

Bill: My favorite Hagen-Renaker? I know one of them was the climbing cat, the Designers Workshop climbing cat, because we made so many of them. And I can remember seeing whole kilns full of them. It was a very, very popular item in Designers Workshop. Tom Masterson designed it. When John Renaker first saw it, the climbing cat, are you familiar with it?

Nancy: Yes, uh huh.

B: The climbing cat was done at first it had both feet on the ground. And he was the one that asked Tom to move the legs so that it was actually climbing like it is...

N: Up against the thing...

B: Yeah, yeah. And uh, that was done at The House That Jack Built (laughs), a little restaurant around the corner. I can remember sitting there looking at the model with John and Tom, and John not liking it. John was the main critic. He was the person who was responsible for all of the innovation as far as design was concerned. When John looked at something, he could pretty well tell if it was going to go. He would make criticisms that were beneficial to them, and that was one of them.

I had a few original designs of my own. One that comes to my mind is the half-duck.

N: Oh, yeah, yeah, that's cute! It was your idea but someone else sculpted it for you?

B: Yeah, Tom Masterson did that, too. And uh, he had the mama duck and the baby duck and they were talking about, three of us were together again, it was maybe three or four of us, and they were talking about what they were going to put on a pond, and what would fit in with it, and I told them I thought a half-duck would do well. At first they didn't understand what I meant. I had to explain it to them. You know what the girls around the plant called that for years? Duck butt! They make duck butts!

N: That's very descriptive!

B: And the Purple People Eater was one of my favorites. And there's a reason for that. We made that line, the Horrible line, very quickly. It had a very short run, and the Purple People Eater was a real short run, because at the time we were doing it we needed, we just couldn't get enough. Because I strained everything I could to get production up to 1200 of those every day. And we got up to that point. We ran them that way for probably two or three months. But the bad thing was that when they finally died, and they died very fast too, we had exactly 1200 of those Purple People Eaters left over. (laughs) We did them one day too long.

N: Was that because of the popularity of the song back then?

B: Yeah. That was it. It was hard for us to get it out quick enough to take advantage of the song, but we did a pretty good job.