

Today's weather picture by Mason Weber, 9, Vancouver, Sunset Elementary



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2007

## Jumping rope on a major upswing

By MARIA MOOSHIL  
*Chicago Tribune*

A jump in sales after New Year's is common for Jumprope.com, as folks attempt to fulfill fitness resolutions. But this year, the online retailer is doing a double take at the bump and the catalyst: "Jump In," a new Disney Channel movie about a young boxer who discovers he loves being in between the double Dutch ropes.

"I figured it would give us something," said Irene Henderson, spokeswoman for Heartbeat Enterprises, which operates Jumprope.com. "I didn't expect it so quickly."

The movie — featuring Corbin Bleu, the best friend in last year's Disney cross-marketing juggernaut "High School Musical," and Keke Palmer of "Akeelah and the Bee" — highlights the competitive side of a sport often dismissed as a playground activity. But the athleticism of the jumpers in the movie is stirring more than a few bodies to get involved, say instructors and competition organizers.

"Kids are talking about (the movie) on message boards and calling us asking questions about it," said John Fletcher, operations manager of USA Jump Rope. Fletcher said most of the callers are interested in joining teams or starting their own.

"This will be another tool we can refer people to," said Jean Hodges, secretary general of AAU Jump Rope. "Up until now, we've referred to the ESPN airings of the national championships, which have been televised the last 10 to 12 years."

Hodges' organization and others have touted the movie on their Web sites and in "e-blasts" to members, many of whom held viewing parties for the movie's Jan. 12 premiere.

"There's a buzz about it in the jump-rope community," Fletcher said. "It's a real visual movie ... especially in the last 10 or 15 minutes, when they're showing the competition. You can't help but look at it ... When they show national competitions on TV, people always say to me, 'I had no idea you could do that with a jump-rope.'"

Jump-rope organizers and retailers believe the fuss will continue as Disney repeats the movie, which drew 8.2 million viewers, making it the most-watched Disney Channel telecast ever.

### Did you know?

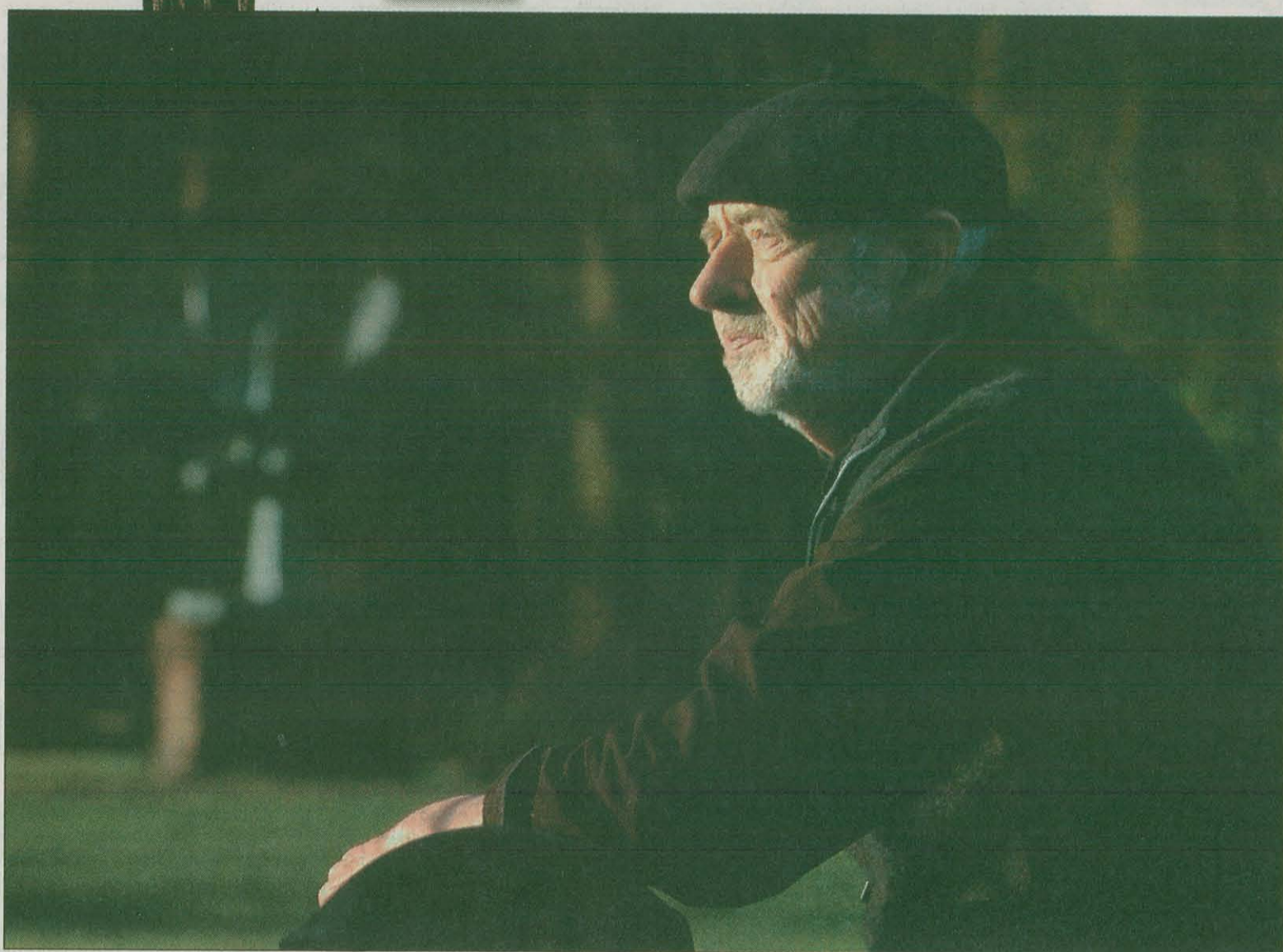
■ Jump-rope history is a little fuzzy, but some believe the activity dates to ancient Egypt and China, when ropemakers who were twisting hemp would jump over them to retrieve strands, according to the International Rope Skipping Federation Web site.

