

Artists to honor Hilaman oak tree

By Elizabeth M. Mack

Democrat staff writer

Jan Auger didn't realize in the beginning what the live oaks meant to those in the community.

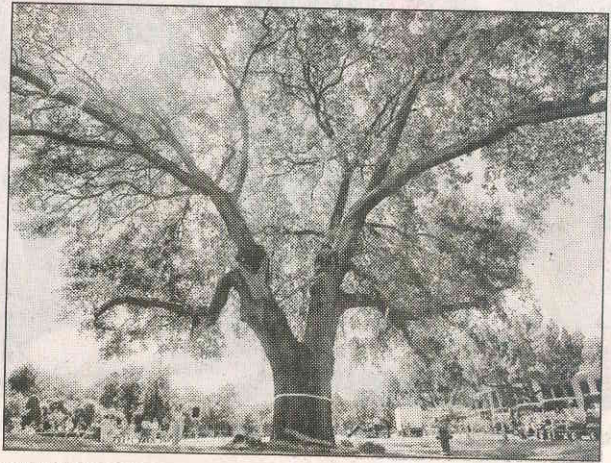
But once the historic live oak that was just outside the pro shop on the Hilaman Golf Course had to be cut down in September, she became all too aware.

"It's a sad thing about the tree," said Auger, Hilaman golf director. "I've been here for 25 years. I would look outside and see the tree and to not see it now is very sad for me."

Because people in the community were so passionate and saddened by the tree's demise after it was struck by lightning, the staff at King Arthur's Tools are transforming pieces of the tree into art. The Tallahassee company manufactures and distributes wood-carving tools.

"Part of the idea was, instead of this great oak tree going to a burn pile or the chipper, we wanted to save it," said Jerry Aveling, King Arthur's Tools vice president. "It's a tragedy that it was struck by lightning. We're happy to do this and keep the tree alive."

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GLENN BEIL/DEMOCRAT FILES

City officials and other Tallahassee residents gathered at Hilaman Golf Course to memorialize an ancient oak tree that was hit by lightning.

Hilaman

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Maverick Jaillet, King Arthur's dealer sales manager, instructor, demonstrator and a woodcarver, is leading the project.

Jaillet said several small pieces were taken from the tree and will be made into bowls, pens and other decorative items.

"It's been a fixture in the community for so many years," Jaillet said. "It was a big, ancient oak. I just wanted to do something where people will always be able to remember the tree."

About four local woodcarvers and workers will also be contributing pieces

that will ultimately be on display at the golf club's pro shop, Jaillet added. A date for when the work will go on display has not been determined.

Not only will the pieces be on display inside the shop, but also other portions of the tree will be used to make tee markers at the golf course, Auger said. And a large portion of the tree's stump will remain and be carved into a memorial.

"I'm proud that we are going to be doing something to remember the tree," Auger said. "(The oak tree) meant a lot to golfers here and the staff. For us, having part of the tree on the golf course is very special."