

MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE Home + Garden

HIS OWN *tropical paradise*



By Don Frances



PHOTOS BY VERONICA WEBER

Charles Hirschbek sits with some of his pigeons in his Mountain View home, which is decorated with tikis, waterfalls, lush plants and tropical flowers.

While fighting in the Korean War, Charles Hirschbek was exposed to several tropical locales — the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii.

The culture of these places wore off on him, and today Hirschbek, 76, has created his own tropical paradise in his home on Ormonde Drive.

The result of decades of work, the home features four complete Polynesian huts, birds in cages, sky-high bamboo, ponds and tropical plants, numerous waterfalls he makes out of bamboo and driftwood, and hand-carved tikis by the dozens.

“It’s my whole life’s dream,” he said.

Born and raised in Mountain View, Hirschbek is also a cancer survivor, former amateur boxer (super middleweight) and has been a certified tree surgeon for more than half a century. His storied past, skilled hands and love of Polynesian culture naturally combined in his favorite hobby: Polynesian woodcarving.

“That’s what I specialize in,” he said. “On the side, I started out years ago” while living in Hawaii.

Today, the many tiki statues in his home were all carved by either Hirschbek or William Sosa, to whom Hirschbek is a close friend and mentor.

His knowledge and love of plants isn’t limited to tropical ones. “I always loved trees and shrubs and horticulture,” he said.

He noted, for example, that “The redwood makes a beautiful hedge. ... You get it the height you want and just top it.” Fourteen large redwood trees surround his Ormonde Drive property — “All you see is the driveway, and the rest is hedges.”

Hirschbek welcomes visitors — by appointment only. Appointments can be made by calling (650) 967-3724 before 9 a.m. ▀

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