

Pike's Peak Whittlers



JUNE 2020

President: Mark Goodman (719) 930-5309

Vice President: Aaron Mayer (719) 380-9041

Secretary: Kristine Harris (719) 593-1524

Treasurer: Steve Gurnett (719) 339-5164

Librarian: Gerry Canavan (719) 650-2353

Woodbin Editor: Jim "Doc" Benjamin (719) 648-9068

Meeting Dates

27 June 2020 Aspen Harvest

11 July 2020 (On Hold)

8 Aug 2020 Meeting (Possible)

12 Sept 2020

10 Oct 2020

14 Nov 2020

Reminder

Due to the current pandemic, the Wednesday carving sessions are on hold. When it becomes safe again to gather a notification will be sent out via email. We are also cancelling July's meeting. At present the next meeting will be in Aug.

"Don't be afraid of failure. This is the way to succeed." — LeBron James



Mark's Musings

Musing and More:

This, for better or worse is an expanded version of Mark's Musings.

First, I hope this newsletter finds you and your family in good health and spirits. The past three months have been challenging for many folks and I do hope you've had time to take care of yourself and family. Becky and I both worked from home for a while, she was upstairs in her office and me in the basement in my office. That was challenging since my carving table is just few feet from my workspace. I did many Zoom meetings with a knife and piece of basswood just out of the camera's view, with wood chips on my desk. I returned to the office at the beginning of May and Becky returns to CSU next week.

I have finished more carvings in the past couple of months than I completed all last year. I took the time to finish a bunch of stuff I'd started years ago and challenged myself to do a piece with only a knife. Fun and challenging. Other's in the club did something similar, read the article on the Corona Carving Challenge (originally the Clear the Shelf Challenge).

As you know the club board made the hard decision to cancel this year's show. We took numerous opinions and points of view prior to making this decision. I hope the membership understands and supports our decision. We also voted to cancel the annual picnic for the same reasons we used to cancel the show, mainly safety of our members. Once we meet again in person, we'll hold board elections, until that time the current board members are honored to continue to serve you all.

I took a few minutes a couple of weeks ago to talk with Tom Merllot about his upcoming booklet, Carving Comfort Animals, being published by Fox Chapel. Tom said he was "surprised" when he received a draft of the book in the mail. He had submitted a couple of articles to WCI (he's had a couple of articles published within the past couple of years) and instead of getting a single article published the company put together a booklet of step by step instructions for his turtle, penguins, bunnies and a whale. Other projects include a hedgehog, an owl and the original "comfort bird". Tom is one of the contributors, the other two are Steve Kulp and Frank Foust. Interesting side note: Steve is from a town in Pennsylvania about 8 miles from where Tom lived yet they never met one another. Frank is the man given credit for the popularity of the comfort bird. The book features two of Tom's previously published animals, the penguin (which he shared with the club last year) and the turtle. The previously unpublished projects are the bunny and whale.

Normally Tom calls WCI and suggests a project and then submits a carving prior to submitting the actual article. . This project didn't follow that process and it just shows that modifications in the process

(Mark's Musing cont.)

can be beneficial if we're willing to accept that change. Maybe that piece of wood doesn't want to be a turtle but is destined to be a whale.

After talking with Tom, I decided to reach out to a couple of snowbirds to see how they stayed connected to the carving community while away from their home club. Scott Schnell was a first-year snowbird in Florida. He said there were three carving groups within an hour drive of his winter home. He settled in with the Indian River Woodcarvers in Vera Beach. He had shipped his carving tools to Florida prior to driving down. He carved with the group once a week with a dollar a week donation plus the dues for the club, sounds like a good deal. Most of the members were snowbirds like Scott including a fellow from Canada who also gave a class using a caricature rough out. Other projects were comfort birds and eagle headed canes that are given to veterans' groups. Scott's big project was carving a chip carved ash holder with a hummingbird the person's name on the cigar box, definitely a keepsake for the family. He is looking forward to getting back to carving with the whittlers.