■ In the 1600s, Dutch settlers brought rope-skipping to America, where it was mainly done by boys until the 1800s, when girls were also encouraged to take up the activity, the Web site says.

■ Today, girls and boys participate in competitions. USA Jump Rope says its membership is about 60 percent girls.



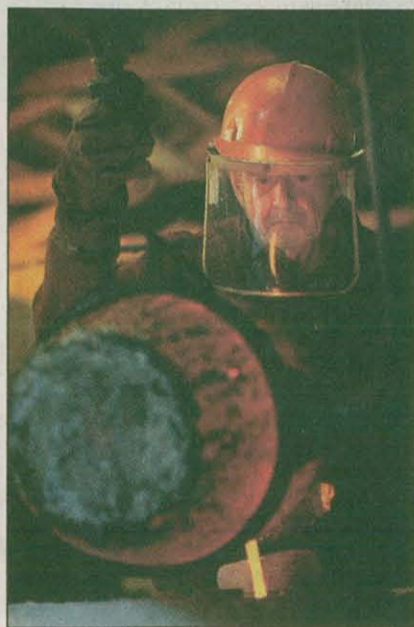
# TWISTS OF FATE, TURN OF FIGURE



He lives amid the tranquility of 13 private acres overlooking a pond in Battle Ground. His legacy as an artist is secure. But, at 81, James Lee Hansen feels compelled to keep creating and refining his sculptures.

Photos by DAVE OLSON/The Columbian

After more than a half-century of work, distinguished Clark County sculptor Jim Hansen is still trying to unlock life's mysteries through his art



### ON THE WEB

What does it take to create a bronze sculpture? We document Hansen's techniques of pouring metal at [www.columbian.com/jimhansen](http://www.columbian.com/jimhansen).

"He really should have a reputation that goes even beyond the region. ... (His work is) as good as anything I look at anywhere."

Arlene Schnitzer, owner of The Fountain Gallery of Art in Portland from 1961 to 1987. The gallery regularly showed Hansen's sculptures.

**A**wake suddenly, Jim Hansen sat up in bed amazed by what he had seen in a dream. Two words handwritten in white on a dark background, like a teacher's note in chalk on a blackboard. Only he had never heard the words before and had no idea what they meant. He also couldn't imagine going back to sleep and forgetting them.

