

By Dal Grooms

Inspirational painter loves ribeye

'Stirrup Something with Beef' is an occasional column featuring favorite beef recipes made in the homes of notable Iowans.

Sometimes it's not the what, it's the who.

For example, I could paint a rock, and if truth be told, I have painted rocks! But, I can't paint rocks like Bubba Sorensen.

And Bubba says he can grill a steak, but not like the steak that his dad Mike Sorensen can grill. Mike, who most Iowa cattle producers know as the man handling advertising sales and ring service for *Livestock Plus*, evidently has a special touch when making "a big chunk of ribeye smoked on the grill," says Bubba.

Before we go too far down the road when talking about that succulent steak, let me make a more complete introduction of Bubba Sorensen. Since 1999, he has painted The Freedom Rock® along Highway 25 in southwestern Iowa. What others saw as a home for graffiti, he saw as a public place to honor war veterans and those impacted by war.

He paints the 12-foot-high, 60+ ton rock every

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As part of The Freedom Rock Tour, Bubba Sorensen recently painted a rock in Bondurant (his sixth) for Iowa Remembers, a nonprofit that helps Iowans with ties to the military – including families of fallen service members, wounded warriors, veterans, and military service members. The photo featuring the train is Sorensen's first rock painted for the Tour. It is located in Diagonal. During the Tour, Sorensen plans to paint at least one rock in each of Iowa's 99 counties.



Bubba Sorensen Profile

Sharing his recipe for Ribeye Steak on the Grill

Spouse: Maria (Galanakis) Sorensen. A talented photographer who joined with her husband to open a full service photography and art studio in Greenfield in 2008. With the demands of the Tour, Maria is starting to focus mostly on being Public Relations director of The Freedom Rock® and handling all the mural bookings for Sorensen Studios.

Your 'real' name: Ray Sorensen II. Got the nickname "Bubba" because "I was a chubby baby and Dad thought it would be funny to call me Bubba. The nickname stuck...the weight didn't."

Children: One daughter. Independence -1 and half years old.

Amount of paint needed to paint The Freedom Rock (including the whitewash coat): I never really keep track. It's hard when you're an artist because instead of just painting on a flat surface with one color I paint on rough surfaces (such as rocks) and use many different layers of paint. It's easy to get lost with how much paint I use and I'm fortunate enough to be sponsored by Valspar. Before I was sponsored though, I would say I used in the ballpark of \$500-\$1,000 in paint and supplies to paint the original Freedom Rock.

Inspiration for The Freedom Rock: Movie "Saving Private Ryan" and our military men and women who have fought and sacrificed so much.

Hometown: Greenfield.

What do you do in the winter? Paint indoor murals. This fall I will paint a mural at St. Anthony Hospital in Carroll. In the future, we also want to start a "School Pride Tour" where I paint in schools across Iowa and get the art students involved in the process. The winter months are nice because our business tends to calm down a bit. Then I like to spend time with my wife and daughter and our two dogs. We're kind of home bodies when we're not touring around the state, so movies and popcorn and spending time with our families is quality time for us.

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year...finishing just before Memorial Day...with new pictures and short stories that tell of bravery, deeds and remembrances of American war veterans.

If you've ever seen the



Freedom Rock or the one of the six rocks he has painted thus far in his "Freedom Rock Tour" across Iowa, you know that this 33-year-old can convey a powerful story with an undulating canvas and a bucket of paint.

Now, let's take a quick turn back to that ribeye. You won't be surprised that this patriotic artist is also a patriotic eater. Ribeye and other steaks are the first choice of foods Americans love to grill, according to the American Meat Institute. Their second choice? Hamburgers! (Seems like the beef industry has a winning streak going at the grill.)

You might wonder what more you could add to a ribeye to make it taste great, but it seems the Sorensens have an idea or two.

"More specifically, I like our home-raised Certified Hereford Beef or the best I can get from

the folks at the locker in Anita, Iowa," Bubba

says. "Once we have our great quality beef, usually our family favors the ribeye but we sample all cuts. We have Dad (Mike Sorensen) season it with Baldrige's Secret Seasoning, then he smokes it on his Treager smoker grill. All I can say...it'd turn a vegetarian into a meat eater. Pure awesomeness."

Bubba's Freedom Rock Tour across Iowa is going to require all the energy and muscle he can get from that steak because he's working on a schedule that will include painting a rock in every county of the state. The effort aims to boost tourism and spread the message of thanking our Veterans while providing a unique mural that tells the story of their area. Over the next five to seven years, Sorensen hopes to paint a Freedom Rock for all 99 counties.

(To learn more about how you might bring Sorensen's efforts to your county, go online to www.TheFreedomRock.com and click on "Tour." You'll find information there, along with an application to include your community in the tour.)

Friends of the Industry

The Friends of the Industry sponsorship allows county cattlemen's associations, companies and individuals to support the Iowa cattle industry.

The sponsorship level is \$1,000 annually.

Friends of the Industry funds will be used to support these initiatives:

- Support the lobbying efforts of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association at the state legislature
- We will support legal and legislative fees for environmental needs or issues with the DNR and EPA.
- Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers – helps Iowa's rural communities grow, one farmer at a time.

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