

# Northwest Stone Sculptors Association

March/April 2017



'First Thoughts', basalt. Sculpture and photo by Elaine MacKay

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# Sculpture Northwest

May/June 2000 Revisited

*Sculpture NorthWest* is published every two months by NWSSA, NorthWest Stone Sculptors Association, a Washington State Non-Profit Professional Organization.

**CONTACT**

P.O. Box 27364 • Seattle, WA 98165-1864

FAX: (206) 523-9280

Website: [www.nwssa.org](http://www.nwssa.org)

General e-mail: [nwssa-office@nwssa.org](mailto:nwssa-office@nwssa.org)

**NWSSA BOARD OFFICERS**

Carl Nelson, President, (425) 252-6812

Ken Barnes, Vice President, (206) 328-5888

Michael Yeaman, Treasurer, (360) 376-7004

Verena Schwippert, Secretary, (360) 435-8849

**NWSSA BOARD**

Pat Barton, (425) 643-0756

Rick Johnson, (360) 379-9498

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Steve Sandry, (425) 830-1552

Doug Wiltshire, (503) 890-0749

**PRODUCTION STAFF**

Penelope Crittenden, Co-editor, (541) 324-8375

Lane Tompkins, Co-editor, (360) 320-8597

**DESIGNER AND PRINTER**

Nannette Davis of QIVU Graphics, (425) 485-5570

**WEBMASTER**

Carl Nelson

[carl@mostlyrandom.info](mailto:carl@mostlyrandom.info)

425-252-6812

Membership.....\$45/yr.

Journal only/Gift subscription.....\$30/yr.

Please Note: Only full memberships at \$45/yr. include voting privileges and discounted member rates at symposia and workshops.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the NWSSA's *Sculpture NorthWest Journal* is to promote, educate, and inform about stone sculpture, and to share experiences in the appreciation and execution of stone sculpture.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT...



Please join your fellow stone carvers at Pilgrim Firs this coming July 8 through 16. This will be our 30th year of gathering in the Puget Sound region and our first year at Camp Pilgrim Firs. Check out the [nwssa.org](http://nwssa.org) web site for details and if you want to add to our celebration of thirty years of symposiums, contact Cyra Jane Hobson. This facility has a number of cabins that are different than Camp-B, and two lodges that are

reminiscent of Fisher Lodge. As a side note, when you show up for the symposium, ask Cyra about bringing guest artists from Zimbabwe to talk about the joy of Shona Sculpture.

Speaking of our web site, those of you who are members, consider updating images of your work in our gallery (<http://nwssa.org/home/members-gallery-and-links>) and consider taking advantage of Renee's skill to put up additional info for you. Check out what Renee did for Penelope Crittenden, Pat Barton, and George Schmerholz's entries in the gallery. To

take the next step, drop her an email ([Renee@nwssa.org](mailto:Renee@nwssa.org)) with your info and images. Those of you who have gallery entries and have not renewed your membership, please consider renewing before we have to archive it.

For those who have displayed work at NWSSA sponsored events, you are probably familiar with the cedar pedestals we use. The first ones were built for members and the association at workshops we held four years ago and the years following. I often have requests to hold another workshop. Because of these requests and NWSSA's need for more pedestals, we will be holding another pedestal building workshop. Look for the announcement on the list serve or social media for the dates.

Finally, members' response to Elaine Mackay's passing made obvious the connection, warmth, and passion that we build with one another in our community. I feel grateful to be a part of this.

Learn much, share with many, and as Elaine would say, carve proud!

...Carl

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## FROM THE EDITORS...

It has been cold carving for those of us working outside. But warmer days are coming and we'll all be glad to see them.

The loss, in January, of our good friend Elaine MacKay, has affected us all. In tribute, we are re-running Elaine's "Artist in the Spotlight" from the May/June 2000 issue. Reading about her art in her own words should help us remember what a live wire she was.

And thanks to Kentaro Kojima, we are bringing to you the personal thoughts of two Japanese sculpture students on their week at Suttle Lake symposium. You will see our gathering from a very different perspective as Kamu and Koichiro share with us their exuberant enjoyment of this life changing experience.

