



ART

# The Ice Sculptor Cometh

BY JANE MUNDY

### TO DESCRIBE CRAIG

Mutch's job as cool is just the tip of the iceberg. This winter, you'll find Mutch in Whistler carving huge blocks of ice into a truck using a custom chainsaw and chisels. Mutch has created ice sculptures around the world, and spends time at Big White and SilverStar almost every year, but Whistler is his main playground. "Because GMC is a big sponsor of Whistler's ski school for kids I've carved several trucks out of snow," he says.

He once built an igloo from lake ice for a family in the Callaghan Valley near Whistler. The ice blocks were hauled on a Snow Cat and it took a week to build. "The family spent \$60,000 for a few hours in the igloo at New Years roasting marshmallows. Then they went back down the mountain on skidoos." He also

built a snow castle 50 feet by 70 feet for a billionaire from Malaysia that took five weeks to build on an empty lot in Whistler. "A lot of events are private and we aren't allowed to tell anyone. When the billionaire arrived by dogsled we had to hide."

Mutch might do another Viking or the Norse snow god Ullr, eight feet tall. "Sometimes my buddy, Mushroom Mark, helps me in front of the Longhorn pub, or you may see us at Whistler's Fire & Ice show Sunday nights."

Creating an image out of snow requires calculations and logistics. "I'm not a computer wiz so I sketch what it will look like to give the client an idea of the finished product," says Mutch.



"Then we build giant wooden boxes to house

large blocks of snow that turn into solid ice the next day. Or we cut blocks of packed snow like building an igloo."

Ice sculptors typically trace the design on the ice with a die grinder before rough shaping with a chainsaw. Next, hand-sculpting tools, custom chisels

and/or powered rotary files are used to finesse the ice.

Ice sculptures are ephemeral, lasting as long as the temperature is below zero. In temperatures of 21°C an ice sculpture will melt at the rate of one inch per hour. The results may be fleeting, but Mutch describes ice sculpting as performance art—the memory will last long after the ice has melted. ■