BY BRETT OPPEGAARD  
THE COLUMBIAN

He woke his wife, Annie, and told her to write down the letters as he spelled them to her. She didn't know the definitions either, and the Hansens couldn't find the words in their pocket dictionary. Hansen, who was in his late 50s at the time, says, "We went to bed early. I wasn't doing anything unusual that day. I didn't hear voices. ... I was written to, like Moses. In another time, in another age, I would have thought this was a very holy thing, and I would have gone and preached or stood on a mountain."

He instead interpreted the dream as an affirmation of his life's work. That the abstract imagery of his mind, which he had been expressing in sculpture, really could be somehow connected to something mystical beyond his comprehension. He wanted more clarity.

SCULPTOR, Page D7



### ON THE WEB

Hansen stores much of his work around his rural property, as a sculpture garden. For a video tour, visit [www.columbian.com/jimhansen](http://www.columbian.com/jimhansen).

### If you go

■ **What:** "The Preeminents," an exhibition featuring the work of Battle Ground sculptor James Lee Hansen.

■ **When:** Through Feb. 24, with gallery hours 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and by appointment.

■ **Where:** Portland's Mark Woolley Gallery at the Wonder Ballroom, 128 N.E. Russell St.

■ **Cost:** Admission is free.

■ **Information:** 503-224-5475.

■ **On the Web:** [markwoolley.com](http://markwoolley.com) or [wonderballroom.com](http://wonderballroom.com).

### your Guide:

**Health & Fitness:** Is it OK to mislead your doctor to be a good patient? /D3

**Television:** Low-rated shows may be due for overhauls /D5



University cafeterias add more green, reduce portions /D4

### Coming Saturday:

Five ways to make the most of your weekend /D1



**MORE JIM HANSEN ON THE WEB: WWW.COLUMBIAN.COM/JIMHANSEN**

■ A video interview with James Lee Hansen, including Hansen's reading of his poem "The Shape of Things."



■ Slide show: Pictures of all of Hansen's work on public display in Clark County.



■ Slide show: Samplings of his sculptures on public display throughout the region, including photographs of major pieces in Portland, Seattle and Butte, Mont.



**Sculptor:**

From Page D1

He needed to find out what those words meant. But he also had an exhibition in a major Seattle gallery to open in the morning. So he vowed to further investigate the mysterious message later.

For decades before and since that dream, the sculptor has been developing a career of regional distinction from his rural home in Clark County. His work is prominently displayed at the Portland and Seattle art museums. He's built pieces for the civic centers in Olympia and Salem, Ore., as well as the plaza outside the stadium at Washington State University in Pullman. Hansen now is showing a collection of his pieces locally for the first time in 15 years, through Feb. 24 in an exhibit at Portland's Wonder Ballroom that classifies him a member of this area's "Preeminents."

"He's one of the masters of the Oregon-Washington scene, and his influence as an artist and a teacher here is probably unparalleled in his generation," says Bruce Guenther, the Portland Art Museum's chief curator and curator of modern and contemporary art. "In his 80s, he's still working on his sculptures for some part of any day. He has enough in his studio to keep him busy for another 20 years, which the actuary tables tell us that he probably doesn't have. Yet, without a patron in mind, he's compelled intellectually and emotionally to work."

Since receiving the message in his dream, Hansen has begun imagining himself as an unwitting member of a hive. He says, "I wonder how much a bee thinks about making honey? That's just what a bee does."

He's driven not by ambition, but curiosity. Hansen just keeps making his sculptures, about 600 to date, to see where the effort takes him. Meanwhile, he ponders the words that came to him in the dream.

He considers these to be a prophecy, which inspires him to keep refining his imagery, to keep looking closer at forms until he can discover their true meaning. He wrote a poem, "Omen," that includes these lines:

*"One night when we were sleeping  
In a hotel above the bay,  
Words that I did not know  
Came in a dream there as I lay.*

*MULTIVERISIMILITUDE  
And beneath it EBULLIENCE;*

*White letters gleamed in a blackened void  
Seared into my consciousness."*

Hansen wonders if the words came from inside his mind or from some outside force.

