

Marty’s Christmas Tree Story
by Larry J Pellet



Marty & daughter Sandra

The word ambitious might be an understatement to describe Cloverville businessman and former politician, Marty Hulka. Polishing up on this, his SIXTIETH year as owner, operator and accountant of Marty’s Christmas Trees & Wreaths and More, the Air Force veteran waxes nostalgic as he recalls the hard years getting his business off the ground and soaring.
“It was 1959, and I was just out of the service,” he said. “There were no jobs to be found.” “My father had some Spruce Evergreens that he sold me for \$1 ea., so I decided to take them and sell them for \$1.75.” Working out of a 1948 Chevy with coleman lanterns for heat and light, Hulka eventually found numerous other plantations to buy trees from, when low and behold he found his calling.
Marty used profits to purchase 10 acres in Cloverville, which he then cleared off using dynamite. But he conceded, business didn’t always run smoothly at first. Partners let him down, and tree disease was something Marty didn’t expect to encounter. But, he learned as he went along. The hard working visionary, of Czechoslovakian descent, cut trees himself with a hand bow saw, and at last in 1968 finished building a house at it’s present location at 3768 E. Broadway. He subsequently bought, planted and grew 42 acres of trees, a process which he labels as “scientific”.

His reputation as an honest and upfront



entrepreneur growing, Hulka decided to run for political office. Along the way he added Fruitport Trustee, Supervisor, Muskegon Drain Commissioner and Tax Assessor under his belt. A brother also entered politics, and nephew Ken Hulka is on the Muskegon Road Commission. Also of utmost interest are the white tail deer, including a piebald fawn, which he breeds on his farm.
Pride and integrity are what guides his family, and in 1973 daughter Sandra began creating Christmas wreaths with the use of coat hangers, which initially sold for \$3 apiece. Today, she specializes in “theme” wreaths, which are original and personalized to fit the buyer’s desires. In accordance with her family’s work ethic, Sandra says, “You always try to out do yourself.” Also available for sale are garlands, yule log centerpieces, porch pots, swags and boughs.

It takes roughly 12 years for a seedling to grow to fruition, where it can be cut for families to enjoy around yule time. In 1995,

Hulka cut and sold 1,026 trees by bow saw, but since has upgraded to a chain saw and



will “guarantee your needles”. Prices range anywhere from \$45 to 70 per tree, depending on customer preference. Though it’s quite literally Christmas year round there, business typically opens around Thanksgiving, and hours are long - 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week.
The robust 82 yr old, along with his daughter, seem to delight in their work and most of all appreciate repeat customers – which they have a lot of.
Hulka, pausing to fold his hands and lean



back in his chair, reflected on all his years of blood, sweat and tears. After a brief moment he then turned his gaze to the future. “I imagine someday my daughters will take over the company”, he surmised.
But...not...quite...yet.

New Live Camera Launches at Grand Rapids Public Museum Featuring Lake Sturgeon Aquarium

WEST MICHIGAN - The West Michigan Tourist Association (WMTA) is excited to announce the most recent addition to their online gallery of West Michigan live camera streams: the Grand Rapids Public Museum Live Camera.
This new live camera stream currently showcases the museum’s Lake Sturgeon tank, which is part of the Grand River, Grand Fish exhibit. The museum invites viewers to visit the fish virtually any time, but to be aware that the lights are turned out for the fish at night.
The stars of the live camera stream are the museum’s two 10-month-old Lake Sturgeon. According to the Michigan DNR, “Lake sturgeon are a unique fish species in Michigan. They are an important biological component of the Great Lakes fish community. Lake sturgeon can grow to weights of up to 200 pounds and lengths of seven feet, with females being longer and heavier than males. Their typical lifespan is 55 years for males and 70 to 100 years for females.”
“This new live camera launches at an apt time,” says WMTA’s marketing director, Courtney Sheffer. “With so many people currently staying in their homes and looking for education and entertainment online, we hope that this live stream can help provide a learning opportunity, or simply provide a calming look into the Lake Sturgeon’s environment.”
The live camera at the Grand Rapids Public Museum is mobile, and they plan to periodically update the view and subject matter which they are live streaming.
This camera is part of the West Michigan Live Camera Gallery, which is viewable online at WMTA.org and provides live views of a dozen locations from around West Michigan.

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