

# Mike Jackson's Oklahoma Bash

by Tom McIltrout



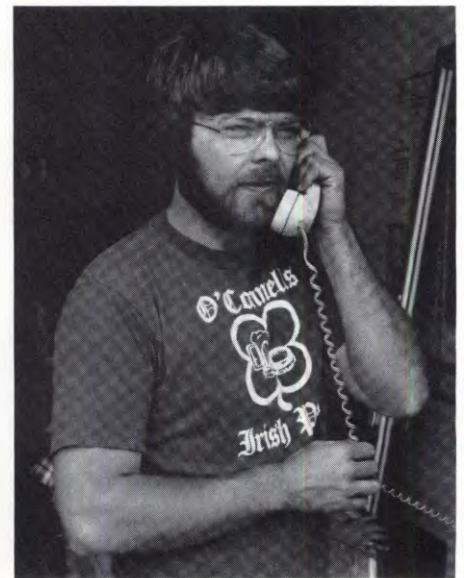
The "big top" set up in front of Jackson Signs in Moore, OK.



A showcard seminar gets underway.

On October 29, 30, 31st, Mike Jackson had a few of his friends over to visit at his shop. About 200 friends, in fact.

They came from all over the United States — from Southern California to Maine from Florida to Alaska. The most remarkable journey was made by Colin Blomfield and Robin Mansfield, both of Auckland, New Zealand. It was a rare



*"I'm sorry but you can't pick up your sign until next week. You see, I'm sort of having this party and..."*

opportunity — a chance to "talk shop" with sign artists from another country. "It was more than I could have ever expected," said Colin.

That leaves us with the difficult task of trying to let you know what happened. How do you explain the unexplainable? "If someone really wanted to know what it was like", says Keith Knecht of Toledo, OH, "they would have to ask someone who was there."

Let me say first that it would be futile to list all those in attendance. 138 signed the register. It would also be reckless to try to list all of the things that went on — showcards, sandblasting, glue-chip glass, pinstriping, gliding, letter cutting, wood carving, pictorials, calligraphy and more. It might be safe to say that almost any facet of commercial sign work was displayed or thoroughly discussed.

A few dozen sign artists had already arrived Thursday night, the day before things technically got underway. It was obvious what was in store. As Bob Parsons of Anchorage, AK said that evening, "I could go home right now and it would have already been worth it."

What happens when a group of sign



*It was a weekend for learning about...*



*Glass gilding and pictorials...*



*gold leaf techniques in New Zealand ...*



*The glue chip process...*



*marbleized backgrounds...*



*Mike Jackson's production methods for wood signs...*



*...and "hands on" experience for anyone interested.*





*Everything with wheels was lettered or pinstriped — from rental cars to an unattended van to Mike's dad's motorcycle.*



*Even Mike's wheelbarrow got a lettering job.*



*Wood carving proved to be a popular subject.*



*By Sunday afternoon — an exhausted but happy group.*

artists from all over the world get together? They talk — almost non-stop until the early hours of the morning for four days straight. They eat — 270 hamburgers for lunch, or a dozen buckets of fried chicken or 14 pizzas for a snack. They make over 5,000 photo copies of books and photos. And — they all come away better sign artists for the experience.

Of course, it wasn't strictly business. Mike demonstrated his yo-yo skills, there was some juggling by Kevin Peterson and scores of hilarious stories about "the sign game". There was also time to celebrate the birthday of gold leaf wizard Steven Parrish. Steven turned 73 on

Saturday, October 30.

The gathering was an outgrowth of the original Letterheads. As Rick Flores said, "I'm standing here and flashing back to the first few times we got together in the evening down at my shop. We wanted to swap ideas and learn. It's great to see this happen on this scale."

Mike's shop is a sign artist's dream. Everything is there — and then some. There is a complete wood shop, darkroom, sandblast equipment and booth, silkscreen set-up and a nifty electric easel. Mike was a great host. As Raymond Chapman said, "Mike's shop and personality compare with his

designs — first class."

What was the best thing about the Oklahoma Bash? It would be hard to say. I would bet that most who were there would agree that beyond the chance to watch outstanding sign artists demonstrate their skills, to examine photos of such impressive work, or to swap stories and experiences with others in the craft, it was the overwhelming sense of openness and sharing that was most impressive—the genuine interest that all had in each other and their work. It was apparent what a great craft the sign craft is... and what a great time it is to be a part of it.

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