As a survivor of soldiering in World War II as well as the various quirks of fate that happen over 81 years, he can't help but question why he's outlived so many of his friends and family. He thinks about how close he came, several times, from never getting the opportunity to make a sculpture or receive such a message.



DAVE OLSON/The Columbian

Even if he doesn't create anything new along the way, 81-year-old Jim Hansen estimates he has about 20 years of work sitting in his shop waiting for attention. When complete, his pieces sell from \$10,000 to \$125,000.

**JAMES LEE HANSEN'S OEUVRES**

The Battle Ground-based sculptor creates imagery that's primarily part of four distinct series:

■ **Equestrian**

Meant to represent the spirit of humans on horseback, this category of Hansen's work has the most anatomical references. He rode horses as a child and has an affinity for them, but the artwork is intended to embody a more general energy and excitement about life.



■ **Guardian**

The first piece in this series, "Huntress," won the San Francisco Art Museum's national contest in 1951. As a whole, the series embodies basic forms and postures of intense watchfulness, while alluding to territorial imperatives.



■ **Shaman**

Hansen considers the shamans of aboriginal cultures the first artists and scientists, helping to create laws, medicines, religions. The work in this series is meant to invoke intellectual curiosity.



■ **Ritual**

A metaphor for survival in the nuclear age, these pieces explore interactions between individuals and their cultures, including marriages, treaties and contracts.



As a powderman and gunner on the USS Preston in the Navy during World War II, shortly after graduating from Vancouver High School, his ship survived the worst storm in Naval history in 1944. Hansen recalls that his vessel just happened to be refueling when Typhoon Cobra hit, so he and his shipmates had enough power to escape the 50-foot swells. The three other destroyers waiting in line behind the Preston ran out of fuel and capsized, killing about 800 men.

A few months later, Hansen's ship was patrolling near Okinawa, Japan, when orders came instructing the vessel to surge ahead and set up a sentry post on the lookout for squadrons of suicide planes. The ship's radar screen jammed just as it was

about to leave to take position. Another ship took the Preston's place, and Hansen and his crew had to go out the next day to clean up the wreckage and dead bodies and bury the sailors at sea. Hansen says the floating hulk looked like a giant canoe full of scrap metal. Hansen says through tears, "They were all killed. That could have been me."

He wonders why he was spared. He thinks about the G.I. Bill money he earned that put him through art school, while so many less fortunate soldiers were buried with their hopes unfulfilled. He thinks about the jobs that have miraculously appeared over the years, when he needed the work and money. He wonders why strangers have shown up

at his studio, simply to volunteer to help him work on his sculptures.

In the mid-1970s, Hansen was asked by the Congregation Shaarie Torah in Portland to create a nontraditional design for a large bronze menorah. He made a sketch of what he thought was simply interesting shapes at the base of the candlesticks. But when he showed the design to the rabbi, there was silence, followed by astonishment in the question, "Do you know what you've done?" The rabbi then told Hansen that he inadvertently had spelled "God" in ancient Hebrew. A few years later, Hansen was going through an intense family crisis, involving a lot of anxiety and emotions, and he discovered that the metal model of the menorah had inexplicably warped, causing one of its candlestick arms to slouch. Hansen only could bend the model's arm back into place using heavy-duty tools from his shop. He has never seen anything like that happen to metal before. He can't fathom how it could have warped. So he just accepts it as another example of something he doesn't understand. He says his mind keeps opening to the possibilities.

"There are energies and forces that surround us that are so unexplainable, that we have all sorts of strange things happening all of the time," he says. "Most people aren't aware. Or they don't think about it. Or they don't talk about it, because it's too weird, and we want things to happen for a reason. We can always say God did it, or the devil did it. Sometimes it's easier to put divinity on our ignorance than to try to figure it out."

Hansen eventually found a more comprehensive dictionary, which helped him explore potential meanings of those words that had come to him in his dream. Combined, he determined, they give a message that describes our world as

"merely having the appearance of truth, so don't get too excited about it." But he still struggles with whether that interpretation is correct. He wants to know why such a puzzle was sent to him. And why he's even still around. Hansen keeps returning to his sculptures for answers. His shop contains at least a couple dozen pieces that need to be completed. He's been so busy on those that he hasn't started a new piece in three years.