Sharon Feeney has been busy, too. Her volunteer effort with four-year-olds from Gig Harbor will charm you and make you wish you could have been there to see her orchestrate their very first joyful encounters with stone sculpture. We should have all been so lucky to get started that early.

And so you don't forget, the Women's Spring Stone Carving event is happening in June. This issue includes



all the information you need, along with the application form. The industrious Arliss Newcomb will not only be organizing the workshop but also the celebration of her 80th birthday. It's a party.

... Penelope and Lane

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT REVISITED: ELAINE MACKAY

*On January 28, Elaine MacKay died of emphysema at her home in The Dalles, Oregon. Sculpt Proud, Elaine*

*We hope that taking another look at her May/June, 2000 Artist in the Spotlight will allow us all to recall her quick wit and down-to-earth ways. This past interview by Arliss Newcomb is vintage Elaine.*

*This is an interview conducted by e-mail and phone with Elaine MacKay. She has been a member of NWSSA since 1996. Where she lives says a lot about her character and also the type of stone she uses for many of her pieces of sculpture. Twenty-five miles southwest of the Columbia River and the small town of The Dalles, OR, Elaine and her partner, Pat, live on 40 acres of land on the lower slopes of Mt. Hood, with National Forest land on one side and wheat fields for miles on the other, and lots of beautiful basalt in all sizes and shapes for the taking. They have built their own home, using native stone for much of the structure's interior. Self-reliance and hard work are very much a part of living in a remote area.*

**Arliss:** *Who are you and what is your history as an artist?*

**Elaine:** The question, "Who am I as an artist?" might more correctly be titled, "The Road Not Taken" and begins back in 1968. I had transferred to a small liberal arts college at Mt. Angel, OR. This was my first exposure to art. Coming from a red-necked background in farming in a small Eastern Oregon community, WE DID NOT DO ART! At Mt. Angel I had to pick a major. I really wanted to go into art because I worked with my hands all my life, but the age-old question at the time was "what are you going to do with a degree in art" and having a very fragile ego, I picked English instead. But every free moment I could find I spent out in the Art Dept. I made handbuilt pots, fired in the Raku method, in a kiln we all built in the side of the hill. We spent long hours collecting clay from the river banks and mixing our own glazes, then firing late into the early morning hours, flames soaring over our heads. A very mystical experience and one I'd never forget through the intervening years when I involved myself in homesteading and various pursuits aimed at earning a buck. I did not actively engage in art again until 1996.

**Arliss:** *How did you get back into art?*

**Elaine:** Just a very lucky chance! Vic Picou came to visit a friend and neighbor of mine here on the Ridge. Although I didn't meet him at that time, my friend Jim told me he was a stone sculptor. I nearly went bonkers! I have always loved stone, hauled em' up from hell at times. I stacked 'em and placed them and ruined many a good one because I didn't know what I was doing, but I never did any pure art. To make a long story short, I phoned Vic, he mentioned Camp Brotherhood, and it sounded like a wonderful opportunity and Vic assured me that I would be welcomed. I was! I call



▲ ELAINE MACKAY

it the summer of my rebirth. Here I was, surrounded by all these wonderful people, a little intimidating, yes; BFA's, MFA's and more A's than you could shake a stick at, but folks would come over and ask me what I was doing and say "Cool." Like pouring water on a plant dying in the desert. Wow, what a wow! What a group of people! This event coincided with an article I had just read entitled "The Long Sleep" from a book by David Quammen. It dealt with the extinction of a species, in this case the Dodo bird. Being alone, having no one else of her kind, being rare and through a complicated synergy of links is pushed into extinction by death. It was how I felt before Camp Brotherhood '96. Then I discovered NWSSA and I knew to the depths of my soul I had found my life link. So I went back the following year and began my pursuit of knowledge of manipulating stone.

**Arliss:** *Why is art important to you?*

**Elaine:** Because I have spent many years being a frustrated wanna-be artist. Believe it or not, I didn't know there was such a thing as stone art, except in history, until Camp Brotherhood. Furthermore, art is important because it is the most individualistic and unique expression we can offer of ourselves. Stone art in particular is, I think, the kernel of all art because our ancestors manipulated stones long before other art forms.

