

CHOATE ORNAMENTAL TO BE AUCTIONED OCT. 4

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Doyle Choate stands in front of his business, Choate Ornamental Iron and Welding, with examples of his work. Herald-Citizen Photos/Ty Kernea

COOKEVILLE -- A prominent local business will soon be closing its doors for good after more than 50 years of service. Choate Ornamental Iron and Welding, owned by Doyle Choate, has been a part of the community for so long, that it almost seems like a permanent fixture. Many people in Cookeville and surrounding areas know of the shop located on Hilham Road -- even if they've never used its services.



"I've enjoyed working; I really have," Choate said. "I still enjoy what we do. I hate to quit, but it's just come the time where I need to."

Choate has decided it is finally time to retire. Now in his 70s, he wants to take care of his business to keep it from being a burden to his family if he ever becomes unable to manage it.

He was in his 20s when the store first opened and has since dedicated his life to it.

"I guess I worked a little too much," said Choate. "That's the biggest wrong thing I've ever done. I never did drink, cuss -- never did anything except work."

Choate Ornamental Iron and Welding specializes in all types of iron works. Choate himself has made countless pieces of art over the years, from intricate gates and arches to beautiful lamps, chandeliers and book ends. He has also made large carports and repaired old farm equipment. From big to small projects, everything has been handmade, and although he has made hundreds of pieces, no two have ever been exactly alike.

Every day, hundreds, possibly thousands, of people pass one special example of his work: a large, white arch with the words "Putnam County Fairgrounds" written in red that sits on the entrance to that area.

"We hand-cut those letters," Choate said.

Other work that those who frequent Cookeville might recognize includes the sign for First United Methodist Church and the overhang in front of Ralph's Donut Shop.

Choate's work is displayed not only in Cookeville, but also in cities all over the United States. Some come through Cookeville during the Fourth of July celebrations to place their order and then come back the next Fourth of July holiday to pick it up.

"I'm proud of that," said Choate.

"You wouldn't think people would drive that far to get something like that, but they will if they can find somebody to (make) it."

He has also found that some of his new customers are grandchildren of his older customers. They come to have repairs done to old pieces of Choate's work, or even just to let him know that they have inherited

something from their grandparents that he has made.

Over the last month, many people have stopped by to visit Choate and wish him well. As he prepares to close, he wants to let the public know that he is grateful to all of his customers for their patronage over the years and will greatly miss bringing their ideas to life.

Choate will be auctioning off the building on Oct. 4, through McWilliams Realty and Auction. And although he is currently selling off some of his left over work, Choate does not plan to sell any of his tools or equipment. He wants to keep working on personal projects even though his business has closed its doors.

“I can’t quit,” he said. “I’d rather die working than die loafing.”

<http://www.ajlambert.com>