

Domenick Signs

Barry Domenick — a can of paint, a paint brush and a lot of creativity.

Written by **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by **Lance C. Bell**



"I got started in the business by painting cars during my high school years. Guys wanted me to paint Popeye, Tazmanian devils, cartoon characters, pin stripes, and other designs on their cars. Later on I did a lot of hand painted signs for Browning's Foodland in Oakland, so I really took an interest in sign work at an early age."

Barry Domenick's early interest in artwork expanded through four years of college and eventually earned him a position as an art teacher with the Garrett County public schools and at Garrett Community College. While serving as a teacher, he painted signs for businesses around Deep Creek Lake to earn extra money. The part time job orders increased to the point that Barry decided to work full time in the sign making business. "I found a nice niche in the Deep Creek and Oakland areas, and have been making signs on a full time basis since 1980."

Barry's Deer Park, Maryland, business was small at the start. "It was basically a business of one and depended on my skills to take care of all facets of the sign production and installation. My dad Lewis, retired from teaching and helped tremendously with the increasing work load. As the business grew, I added more equipment, work space and employees."

In the early days Barry practiced the traditional form of sign painting—paint and brush; however, he also produced uniquely carved wooden signs that have become local landmarks. The colorful dimensional signs are the ones residents and visitors often see displayed around Garrett County businesses



One of Barry's masterpieces created for Lake residents Lee and Nadine Baughman. The sign hangs high in their kitchen for all to see as a reminder of emotional major health issues they have both been through and survived. The sign is 3 dimensionally carved with significant meaning to the phrase, "Every Day's a Holiday!"

The wine bottle has the name of their cottage, "Acorn Cottage" and 1991, the year it was built.

and residences. “We still create a lot of signs using chisels, scroll saws and other hand tools. Whenever possible, we like our dimensional signs to be in tune with their environment and often utilize designs incorporating wood timbers, stone, shrubbery and other landscaping elements.”

Changes in technology during the mid 1980s meant that the hand painting skills were used less frequently. Instead, computer generated images provided artistic options for a majority of the orders requested by customers. Even though technology drives the modern sign business, he still receives requests for time tested skills requiring paint, brushes and carving that Barry acquired before the digital age.

Customers rely on Barry’s experience and judgment when creating signs. “Sometimes the customer comes in with great ideas and we work with them to create an appropriate sign and logo. Often times the design we create for the sign becomes the trademark for the business; they end up using it for their business cards, stationery, etc.” In many cases, customers rely on Barry for creative solutions to visually identify their business. “We also help our customers with the use of color, distinct lettering and general layout. Sometimes a design may look nice on paper, but won’t work outdoors along the roadway. We try to guide customers to a design that people can easily read and remember.”

Some of the landmark signs created by Barry and his company include Will O’ the Wisp and Four Seasons Restaurant along U.S. Route 219, the Mountainside Community, Railey Realty, Arrowhead Market and UNO’s Restaurant to name a few.

Barry relies on his wife, Sharan, for her computer and design skills, along with her bookkeeping and administrative expertise. Tina Harvey, a 23 year employee, is also skilled in design and production work, including sign layout and decal application. A large amount of credit for the dimensional sign work goes to Jim Feather, a talented craftsman, carver and installer who has been on staff for 18 years. “We ended up being a great team. Every one of us contributes greatly to our success as a company.”

In addition to creating custom commercial and residential signs, the Domenick team also specializes in wide format printing, vehicle and boat lettering, electrical signs, banners, decals, plastic and metal letters, window lettering, posters and many other sign related services.

The company maintains a loyal customer base by practicing what Barry started more than three decades ago—personalized service, attention to detail and a creative approach to sign design. From residential signs to commercial graphics, customers rely on the experienced staff at Domenick Signs.



Jim Feather with a nearly complete carved sign ready for painting.



The crew: Barry, wife Sharan, Jim Feather, Tina Harvey and head dog, Yodi.