**Arliss:** *What is your philosophy of art?*

**Elaine:** The short answer is don't ruin a good stone, because inherent in the stone's form, color and hardness is the possibility that the hand of an ancient may have touched it. This philosophy is of course easy for me because I carve basalt. The philosophy is in the stone, i.e., what I imagine an old ancestor might have thought of it, why they might have picked it or not.

**Arliss:** *What kind of art do you create and from where do you get your ideas?*

**Elaine:** I do not have the intrinsic ability to look at a block of stone and say I see so and so in it. I go searching for forms, I spend a lot of time and bloody fingers doing so, but it is also an integral part of my process of carving a stone. I imagine when I go stone searching. I imagine my clan long ago fingering the same stones. It is a link to our ancestors older than all others, older than any other art form, they could have touched the same stone as I, they might not have but they could have. My forms and what I do with them reflect what I feel my ancient ancestor also shared, images of pleasure, healing, power, protection and an awe of the mysteries of life. He found joy in the stone at the river bank and it caused him to have pleasure whenever he looked at it so he lugged it back to the den.

What kind of art do I create? Primitive would about sum it up. Sometimes I don't do anything to the stones I have at home. Never ruin a good stone. So if I go doctoring a stone I follow the philosophy above.

**Arliss:** *What type of tools do you use?*

**Elaine:** I use mostly air tools, as I did body and fender work for 10 years and am familiar with their use and you don't have to worry about getting zapped, as I use water a lot in my grinding and cutting. It keeps the dust down and lubes the blade. There is of course a place for hand tools also, as Reg Akright pointed out. I intend to incorporate them into my tool collection in the future. Money! I like pitched surfaces and again it's the primitive act of striking that appeals to me.

**Arliss:** *What scale do you like to work in?*

**Elaine:** Well at this time, pieces that I can tote. Though I am sifting every thread in JoAnn Duby's brain on basing. With multiple basing you can achieve soaring pieces that you can still lift and move without breaking your back.



▲ CLASSIC ELAINE

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT *...Continued*

**Arliss:** *What new and wild ideas do you have planned for future work?*

**Elaine:** With the multiple basing thing I am going to work on a series of shape-shifters this summer. Pinned and sleeved, each stone can be turned independently of each other and thus a different face, hence shape-shifters. Again this goes back to the old ones and the mythology of the Native Americans and Celts.

**Arliss:** *How many do you work on at a time?*

**Elaine:** I work on several at the same time. The first 15 minutes on most pieces is ecstasy and then you can get bored, push something that you shouldn't and not allow the stone to be and can just end up destroying a good stone. So I rough out a bunch of what would be considered ideas then "I just sets em' about and ponder em."





***Arliss: Where have you shown your work?***

**Elaine:** At this time , I enter most shows NWSSA puts forth in the newsletter. I haven't done the gallery thing because I do not have a big enough body of work at present. Hopefully that will come; I have received immense satisfaction in the short time I have been carving stone. I won an award at the AIA show last year in Seattle, which left me speechless. I also had a piece accepted at Big Rock Gardens in Bellingham for permanent exhibition and am in tremendous company up there. Even though it was a long distance to bring work, I have two pieces in the Bremerton Show.

***Arliss: Is there anything else you want to mention before we close the interview?***

**Elaine:** Carving stone has given me personal happiness, satisfaction and an even keel in my life that had heretofore eluded me. Which brings me to the importance of NWSSA in my life. The community of like-minded people, ideas, education and opportunity. Reading David Quammen's article on the Dodo bird coincided with my first Camp B. symposium and I knew I would never have to face such a destiny. This is what my art and the people I absorb through NWSSA gave me. I hope I am able to give a tenth back.



