

Students visit pumpkin patch

By Karen Krien

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Thursday, Cheylin second grade students were excited as they poured out of the white bus driven by Bruce Bolin, superintendent. They had just arrived at the home of Benny and Kathy Weber north of St. Francis and were on their way to discover what all grew in their garden.

In the morning before the field trip began, Mrs. Weber, their teacher, showed them pictures of nuts on both the almond and pecan trees, and they talked about the things they would see in the garden. Before they started to the garden, each student received a peanut.

"I wanted to bring the students over mainly to be able to pick a pumpkin," she said. "I also thought it would be good for them to see the plants as many have never seen some of them."

The first plants the students saw were the peanut plants. They went on to look at the different trees including several almond and pecan trees. They picked some grapes off the vines, each picked an apple off the tree and pointed out the plums and pears left on

the trees. Some of the leaves of the grape vines had been picked earlier and the students had used them to make fossils at school several weeks prior to the visit.

In the watermelon and cantaloupe patch, the kids were able to see the stages of the cantaloupe from the blossom, to the tiny fruit, to the ready-to-pick cantaloupe.

Probably the highlight of the trip, Mrs. Weber said, was when the students were able to choose their own pumpkin. Mr. Weber cut the stem so they could take it home with them.

The Webers figured that none of the children had ever seen, or even thought about how the peanut grew. At the end of the visit, a peanut plant was dug up so they could see how the peanuts grow underground.

Later in the school year, probably in the spring, Mrs. Weber will be talking to her class more about plants and trees and they will remember their visit to the garden.

"They will have actually seen how plants grow," Mrs. Weber concluded.



CHEYLIN SECOND GRADERS made a field trip to Benny Weber's garden on Thursday. Pictured (l to r) are Briana Vandike, Soledad Bermudez, Colton McCarty, Kathy Weber, teacher; unidentified girl, Gus Hespe, Gaby Gutierrez, Bruce Bowen, superintendent; and Jeff Canare.

Times staff photos by Karen Krien



TALKING TO HER STUDENTS was Kathy Weber, left. Others pictured (l to r) are Caitlin Ray, Briana Vandike, Jeff Canare, Brissanelly Salcido and Soledad Bermudez. Benny Weber picked a pumpkin for Joseph Augusta (right photo).



City's oldest tenant is still working

By Norma Martinez

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One of Bird City's oldest and most colorfully decorated businesses is Mike Boyson's Hot Brush Signs. You can't miss it if you watch the signs along the highways in Kansas and Nebraska, or go down Bressler St. to the post office, or grocery store. Even his white truck draws attention with his artistic signs and detail work.

Mr. Boyson's gained his first painting experience when he was un-employed and went to Evelyn Creach, the editor of *Bird City Times* at that time to place an ad for work. Ms. Creach needed her house painted and hired him to do it.

At the time he was in the National Guard and had to stay in the area from 1970-76. He signed up for six years and at that time he said it was disheartening to him as he had to have short hair and everyone else at that time had long hair. Today his short blond hair helps him to stand out in his shop and gives him the distinguishing look to go along with his designs.

Mr. Boyson first became interested in artistic painting

when his cousin Dave Duke came in 1974 from California to Bird City to help another cousin start a karate studio. The karate business failed, he, however, was able to give Mike some valuable advice on brush techniques that he needed to know for doing custom-design painting. They even painted a few signs before Dave left him to go back to California.

In 1975, Mike moved into the old antique shop on Bird Ave. which was owned by Darwin Higgins at that time. As soon as the building at 204 W. Fourth Street became available he moved into it. He is still there today.

His first art project was done in 1974 for Bill Rambat when he repainted a horse on his barn. The farm is just west of town on Rd. 28. Ted Partch lives there now and the painting is still there.

Mr. Boyson painted a car for the Bird City shop in a demolition derby that went to the national events in Minneapolis, Minn., and won a trophy for the Best Appearing Car. He was honored to have Paul Gould; one of his customers from Sardinia, Ohio, win a grand

champion trophy at the National Sun N Fun Fly-In in Lakeland, Fla.

Gould restored a 1946 Aeronca Chief 11-AC Airplane which Mike hand painted the dash restoring it to look like and match the original wood. Paul said one of the judges climbed up in the plane and said the dash looked just like the factory original.

Other awards were also won at other Oshkosh, Wis., events. Gould said he was plugging his professional wood grain craftsmanship to everyone who wanted to restore their instrument panel to original. Paul discourages clear coating as that doesn't represent original.

Another customer had a classic race car restored and brought it to Mike to paint the original letters back on. It was a semi-famous car driven by the Mighty Mouse Driver. He was so well known by this name that the name was etched on his tombstone when he died. This car won all sorts of awards and was displayed in a Las Vegas casino.

Cars and trucks are Boyson's specialty; however he also does a lot of car

windows, window glass, highway signs, banners and pin striping. Lots of pride went into his custom-hand painting and lettering, but he says his best investment in the company was at the turn of the century, when he purchased a 24-inch vinyl cutter plotter.

He is now able to cut his own vinyl letters and logos in his shop. In 2006 he bought a second plotter to make things even better.

A couple years ago he estimates he was able to do 50 trucks in two months time using this equipment.

Hand painting takes a great deal more time to do, but most customers prefer the computer cut designs because it is dry instantly, and they can leave with their car and new art work right away, or have it mailed to them, and apply it themselves.

Another must in this work is to be able to spell correctly, as there is no spell check and if he spells celebration with and "i" instead of an "e" it stands out on a large sign. He takes a great deal of pride in his work and business and artistic ability.



MIKE BOYSON talks about some of the signs he has painted through the years.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez