

# Local carvers find enjoyment

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were among the displays of exquisite wood creations.

Jordan's display featured a four-foot replica of the Anheuser-Busch Budweiser wagon, harnessed to a team of eight miniature Clydesdales.

The Lititz carver, whose hobby bloomed a decade ago after whittling a letter opener for his daughter, figured he'd spent between four and five hundred hours shaping the Budweiser team, and their wagonful of individually-carved miniature barrels. Acrylic paints add brilliant and realistic color to the replica.

When asked how he can bear to part with the items he brings to life from chunks of softwoods, Jordan's eyes twinkled as he gave away one of his secrets: "I give 'em to our kids. That way I can see them again."

But Jordan is probably best known, at least in the Lititz area, for his stylized wood carving of Christ, arms outstretched in blessing, that is a focal point of the St. James Catholic Church in Lititz. Standing nearly seven feet tall, the sculpture was done in white pine.

"I just love to carve," simply states Bill Porterfield, professional carver of wildfowl and birdlife reproductions in artistic and antiqued style. "And my favorite piece is always the next one I'm going to do."

Owners of the Holtwood artist's creations range from local duck hunters to England's heir to the throne himself, Prince Charles, who received a Porterfield reproduction for a wedding gift.

His "old style antiqued" mallard reproductions are fast becoming

artistic collector items in England, and are being offered in the Christmas catalog of the prestigious, Herrods, an exclusive London department store frequently patronized by visiting Mid-East oil sheiks.

Porterfield says, though, that his favorite works are the intricately-detailed, life-like carvings, true works of art sought mainly by professional people.

Although he began carving as a boy, styling his first Mallard at age 14 for use in duck hunting, Porterfield has never studied art design.

Like Porterfield, Vonny Boarts, a State College homemaker, just happened to find the carving talent in her fingertips.

"I first became interested when I was shown how to whittle while at junior high camp," she says. She's been carving in earnest for about four years.

A member of the Pennsylvania Craftsmen's Guild, Vonny exhibits her creations, predominately children's toys such as wooden animal sets, and household items, at craft shows throughout central Pennsylvania.

One rather unusual item she's designed was a "crosier," the staff carried by bishops as a symbol of the church office. Styled from oak, she designed the wooden shepherd-staff piece by first steaming the wood and squaring one end. Using a draw knife, she then shaped the squared portion into a graceful curve.

Vonny took several awards in the Yorkcarvers categories of competition, with entries that included an ornamental bowl, a carving of St. Francis of Assisi, whittled knomes and a Charlie Brown cartoon caricature.

And still another dimension to

the art of carving drew visitors to a corner of the Wolf Gymnasium, where Howard Stott was working chestnut pieces.

Admitting embarrassment because he sported a bandage, the only really "occupational hazard" faced by carvers, Stott patiently curled bits of a weathered slab of wood away as a graceful waterbird figure emerged from the gnarled, heavily ridged gray chestnut.

A retired Baltimore school principal, who now devotes all his energies to his carving designs, Stott calls his creations Wildfowl Representations.

What makes them so unique is that the bird or waterfowl figure is carved in relief from a large slab, perhaps 12 by 30 inches, leaving intact the outer part of the wood, forming a frame.

"These figures aren't carved and then set into the chestnut frame," he emphasizes. "They are carved out of the piece, intact."

The American chestnut wood used by Stott, and by Bill Porterfield, is a rarity, since the highly-valued ornamental and nut-producing tree has been wiped out by blight. Carvers seeking chestnut materials for their art scour the forested hills near the Chesapeake Bay, searching for the silvery remains of the once majestic specimens.



With nimble fingers and creative imagination, Vonny Boarts cuts the finishing curves to her diminutive western hat.

Occasionally, luck runs with a carver, such as the time Bill Porterfield stumbled across a Chestnut telephone pole. A swan carved from the pole has become his wife's favorite piece, and a commanding item of true, collector art.

Because they are of wood, the creations of these carvers can be handled and enjoyed, passed from one generation to another, true Americana art that can only become more appreciated and valuable as they take their place among other family heirlooms.

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