# KENTARO KOJIMA INTRODUCES...

## KAMU AND KOICHIRO: TWO JAPANESE STUDENTS AT SUTTLE LAKE

*I visited my friend, Ida-sensei, at Zokei University (an art school in Tokyo) in November 2015, and while there he gave me an opportunity to do a seminar with his students. At the seminar, I found out that none of the seven or so students in their early twenties had even gone out of Japan. They wanted to, but had this idea that it was very difficult to do. That was when I got the idea of bringing them to a NWSSA event. After I came back, I asked Doug Wiltshire about the possibility of getting the Japanese carvers a financial assistance to Suttle Lake symposium and he told me, "two full scholarships, done." Elated, I told Ida-sensei about my idea. If the sculptors can come up with their airfare, I will do the driving and they can stay in my house while in Seattle, I told him. He was so happy, he almost didn't believe me.*

*Ida-sensei selected two of his students, Kamu Nagasawa, who studied under Ida-sensei and is now a professional sculptor and Koichiro Bambara, who has just finished his undergraduate studies with Ida-sensei.*

*This is how Kamu and Koichiro ended up attending the Suttle Lake symposium in 2016. They provided an incredible stimulus to the NWSSA community and, attending the symposium, they told me, changed their lives.*

~ Kentaro Kojima

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### KOICHIRO BAMBARA'S STORY FROM SUTTLE LAKE SYMPOSIUM

**Sunday, August 21**

We left Seattle and headed to Suttle Lake in Oregon. This gave me the chance to see the American west-coast landscape. Tall pine trees, freight trains and railway tracks, a huge military base, the Columbia River, vast farmland.

Around here, it didn't rain this time of the year. So, the air was dry and dust got kicked up as the wind blew. This was a great environment for carving.

Dinner was prepared by the staff of the camp. It tasted good and the quantity was right.

I was looking forward to the week ahead.

At night, we made a campfire. The night was dark at Suttle Lake. So, the stars were very beautiful. It had been a while since I saw so many stars.

**Monday, August 22**

I woke up early and walked about the trails of the camp. I saw many chipmunks all over the place and as I looked up, I saw an eagle flying. This place was quite different from Japan. Many of the trees had burnt marks. I heard that there was a forest fire a while back. To see tall white withered trees and burnt trees among low brushes was pretty surreal.

When I dropped my gaze to the ground, I saw basalt and some kind of volcanic rocks with many holes. I found it interesting and wanted to carve them, but I was told that it was prohibited to collect them, so I gave up that idea.

After breakfast, we started to carve. A chunk of columnar basalt was prepared for me.

The basalt had a beautiful skin (rind) so I decided to carve something that will utilize that aspect of the stone. First, I split the stone in three. I drilled the holes using a hammer drill and used feathers and wedges. I borrowed both of them from another carver nearby.

This was what was great about this symposium. We could loan each other tools and help each other out. I split the stone in half. Then split one of the halves in half.

**Tuesday, August 23**

Lots of different stone started arriving at the symposium. Pinkish alabaster, limestone, chlorite, etc. Some, I've seen at Japanese stone suppliers and others that I have never seen. I was enjoying just looking at them.



▲ KOICHIRO BAMBARA

In the afternoon I joined in the jade carving workshop.

And after dinner, I made a presentation introducing my work. It seemed to have been received well. I was glad.

**Wednesday, August 24**

Because of my presentation the night before, many people came to talk to me. I can't say I communicated well in English, but because we are all dealing with carving stone, there were things that we communicated well without it.

A tool dealer came to the symposium. The prices were incredible, so I bought 5 blades for my grinder.

By the way, one of the highlights of the symposium was that I got to see many kinds of tools. I had never seen a chainsaw for stone in Japan. The idea of stuffing sand into a rubber tube (to make sandbags) was great.

**Thursday, August 25**

The biggest event of the day was, needless to say, the auction. With the help of alcohol and the participants' eagerness,

combined with an excited, white-hot atmosphere, the auctioned items climbed to incredible prices.

I had my eyes on a book of collected works of a sculptor by the name of Fritz Wotruba.

He was mainly a figurative artist and I felt like his work will help me a lot in my studies, so, I had decided that will be mine in my heart. As it turns out, there was another person that wanted this book and we competed up to \$60. But, that was my limit, so, as I was giving up and wondering if I would find that book on Amazon, an unthinkable thing happened. Several people chipped in to help me get the book. The result was that the book sold for \$110 and all I paid was \$60. This was one of my best memories of the symposium.

**Saturday, August 27**

Last day. I put my piece on an exhibit at 10:30. This exhibit was open to the public and if a work sold, NWSSA got a commission. One could exhibit even if the piece was still in progress.

