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## **Master Chain Saw Carvers Race Against Time and Each Other Under Sea of Balloons To Raise “Wishes” for Kids**

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Chicago, IL – August 27, 2009 - The 5th Annual ECHO Chain Saw Carving Championship is returning to the [Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta®](#) in New Mexico October 2-4 to carve for the [Make-a-Wish® Foundation of New Mexico](#). And there's a new twist. This year the Championship pits the highly competitive [ECHO Carving Team](#) against the clock and each other.

Mike Bihlmaier (Marengo, IL), Mark Colp (Lakeport, CA), Jason Emmons (Branchville, IN), and Bob King (Edgewood, WA) have appeared as members of ECHO's national carving team since 2005 when ECHO first formed the team. The company started the ECHO Carving Series and Championship the same year.

This year's championship showcases the ECHO team members to see who will be judged as the superior carver. The four professional carvers will compete for cash prizes and the prestigious ECHO Carving Cup. They have 22 hours to produce masterpiece sculptures under the theme: "The Great American Southwest".

On Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> the sculptures will be judged and then auctioned, with proceeds benefiting the [Make-a-Wish® Foundation of New Mexico](#). The Foundation grants "wishes" to children who have a life threatening medical condition. Last year's auction raised \$34,700 for the Foundation, granting wishes to seven children.

The competition in Albuquerque should be tense. King has won the championship three years in a row. Colp has competed in all four prior Championships, while Mike Bihlmaier has competed in two championships and Jason Emmons one. You can follow the team as the tension ramps up at [www.echo-usa.com/carvingcontest](http://www.echo-usa.com/carvingcontest) Or on the team's [Facebook page](#) You may reach their page via the Championship link on the ECHO web site.

The Balloon Fiesta remains a perfect visual venue for the Championship. With 700 participating balloons, Balloon Fiesta is the largest ballooning event in the world, the most photographed event on earth and the largest annual international event held in the U.S. Over 400,000 visitors are expected during the event's opening weekend October 3rd and 4th, which is the same weekend as the ECHO Carving Championship. Visit [www.balloonfiesta.com](http://www.balloonfiesta.com) for more details.

ECHO INCORPORATED is a leading manufacturer of professional-grade, high performance hand-held outdoor power equipment for commercial and residential use. [www.echo-usa.com](http://www.echo-usa.com)

## MEET THE TEAM

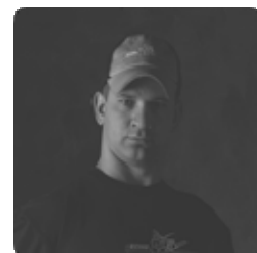


**BOB KING**

Bob is a three time winner of the ECHO Carving Series Championship. He won the Championship in 2006, 2007 and 2008 and is a member of ECHO's Chain Saw Carving Team. He is a professional carver and has been carving for almost fourteen years and works at his trade five to seven days a week depending on the weather. Bob lives in Edgewood, WA. His favorite wood is western red cedar and his favorite subject is realistic wildlife. He considers his best work to date the piece he carved at the 2008 ECHO Carving Series qualifying event in Chetwynd, British Columbia, Canada.

**JASON EMMONS**

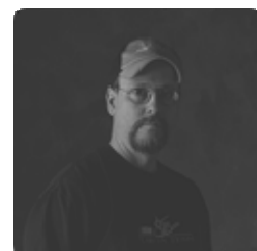
Originally from Indianapolis, Jason is a full-time carver now based out of his studio, Bear Hollow, in St. Croix, IN and a member of the ECHO Carving Team. He has been carving for about ten years and credits his wife Cindy, whose family operates a saw mill and lumber yard, as the inspiration to become a chain saw carver. Emmons' most challenging carving project to date is also the one he's most proud of. "I carved a dog memorial for a customer in New York," he recalls. "The project took about 10 hours from start to finish. Because the dog had passed away, it was a very personal, emotional and sentimental project for the customer and so the pressure was really on." He competed in the 2006 ECHO Championship.



**MARK COLP**

Mark is also a member of ECHO's Chain Saw Carving Team and has participated in every ECHO Carving Series Championship. He has been carving for 31 years and has been a professional chain saw carver since high school. He jokes that he has never filled out a job application. You could say chain saw carving runs in his blood. Mark's father is a pro chain saw carver and was one of the pioneers in the trade. "I grew up with chain saw carving," says Mark. "And I still learn a lot from my Dad." Mark lives in Lakeport, CA. His favorite wood is redwood and his favorite subject is nautical, especially carving dolphins. He considers his best work to date three jumping dolphins, which won first place at a Washington competition in 2005.

**MIKE BIHLMAIER**



Mike, an ECHO Carving Team member, does all his carving and finishing work at his home in Marengo, IL, and considers chain saw carving a labor of love, not a job. Mike, who started out competing in snow sculpting, was inspired to become a professional chain saw carver after seeing carvers at various county fairs. To Bihlmaier, carving is more of an art form than a skill and likens the craft more towards classical sculpture than traditional wood carving. Mike asserts that he hasn't carved his hardest piece yet, but one of his most challenging projects so far was 22-foot red-tailed hawk on a 3-sided pillar that he carved out of white oak for a country club. Mike has competed in two prior ECHO Chain Saw Carving Championships.