"I'm overwhelmed with unfinished pieces," he says. "If I don't finish them, then I might as well not have started them. ... I feel in a way that I'm imbuing inanimate material with spiritual imagery. I'm motivated to do it, and I don't know why. It's the same kind of feeling someone might get from a great piece of music or a beautiful sunset or a wonderful flower. Why are we attracted to certain things? Why do certain things inspire us? I like to think that they make us more inquiring and compassionate."

**BRETT OPPEGAARD** writes about the arts. Reach him at 360-759-8028 or [brett.oppegaard@columbian.com](mailto:brett.oppegaard@columbian.com).

**What others say about Hansen and his work:**

**"He's never had a consistent gallery on the East Coast, and that has, I think, decreased the reach of his work but not its power or the satisfaction it gives as an aesthetic experience. ... Several people have tried to imitate him, but when you see a James Lee Hansen (sculpture), you don't think of anyone else. It's his voice. His vision and his passion. It's unmistakable."**

*Bruce Guenther, chief curator as well as curator of modern and contemporary art for the Portland Art Museum.*

**"It's hard to put him into any context locally. Jim is at the top of the ladder in terms of Clark County artists. He's really above the game here. ... Most people locally don't even know about the accomplishments he's had and the ways he's influenced (other sculptors in the region)."**

*Janice Altman, owner of Vancouver's oldest professional gallery, The Altman Gallery.*

**"(Hansen's work) emanates a spirituality. It has a kind of grounded quality that makes it part of the earth and the universe. ... His emphasis has been on getting the work done, not becoming nationally and internationally known. History will prove the merit of the artist."**

*Ken Shores, retired art professor from Lewis & Clark College in Portland.*



DAVE OLSON/The Columbian

Jim Hansen, left, chats with his wife, Jane, holding their dog Isabelle, in the kitchen of their Battle Ground home.

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES LEE HANSEN, 81, BATTLE GROUND SCULPTOR**

<p><b>June 13, 1925</b> — Born in Tacoma; family moves to Vancouver in 1936.</p>	<p><b>1943</b> — Graduates from Vancouver High School, enlists in the Navy; half of his squadron is killed during World War II.</p> <p><b>Jim with his mother, Mary Elizabeth Hansen.</b></p>	<p><b>1946</b> — Discharged from the Navy; returns home and marries Annabelle Hair; enrolls in the Portland Art Museum School, later graduating and winning the institution's Cary Life Drawing Award.</p>	<p><b>1950</b> — Completes construction of a bronze foundry at his Vancouver home, using salvaged industrial materials. Becomes the first artist on the West Coast to have such a facility and to do bronze casting.</p>	<p><b>1952</b> — Wins the San Francisco Art Association's first prize for his "Huntress" bronze, which was purchased by the San Francisco Museum of Art. This same year, the Seattle Art Museum buys his bronze "The Call."</p> <p><b>Working on "Huntress"</b></p>	<p><b>1953</b> — Displays his work as part of a national exhibition of painters and sculptors at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.</p> <p><b>Working in his Burnt Bridge studio, 1960s</b></p>	<p><b>1964</b> — Begins teaching sculpture at Portland State University.</p>	<p><b>1974</b> — Takes part in an exhibit at the Smithsonian National Gallery of Fine Art, representing "Art of the Pacific Northwest, 1930 to present."</p>	<p><b>1977</b> — Moves his studio to Battle Ground.</p>	<p><b>1993</b> — Hansen's wife, Annabelle, dies of congestive heart failure and diabetes.</p>	<p><b>1994</b> — Hansen marries Jane Lucas, wife of his late friend Jack Lucas, a prominent local arts conservator.</p>	<p><b>1997</b> — Maryhill Museum of Art presents a retrospective of Hansen's work over a 30-year span.</p>	<p><b>1999</b> — Retires from teaching at Portland State University.</p>	<p><b>2000</b></p>
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For more events and photos from Jim Hansen's life, see [www.columbian.com/jimhansen](http://www.columbian.com/jimhansen)