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## KAMU NAGASAWA DESCRIBES HIS WEEK AT SUTTLE LAKE SYMPOSIUM

NWSSA puts on a stone carving symposium every August in Oregon. It lasts about a week and on the last day, there is an open air exhibition in the woods. The participants gather to carve stone from all over the USA. The fee to attend is about \$1000 which includes room and board, electricity and air to carve. The symposium is held at a summer camp site by Suttle Lake where chipmunks ran all over the place. This is in the middle of nature where moose roam. Of course, my smartphone was out of range, which made for a wonderful location.

Though it is August and very hot, the weather was dry and you didn't sweat which was pleasant. But, it was so dry that my lips got chapped and I had to put some olive oil from the kitchen on it then until I found some lip balm. You may consider taking lip cream with you. Also, it actually gets cold at night, so do bring a sweatshirt or a fleece jacket with you. The basic accommodation is a cottage, but there are some brave souls that camp outside.

The meals are served on time and one can focus on carving. The Japanese electrical tools work just fine, but when using air tools, you should prepare a short hose with an American coupler (male) on one end and a Japanese coupler (female) on the other.

As many big vehicles loaded with stone carving tools started to arrive, we started to set up tents and wooden working stands. I began adjusting my body and started communicating with the other participants through this communal activity.

This symposium seemed to be an important occasion where people that have attended in the past got to meet each other again after a year. One feature of this gathering was that the participants varied in age and experience. There were older participants and students, professional carvers and beginners.

What I expected was to work on something small that you can finish in a week, but as we got started, I suddenly heard the roar of huge gas saws and big pneumatic hammers. The sight of someone carving stone that filled a big trailer left me speechless. There were tool and stone vendors that



▲ KAMU NAGASAWA



## JAPANESE STUDENTS *Continued*

visited the site and I saw tools I had never seen which were very interesting to me. So, even if you didn't bring a tool you needed, you shouldn't worry about not being able to carve.

The stone I carved came from one of the stone vendors. He had many different types of stone. What I chose was chlorite. A type of stone that you could easily carve with woodworking knives. This was the first time that I had seen this type of stone, but apparently was popular carving stone in America, so I wanted to give it a try. Given the time constraints, and limited access to tools, this soft and fine stone worked well. Also, everybody showed me its characteristics and how to work it, so it made for a fun carving.

During the symposium, I participated in jade carving, clay sculpting, tool making, and many other lectures. And every night, there was a presentation by two or three sculptors. These presentations also functioned as a passing on of their techniques and experiences. Of course, us participants

from Japan got to introduce ourselves on one of the nights. We must have come across as mysterious people barely speaking English, but after the presentation, we got even a warmer reception, which was thanks to Kentaro's wonderful interpretation of our presentation.

Play hard and carve hard was exactly what we got to do at the symposium. The experience of the exhibition and sale on the last day would provide an opportunity to widen the scope of activity to those who experienced it.

I was able to attend the symposium because NWSSA provided for my attendance fee and I got a lot of assistance in buying stone as well. Not to mention the assistance I got for my stay in America. I would like to use this experience to introduce this to a wider audience in Japan and to keep and better the relationship we have built.



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## START THEM YOUNG

We often hear it said "We need young people in NWSSA." I was asked by the Greater Gig Harbor Arts Foundation to create an art piece with eighteen four year olds to be auctioned as a fund raiser for the Curious by Nature preschool in Gig Harbor.

For this project I cut a 1-inch to 2-inch fish shape of soap stone for each child to sand, polish and buff. Each picked the fish shape they wanted to work. We used foam sanding blocks flat on the tables so they could take the stone to the sanding pad. When ready, we gave each child a tiny dab of Tenax Creama Wax and a little terry rag for buffing. Each child also chose a colored glass bead for their fish eye. We requested two things of the children: No blowing the dust and the use of a wet wipe to clean their hands and space. In a couple of sessions and with the help of two teachers, the shapes were done.

As a "frame" for their work, I cut a cedar fish approximately 2 feet long and made a divot for each little fish to rest. The children also painted the tail and fin groves. To avoid any child contacting epoxy I took the work back to my studio where I epoxied each little fish into the large fish frame. Next I printed a chart showing which little fish was created by which child so parents could identify their child's work. Three other media artists also made group art with the children. The auction of the art was a success!

