



Fiddlin' around

Elmer Flaughter says he can't play the fiddle very well, but he knows how to repair fiddles from all over Missouri. This March Flaughter built a fiddle, the third one in his lifetime.

Tuscumbia man returns to his 'playhouse' days

Tuscumbia's all-around handyman can repair a fiddle, make a fish gig, carve a knife and play a tune for his customers.

He is Elmer Flaughter, a blacksmith in Tuscumbia since 1927. "I just built this for my playhouse," Flaughter says, as he points to a shed in his backyard where he has made knives for the past 25 years.

One of Flaughter's most recent projects is the construction of a fiddle in March. One needs hard maple for the back and rim and spruce pine for the top, but willow will work for the back, Flaughter says. He has made it work.

Although Flaughter says he can't play the fiddle, he does like to try. But repairing fiddles is another story. People come from all around to seek Flaughter's help.

"I repair lots of fiddles. They send them to me from Jefferson City. I've repaired them when they've been torn to pieces," Flaughter says.

When the gig season opens in October, Flaughter spends many hours in his "playhouse. I could sell a gig every day if I had enough."

Inside Flaughter's home, one sees more of the blacksmith's work displayed in the red and white cedar furnishings.

"Right here in Tuscumbia is where I'd rather be," Flaughter says, even though the Osage River bottom is not good for his arthritis. "Everybody's a friend to me." He and his wife celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary June 15.