

CRAZY AL'S Tiki CORNER



This edition tells Part One of the story of Tiki #13, "Keeper of the Charm." I consider this a pivotal Tiki in the direction of my individual style. It would strengthen my relationship with Mother Nature, create new inspiration artistically, and inspire products for my new, developing business, Bone Productions. Five of my first six Tikis were carved from palm logs I hauled back from my childhood house in Arizona. Over the next seven years, 19 of my next 73 Tikis were carved from my second log expedition right down the street. Tiki #13, carved in September of 1998, came from this stock of logs.

It had been a few weeks since the electric company had topped six, 40-foot Mexican Fan palms that were threatening some local power lines. These palms were located at an old-school Mexican restaurant about four blocks from where I lived! Late one afternoon I saw the trunks lying in the street and a-hauling I did go. I took as much as my VW Thing could carry, some lengthy logs sticking out the side. Several trips into it, I met Jeff, the tree trimmer. Jeff would become the first CrazyAL-spawned carver and infamous in the Huntington Beach area,



Tiki No. 13 marked the beginning of Al's exploration of leaving the top of the log intact.

even to this day. Jeff would, in turn, inspire at least half a dozen local carvers. (Jeff is a long story for some other time.) Many of the new logs had to have their palm boots stripped off, something I had never done before. I once asked Bosko how he got all that crap off and he said, "...some folks burn it off." I still don't know if he was completely fooling with me or not, but I lived in an apartment, not on some cool ranch in the boonies. I knew a sharp razor knife would cut palm fronds just fine, so I started into spinning myself silly around some of the four- to five-foot logs. As I went along, my obsessive-compulsive self saw a pattern developing. Perfectly segmented rings started to appear evenly spaced. Better yet, these rings of freshly exposed palm skin where the most beautiful colors of brown, so rich in depth and complexity.

Closing in on completing a log, I noticed that a slightly odd but very cool hat or crown started to appear. Looking like an upside-down fez or some kind of baker's hat, I left a few logs with the cool caps on. I had to. The cap or crown had this perfectly designed split in it that fanned up into the coolest looking symmetrical grid pattern. I could never think of that, let alone want to carve it. I chose one of these logs for Tiki #13. I had never seen this type of design on Tikis before. The crown would be the perfect type of element for new pieces I was doing for the Copro/Nason "Tiki Art" show in the fall of 1998. Having left the natural design of the "living tree" on the sculpture seemed very appropriate to me. I've since had these crowns appear on many of my APE-carved pieces as well as Tikis #27, 30, 45, 55, 108-10, and others. I had no idea that leaving the segmented bark on the back was typical of Milan Guanko, a carver described in *The Book of Tiki*. This technique is also evident in the Tikis found in Sam's Seafood in Sunset Beach, Calif. I would notice these familiar looking Tikis after frequenting Sam's much later in my carving career.

The new adorning crown on Tiki #13 was just the start of elements of my developing style that I wanted to debut at "Tiki Art." In Vol.3, #1 of this magazine, I describe the development of the squinting eyes of Tiki #11 for that show. "Keeper of the Charm" would have very exaggerated squinting eyes due to my now common gaping mouth design, and this time it would be full of real teeth! Well, Tiki teeth anyway. During my brief occupancy in Sunset Beach, I found myself at the seashore often. While beachcombing drift bamboo (not real bamboo, ask Bamboo Ben), washed out from the local rivers, I noticed the beach littered with "teeth"! They were everywhere. I picked up one of these cool looking objects and found it to be a shell fragment that had been perfectly sculpted into a tooth by my artistic partner, Mother Nature. I collected handfuls, or a pocketful, of teeth every trip across Pacific Coast Highway to the sand. The teeth first appeared in the wide, hollow mouths of my yucca stem



Tiki No. 27. Another example of a palm crown.

DEAF XOXO XOXO XOXO XOXO XOXO



Tiki No. 4. The natural top was also a favorite technique of Tiki carving legend Milan Guanko.

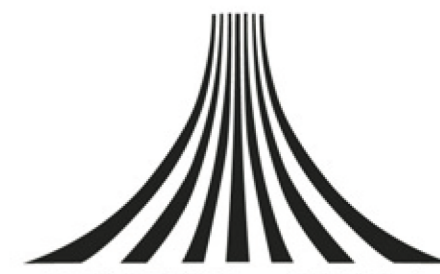
carvings done at that time. Most of the best teeth are fairly small and lent themselves to the smaller carvings. This abundance of small teeth would become very handy later on. It takes hundreds of teeth to get a great looking, perfect dental lineup. Much time is spent to get a set of eight or so shell fragments that look like a perfect row of 'natural' looking teeth – sorting, mixing, matching hundreds of fragments. Finally, I had piled up enough of the more hard to find, large teeth. The prospective, four-foot tall, Tiki #13 would have to have its own set of pearly whites. It would be only one of four of my 137 large Tikis to get teeth.

My devotion to creating an individual, conceptual style brought forth a new body for this Tiki, as well as the teeth. I also knew I wanted to have this piece be the "Tiki-necklace Guardian," and that would need a special touch. Tune in next spring for Part Two!

Collectable Tiki#13 mugs and imported carvings of Tikis #45 and 55 can be found at www.tikimania.com.



Images courtesy Crazy Al



OMNI HUT
POLYNESIAN RESTAURANT
ESTABLISHED 1960

**WORLD
FAMOUS
FOODS**

"Created in a million miles of travel"

OPEN:

Tuesday - Saturday
5:30PM - 9:30PM

CLOSED SUNDAYS & MONDAYS
B.Y.O.B.

Highway 41 & 70 south
SMYRNA, Tennessee
(615) 459-4870

WWW.OMNIHUT.COM