~ Sharon Feeney



# WOMAN'S HAND CARVING WORKSHOP ... *and cake*

## JUNE 2-3-4, 2017

**Location:** Old Alcohol Plant Inn, 310 Hadlock Bay Road,  
Hadlock, WA. (6 miles South of Port Townsend)

**Hours:** Friday 11:00am – 4:00pm Sat. 10:00am – 4:00pm

**Saturday evening Gallery Walk/reception 5:00pm – 8:00pm**

**Sunday 11:00am – 1:00pm**



If you aren't a hand carver, bring a partly finished piece you can rasp, chisel, or sand. I will have my Fordham flex-shaft for people to use. Bring whatever other tools you might need.

There is room for 7 to 8 canopies on the lawn in front of the Hotel, so two people can share one canopy space. Bring a worktable, chair or stool. If you have sculpture pedestals for up to 3 of your finished sculptures for the show and sale, bring them. (I have 5 or 6 extras I will bring.) Try and keep the size under 30 pounds please. The Hotel is not charging us to use their space for this event so (25% of all sales will be donated to their Non-Profit. Charity.) This is a Volunteer event so bring a bottle of wine and something for our Friday evening Pot Luck Picnic. Items needed: Paper plates, plastic forks knives & spoons. cups, napkins. Let me know what food you plan to bring so we don't have 10 pots of beans.

Just to let you know, Carl Nelson, in the last issue of Sculpture Northwest, said that "MJ, Tamara and Ruth would be teaching at our week end." Not true. We will all share our knowledge and expertise with each other and have fun. No pressure, just come and enjoy.

**Total cost:** Registration fee, \$100.00 for NWSSA. \$120.00 for two nights at the Hotel for each person (two to a room.) I have reserved four rooms, so it's first come first served. There is a Motel 1/2 mile away for anyone else. Bring your own Toiletries and Bath Towels (no maid service which has kept the cost down.)

**Phone:** 360-301-1085 or stone.unicorn37@gmail.com ~ Arliss



### WOMAN'S WORKSHOP JUNE 2-3-4, 2017

## REGISTRATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Stay in: Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ Motel \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Paid up member NWSSA yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration fee of \$100.00** should be made out to NWSSA.

Hotel and Motel registration phone #'s will be sent to you after the first of March.

**Mail registration form to my address here in Arizona along with check (ONLY TILL THE 15TH. OF MARCH) after that mail to my Port Hadlock address.**

**Arizona address:** (before March 15)  
ARLISS NEWCOMB  
10901 Crystal Canyon West  
Parker, Arizona 85344

**Port Hadlock address:** (after March 15)  
ARLISS NEWCOMB  
P.O. Box 1117  
Port Hadlock, Washington, 98339



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98165-1864

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Permit # 145

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*"I assert that the art of sculpture, among all the arts connected with design, is at least seven times greater than any other, for the following reason: why, sir, a statue of true sculpture ought to have seven points of view, which ought all to boast equal excellence."*

~ Benvenuto Cellini, The Autobiography Of Benvenuto Cellini ~

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## STONE ARTS OF ALASKA

www.stoneartsofalaska.com (360) 592-7408

### STONE SCULPTORS SUPPLIES GUERNEVILLE, CA

Pat and Karen are continuing their discounts on purchases by NWSSA members. All stone is 25% off unless it's a special or a grab bag. 10% will be taken off of imported, Italian tools (Cuturi and Milani). All other tools are 20% off. You must note in the comment section that you are a member or call in your order at: 707-869-1666 or 707-869-1021.

Info@stonesculptorssupplies.com

### KANSAS LIMESTONE FENCE POSTS FOR SALE

Still 59 cents a pound

Delivery possible if you order three or more posts  
Tom Urban, tfurban@uoregon.edu, 541-912-2197

### 2016 CARVING CALENDAR

#### **Camp Pilgrim Firs**

Port Orchard, WA

July 8-16, 2017

#### **Suttle Lake**

Sisters, Oregon

August 20-27, 2017

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And don't let us forget our friend Peter Becker who brings us stone ideas from around the world in the monthly, online stone-ideas.com.

<http://www.stone-ideas.com>

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