the Washington-based Millennium Society. "The dynamics of throwing a birthday party for planet Earth a year early include the magic of seeing the number 1999 turning into 2000 and launching a year of events and celebrations."

A bunch of Yale graduate students founded the Millennium Society in 1979 to plan "the largest charity fundraiser in the history of the world." Plans include a round-the-globe succession of black-tie parties and concerts at historic sites, including Mount Fuji in Japan, the Great Wall of China and the pyramids in Egypt.

Philanthropy aside, others

are simply planning one heck of a bash.

"We figure you can't stop a good party, so we will celebrate the dawn of the new millennium everywhere it dawns," says Gretchen Dykstra, president of New York's Times Square Business Improvement District, which, with great fanfare, began searching for "The Big Idea" a year ago. It got about 750 responses from 21 countries.

Just west of the date line, Western and American Samoa are banking on their own share of millennium madness. As the last places on earth to dust off 1999, they're hoping tourists will come to the islands not to celebrate the new century, but to bid farewell to the old.

Homeless find hospitality in roving camper

By Kathy Walsh Nufer
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

APPLETON, Wis. — It's a slopy night with enough nip in the air to make him wish he'd stayed inside in front of a fireplace, but Tom Hildebrandt is in the driver's seat of the used camper he calls "Hospitality on Wheels" making the rounds in downtown Appleton.

He's looking for someone he can offer a bowl of chili, a mug of coffee and a warm bed to for the night, someone who doesn't have a home.

This night as he turns down this street and that seeking out the possible haunts of the homeless, he will find two someones to invite in from the cold.

After stopping to introduce himself at the Appleton Public Library, Outreach Center and a Laundromat, he discovers one in Jones Park.

The man is curled up on a soaked piece of cardboard just inside the concrete entry to the park restrooms.

He has no blanket for cover.

Hildebrandt tries to coax him to come inside, but the man

politely refuses.

He has "no needs" tonight, he says.

Hildebrandt, who has given the man a place to sleep before, hates to leave him but heads back to the camper.

"All I can do is offer," he says. "Maybe he will find me later."

Hildebrandt continues on, parking on College Avenue.

In a matter of minutes a young man knocks on the door.

This is "John's" second night



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8-track mind keeps puzzles coming

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADISON, Wis. — Raymond Hamel says his "eight-track mind" enables him to be a prolific amateur puzzle maker.

Hamel, 36, creates more than 100 crosswords and puzzles annually for publications such as The New York Times, the Chicago Tribune and Games magazine. He also writes a semi-weekly trivia quiz for the New York Times' Internet web page.

"I've got at least eight things going on in my head at the same time," Hamel said.

A librarian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Hamel is a self-described compulsive record keeper. His constant companion is a notebook in which he records trivia — obscure facts that few remember but that are very important to a few people.

Hamel's talent for trivia emerged as a youth in Nekoosa where he watched lots of television and memorized pop culture minutiae.

He was an A student in high school. Hamel started solving crossword puzzles. He soon turned to puzzle making, a skill encouraged by a teacher and tested on his classmates. Hamel's first puzzles were published when he was 17.

As an English major at UW-Stevens Point, Hamel won national trivia contests, was inducted into the Trivia Bowl Hall of Fame and continued to sell puzzles. An academic scholarship paid for college tuition. Puzzle proceeds paid for food.

Hamel earned a master's degree in library science at UW-Madison that led to a job as manager of the audio-visual collection in the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center, where he now works. But nights, weekends and every lunch hour, Hamel conjures crossword clues and themes and trivia questions.

The most challenging aspect of puzzle making is creating original themes that both entertain and stump, Hamel said. Theme puzzles must contain at least four related clues, but Hamel tries to include more.

"Crosswords are all about free association and humorous takes on things," Hamel says.

To develop them, Hamel pays close attention to the sounds and meanings of words. When he came across the phrase "fly in the ointment," it struck him as unusual as a "bull in a china shop." That association led to the theme, "Out of Their Element."

Hamel says crossword puzzle editors have a few peevish that constructors learn to avoid. Diseases are off limits since many people who do crosswords are in hospitals. "Downer" words are not allowed.

Publishers pay anywhere from \$15 to \$300 for a crossword.