The other snowbird was Jerry Branesky. Jerry wintered in the panhandle of Florida for the second year. He carved on Monday and Wednesday with a "snowbird club." Like Scott he brought down his full box of carving tools. Steve Brown, a member of the CCA, is active in that carving community

and Jerry had the opportunity to learn and laugh with a very talented carver. He became so taken with Steve's personality and abilities he laid out hard earned retirement funds on roughouts and a Steven Brown signature knife (complete with Steve's backward signature.) Back in Colorado he's back to bark carving and finishing up the carvings he started in Florida.

Now that restrictions are starting to be lifted and the weather has improved a few folks have started to get together to carve within the social distancing requirements. I encourage members to reach out to a couple of your fellow members and have a whittling get together. Maintain proper distancing in an outdoor setting and let the fun and chips fly. Hopefully, we'll all be together soon to do what we all love to do, carve and laugh.

Aspen Harvest 2020

We will be doing our annual aspen harvesting once again. The date will be June 27th. We are only going to have club members attend this year due the restrictions that we have to uphold. If you are interested please contact Aaron at (719)641-0424 to make a reservation and get more information. If you are unable to attend you can also put a **small** order in with someone who is going. Please understand that all precautions for COVID-19 must be followed (social distancing, masks, etc.) in order to attend.

I love sleeping but I never want to go to sleep early... I stay up late every night, regret it every morning. Then do it all over again.



Love of Scrimshaw in the Time of the Plague

By John Armstrong

You're probably wondering how someone who claims Arizona as his home and lives in Colorado fell in love with scrimshaw. The truth is that until I was 8 years old, I lived in Norfolk, Virginia and my dad was in the navy. Norfolk is a place connected with ships, beaches, swamps, and pirate lore. It is not far from The Mariners Museum in Hampton Roads and places such as the Great Dismal Swamp, Cape Hatteras, and Nag's Head. When my dad returned from sea duty, he would open his sea bag and pull out fantastic items such as carved coconuts, shells, and maps of the West Indies. Then he would spin yarns of pirates and sunken treasure. Kids just naturally develop a love of the sea in this environment and spend their time building rafts that never get near the water, beachcombing, seeking hidden treasure, and wielding wooden swords.

It was a little over 40 years ago that I first attempted teaching myself scrimshaw. I tried intermittently after that, but I was never satisfied with the results. When Amy Eha presented her hands-on scrimshaw workshop at the Pikes Peak Whittlers' meeting, something clicked. That workshop and the COVID-19 stay at home policy gave me plenty of time to practice.

Tools weren't hard to come by, but material to scrimshaw was hard to find. Ivory is expensive and often illegal these days. Most aquatic and terrestrial ivory bearing animals

are endangered due to over harvesting by man. We learned on slices of cue balls at the workshop, but that involves finding cue balls and slicing them. Inexpensive materials that I've tried are plastic piano key top replacements, bone, and sliced tagua nuts. Tagua nuts are my favorite because of their size, texture, and the fact that they are easily turned into pendants or plaques. Bone is problematic because it is porous. It absorbs ink causing a cloudy surface. Some use super glue to seal bone, but it didn't work for me. I finally found a source that said to use Elmer's Glue-All (not white school glue) thinned with water. Bingo! It worked perfectly. Whatever material you decide to use, polish it so the scribed lines will be easier to see.

I use the tools recommended by Amy Eha in her workshop with minor changes. I've played around with several different tools to cut the designs in. I've found an X-Acto knife with a #11 blade to be the best all-around tool. Press harder for darker lines and not so hard for lighter lines. Use the sharp edge most of the time, but try the back of the blade when you want a wider line. Have replacement blades handy because blades will dull quickly. I use a metal scribe for dots, stippling, and small curved lines. I also use it to widen lines already cut with the X-Acto knife. One tool I haven't tried yet is a sewing machine needle fastened in an architect's graphite holder.

Use a good quality India ink. I've been happy with Speedball Super Black. Put a piece of plastic wrap under the lid when you screw it back on so the lid comes off easier the next time. Cotton swabs are inexpensive, disposable, and great for applying the ink to the cut areas. An old washcloth is handy to

(Scrimshaw cont.)

wipe off excess ink. Sandpaper in 320, 400, and 600 grits works fine to remove dried ink. I used 220 for a few pieces, but don't think it's necessary. I also tried steel wool, but I don't think it's an improvement over the sandpaper. Some type of lit magnifier is also extremely helpful to see those lines. Speaking of seeing the cut lines, some scrimshanders ink the entire surface of their material before they cut. The cut lines then appear white against the dark background. I haven't tried this technique.

