

A Note From A Wood Tinker

Once in a while it is not all happy talk amongst the wood chips. Frustrating our best efforts, a carving doesn't turn out like we envisioned, or a new technique is a bust and disappoints. Sometimes it is a matter of experience, or rather the lack of experience. Then, our first crude efforts often yield to practice and become more refined and satisfying.

Disappointments may arise from other sources too. For example, an arthritic hand of the basswood beginner suffered a flare up last week. Pain teaches patience and sometimes wisdom, but not without frustration. With rest, the hand is whittling again. Not long ago, one of our Chippers noted her switch to woodburning had provided relief to her arthritic hands. Some carvers prefer flexible shaft or micromotor rotary tools as being easier on their joints than palm tools. Still others have learned to set carving time limits with frequent breaks to keep hands steadier and more comfortable.

While it is human nature for people in pain or frustrated by physical challenges to be a bit more self-focused, the pleasures of our art (and our club friends) draw us out of our melancholy. The Mid-Wisconsin Chippers have many seasoned members. Like some timber, those with chronic afflictions can produce diverse burls or artistic grains. These members enrich the club with their singular expressions; through pain may come much that is beautiful. It is well the sturdier jack pines of relative youth appreciate these gnarly oaks and curly maples.

An amazing commonality of our club, regardless of physical vitality, age, or experience, is the vibrant spirit of each Chipper. Every Chipper has a joy of carving and expression that fills his and her work. As a relative newcomer to the club, I appreciate this vital spirit, which sometimes may be obscured by familiarity. The 2017 Chippers Club has at least 54 active members. How do we make our club the fun experience that it is? As Elizabeth Barrett Browning might say: "Let me count the ways."

Let's recall *many* of the 2016-2017 jobs, tasks, activities, classes, and planned events:

- club officers
- board of directors
- website - updated monthly
- newsletter - calendar, events, articles, club news and photos
- library - several new books and a DVD added
- Meeting set up & take down
- Meeting demonstrations - Flocking, Cottonwood Bark Carving, Pine Habitat
- Meeting refreshments
- Meeting Show 'N Tell
- Krugers Hardware Carving Day
- Jan Jensen Old World Chip Carving - 2 Day Class
- Bill Wright - Carving Classes at Fox Valley Tech & Woodcraft Store
- Magnetic Club Name Tags
- Annual Potluck Luncheon
- Chippers Carving Interest/Experience Survey
- Lee Belanger Cottonwood Bark Carving - 2 Day Class
- Gene Bengel - Open Carving Class at the Oshkosh Senior Center (OSC)

- Dick Christiansen - Advanced Bird Carving at OSC, Tufted Titmouse & Northern Flicker
- Keith Melzer & Gene Bengel - Beginning Bird Carving at OSC
- Open carving Wednesdays at Krugers Hardware
- Open carving at St. Bernadette's Catholic Church
- 43rd Annual Artistry in Wood Show
 - Judges
 - Recorders
 - Ribbons
 - Demonstrations
 - Set up & Tear down
 - Bucket Raffle
 - Friendship Cane
 - Entrance Fee collectors/ door watchers
 - Advertising
 - Sign Set Up
 - Radio Interview
 - Show site reservation & arrangements
 - Commercial Exhibiter Contact
 - Exhibiter Tables
 - Club trailer transport
 - Refreshments
- Oshkosh Birdfest - Club Carving Table
- Boys & Girls Brigades - Club Carving Table
- Rich Wetherbee Caricature Seminar - 2 Day Class
- Plus more in the planning stages including:
 - possible tours to:
 - the International Woodcarvers Congress Show in Maquoketa, Iowa (billed as longest running juried wood art show in the U.S.A. Carving seminars, classes in pyrography, and more than 600 carvings in competition. Exhibits open June 13-16; seminars June 10-15.);
 - the Dayton Artistry in Wood Show in Wilmington, Ohio (billed as primarily an exhibit & competition with over 225 exhibitors and vendors and show attendance over 5,000. October 14 & 15);
 - Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum 42nd Annual Birds in Art Exhibition September 9 - November 26 in Wausau, Wisconsin coupled with a possible Raptor Education Group, Inc. (REGI) tour in Antigo, WI.

At least 30 different Chipper Club members worked to make the above items happen (not counting event attendees) and most Chippers are involved in multiple activities. Undoubtedly there were many more activities and people; please excuse the tinker's inadvertent omissions. Every time a club member volunteers to "Show 'N Tell", bring cookies, perform a demo, sell raffle tickets, set up chairs, advertise the club, or check out library books, our club comes alive. Performing these dozens of tasks, big and small, add up to a vibrant, interesting, exciting, and friendly club that has an abundance of opportunities to learn and share the joys of carving, woodburning, painting, habitat building, creating and appreciating art, craftsmanship and fellowship.

This Wood Tinker's Note counts just a few of the ways that our club expresses its love of carving. The club for almost half a century has enriched its members. With members from Oshkosh, Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, Fond du Lac, Ripon, Berlin, Hortonville, Winneconne, Kaukauna, Kimberley, Hilbert, Greenleaf, Green Bay, New London and beyond, we truly are the **Mid-Wisconsin** Chippers. Almost a dozen new members have recently joined. The experienced old timers are still learning new skills, and mentoring beginners, novices, intermediates and masters alike. The planning for next year has already begun. It is a great time to be a Chipper!

The Tinker ends this note with the great poetess Browning who could have been writing about woodcarving when she penned her 43rd sonnet.

Sonnet XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.
-Elizabeth Barrett Browning

With apologies to Mrs. Barrett Browning.

The Wooden Sonnet

How do I carve thee? Let me count the ways.
I carve thee to the depth and breadth and height
My chisel can reach, with magnifying sight
For the barbs of feather and in Relief.
I carve thee a style of Acanthus leaf.
A mallet wield, by sun and candle-light.
I carve thee freely, as chips take flight;
I carve thee purely, as I twist my wrist.
I carve thee with the knife put to use
To shape a crop, and tools from my Sheffield List
I carve thee with an edge I seemed to lose
With my lost strop,—I carve out knots most fain,
Gouges, burs, my precious knife!—and, if God choose,
I shall but carve thee best across the grain.