

## A Note From A Wood Tinker

This month the Wood Tinker turns miner. Mining golden nuggets and a gem of a book from the mother lode of the Chipper's Club Library.

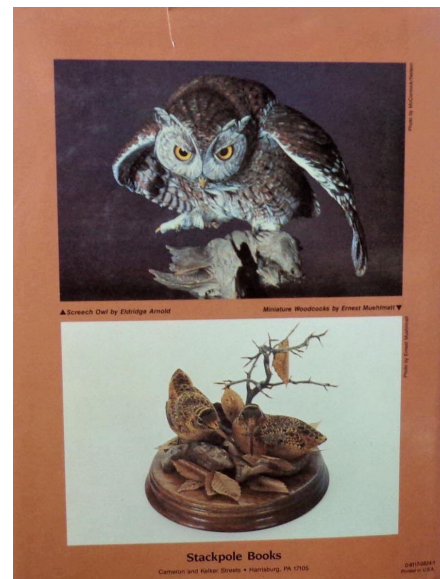
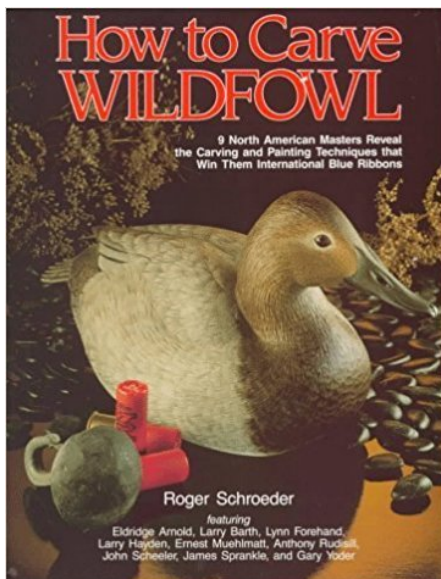
Spring 1985. What were you doing that spring? So long ago... 32 years....

Ronald Reagan was beginning his second term of office and inflation had dropped to 3.5% from the 13.5% of 1980, Michael Jordan was rookie of the year in the NBA, vinyl LPs and music cassette tapes still dominated over the new compact disc format, and The Mid-Wisconsin Chippers were holding their eleventh annual spring carving show. A brand new magazine *"Wildfowl Carving and Collecting"* published its first issue that spring. The magazine's origin was recalled in its 100th issue:

*In the beginning—before the beginning, even—there was a book. The book was **How to Carve Wildfowl** by Roger Schroeder, which Stackpole Books of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, published in 1984. The hardcover volume included profiles of nine carvers, among them Larry Barth, Ernie Muehlmann, John Scheeler, and Gary Yoder. Judith Schnell served as the books editor.*

***How to Carve Wildfowl** was an immediate success and went into a second printing within two months. The third, fourth, and fifth printings quickly followed. Stackpole's David Detweiler, who had been seeking an idea for a specialty magazine for the company to publish, realized the idea had been staring him in the face. Why not wildfowl carving?*

So that magazine, **THE** magazine for bird carvers, now known as *Wildfowl Carving*, was the inspired offspring of a successful book *"How to Carve Wildfowl (9 North American Masters Reveal the Carving and Painting Techniques That Win Them International Blue Ribbons)"*, and that book is one of our club library gems.



The author, Roger Schroeder, selected twelve winners of the Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition for their creativity, ingenuity, and technique. Schroeder interviewed nine carvers, each in his workshop, for this book. A tenth carver, William L. Schultz, of Scandinavia, Wisconsin was to be included as well, but died before work on the book began; two others declined Schroeder's project because of their own planned book ventures. The nine masters, in the order of their book appearance, are sketched in the attached Master Woodcarver Table.

Once upon a time the Wood Tinker's eyes scanned the following poetic quote in a textbook:

*Plagiarize, plagiarize, let no one's work escape my eyes.*

Taking to heart that textbook author's advice, excerpted here from the book jacket of Schroeder's "How to Carve Wildfowl," is a synopsis of the 9 chapters, one for each master carver.

*Schroeder takes you first to visit Lynn Forehand in Chesapeake, Virginia, as the artist begins to carve a miniature pheasant. Through masterful step-by-step photographs, you peer over Forehand's shoulder and see him progress from the drawing board to the block of basswood. Forehand shares his techniques for roughing out the piece, shaping with the Foreman tool, rotating the head, burning-in lines, and laying out and detailing feathers. You'll follow along until the pheasant is ready for painting.*

*Next you'll pull up a chair in the workshop of Ernest Muehlmann in Springfield, Pennsylvania. He's working on two pieces: a woodcock and a spruce grouse. Discover how Muehlmann so deftly uses the burning pen to achieve colors in wood, a technique he's perfected that is especially suited to earth tones of the woodcock and grouse. Learn how Muehlmann gives his birds a fluid look with muscles and bumps, how he creates a well-designed arrangement, and how he blends the elements together. Before you leave, Muehlmann reveals what he's learned about the importance of color, mixes, and washes.*

*Next stop is Eldridge Arnold's studio in Greenwich, Connecticut. As he sculpts and paints a woodcock, he shows you how to make and insert separate wings, feathers, and tails. Discover why he pays special attention to the sculpture's base and how he achieves more by actually painting less.*

*Then on to May's Landing, New Jersey, where you'll visit John Scheeler. Watch him start with only a band-sawed side profile and a center line and move into composing, shaping, and sculpting....*

*Then drop in on Anthony Rudisill in West Atlantic City, New Jersey. You eavesdrop as Rudisill creates a kingfisher. You learn how he works with a mount, uses a pattern, seams the head, and makes clever use of a roofing nail. Pay special attention to how Rudisill secures a support system and why he's so particular about the base.*

*In Larry Barth's studio in Stahlstown, Pennsylvania, you encounter ...his insights on the composition and on the relationship of a bird to the structural elements in nature. Learning how he works from a clay model and how he looks at birds in flight are special highlights of your visit. [And he discusses packing a bird carving for shipping.]*

*Gary Yoder of Grantsville, Maryland is sketching a pair of miniature pheasants when you arrive. First he tells you how he meets the challenges of implied motion through shaping and assembly. Then he demonstrates texturing [and exaggeration] in the making of feathers... observe how he uses a grinding stone [with a Dremel] to enhance his birds.*

*On to Annapolis, Maryland, to see James Sprankle in his aviary. As he carves and paints a shoveler, he reveals some personally developed techniques for smoothing carved wood, flaring a head into the body, making corrections in pose, blending paints, and texturing.*

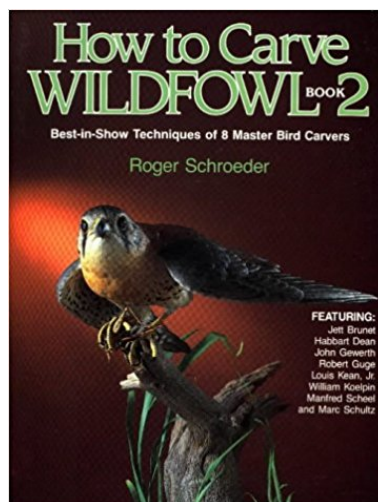
*Your trip isn't complete until you've traveled to see Larry Hayden in Farmington Hills, Michigan. He's working on a canvasback, and he shares the secrets he's developed for carving decoys. He brings out the subtleties involved in carving a head, and he discloses what he's learned about the importance of the eye position and how he works to attain a soft yet animated carving by using a grinding stone. The visit ends with a detailed session on how to prepare a decoy for painting, with a special concentration on color and the intricacies of painting.*



*Anthony Rudisill describes developing a base and how he makes a bird pattern.*

In 255 pages with hundreds of black and white photographs and 16 pages of color photographs, Schroeder's book is informative, and engaging. The artist's views of their art as well as their techniques are brought to life through Schroeder's writing which makes you feel as though you were there.

Schroeder's book was so successful that he wrote a second volume in 1986 with 8 more master carvers. *"How to Carve Wildfowl - Book 2 (Best in Show Techniques of 8 Master Carvers),"* extends the tour to include: Jett Brunett, Habbart Dean, John Gewerth, Robert Guge, Louis Kean, Jr., William Koelpin, Manfred Scheel, and Marc Schultz. It should be noted that Schultz and Koelpin hail from Wisconsin, Guge and Gewerth from Illinois, Brunett from Louisiana, Dean from Maryland, Kean from Virginia, and Manfred Scheel from Pennsylvania. Book 2 is also in the Chippers' club library.



A note on the missing master carver:

William L. Schultz of Scandinavia, Wisconsin carved his first decoy at age 14 in 1939 and died of leukemia at age 57 in 1983. After serving as an Air Force navigator in WWII, Schultz joined the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1947, working on designs of many exhibits, and painting backgrounds for over 20 dioramas. In 1973, Schultz resigned to devote full time to carving and painting. In the 35 years after winning his first blue ribbon in 1948 for a Bufflehead decoy, Schultz garnered over 500 awards including a 1977 Best in the World at the Ward Foundation's World Championship Carving Competition.

His son, master carver Marc Schultz (who is profiled in Book 2), said,

*"The most elusive aspect of my father's art was his skill as a painter. Birds are feathered in hundreds of hues, and my father had the ability to instantly deduce the components of these hues and mix them with astonishing accuracy. But beyond reproducing colors-and this is the magical part-he knew how to make them do what he wanted. The problem with painting a carving is the textured surface of the wood, which absorbs and reflects light much differently from plumage. The artist must be able to give a wooded surface the warmth, softness, and depth of feathers. This involves some unlikely and tricky formulas, but my father was a master sorcerer."*



Two duck decoys carved and painted by William L. Schultz.