I don't trace the design on to my material and so I've eliminated the tracing paper and carbon paper. I use Ticonderoga Noir HB 2 pencils to draw directly onto the carving surface. They work better than other pencils for drawing on the tagua nuts. This allows me to better place, adjust, and play around with the design to fit the contour of the material. I also sketch in my idea of what the shading is going to look like.

I cut in the obvious shading before I do the first inking. After sanding with 320 grit, I add in additional shading and detail. This process can take several sandings and inkings. When I'm happy with the image, I'll continue sanding and polishing with the 400 and 600 grit papers. After I'm sure everything is dry, I rub on a thin coat of oil.

Color in scrimshaw should not just sit on the surface of the material. It should be rubbed into scribed lines in the material. Cut in shading or crosshatching and use a fine paint brush to apply the same acrylic paint we use for our carvings to the area you want to color. Wait until the acrylic is totally dry and sand off the paint

on the surface leaving the color in the cut lines. Do not wipe the paint off while it is wet or it will get everywhere on your design.

So how do you come up with your designs? Think of what interests you. Traditional nautical designs of ships and whales can be found in books about scrimshaw, Wooden Boat magazines, or illustrations from the internet. I've used those, Polynesian and Native American designs, illustrations of plants and animals, and some that I've just made up in my head. My favorite book on scrimshaw is Scrimshaw: A traditional folk art, A contemporary craft by Leslie Linsley. I recommend just about any book on pen and ink drawing for learning how to shade and crosshatch.

So that's why I fell in love with scrimshaw. It requires only a few tools and can be done anywhere. This is what made it popular with whalers in cramped quarters on long sea voyages. I plan to keep working at it and experimenting with new materials, tools, and techniques. I've heard that some people scrimshaw on PVC pipe and plastic lawn furniture. It is a practical decorative technique that I've used on plaques, pendants, and knife handles. As with any other art or craft, it requires a lot of practice. I hope you'll try it.

Social Media Sites

Facebook: [Pikes Peak Whittlers](#)

Instagram: [@pikespeakwhittlers](#)

The Corona Carving Challenge Continues!

by Karlene Kilmer

Since our all our regularly scheduled meetings have been canceled as well as our annual show, keeping in touch and seeing what others are carving has become a challenge. As mentioned in our last newsletter, an idea emerged for addressing that issue: for members to work on clearing that shelf of half-finished carvings that all carvers have (starting something new is okay too), take pictures of the completed carvings, email them into the club, and they then are posted on the PPW Instagram and Facebook pages. This is the Corona Carving Challenge.

I am so pleased to announce that an increasing number of PPW members have emailed pictures of what they are working on including Mark Goodman, Jerry Branesky, Susan Reynolds, Ken Schroer, Gerry Canavan, Steve Gurnett, Scott Schnell, Gary Fenton, Doc Benjamin, John Armstrong, Art Gibson, Del Cox, Jon Nelson, and myself. You also can go to our social media to check-out some celebrations including the publication of a booklet that includes some of Tom Mellott's comfort animals and Gerry Canavan's completion of 100 (yep, one-hundred!!!) carvings from his half-finished shelf during quarantine. If you have sent in a picture and have not seen your work posted yet, you are in the queue and will be posted in the order in which your pictures were received. I make 1-2 postings per week to ensure everyone's carving has time to be seen by followers before adding the next post, therefore it might be a bit before it's your turn. Please be patient. If you have not yet sent in pictures of what you are doing, please do so by emailing them to pikespeakwhittlers@gmail.com. You



(challenge cont.)

can see posts on our Instagram page @pikespeakwhittlers and our Facebook page facebook.com/pikespeakwhittlers. You also can access both our Instagram and Facebook pages from links on our website pikespeakwhittlers.com. I am working on creating a Gallery page on our website which also will showcase what people have been doing.

My queue is getting rather short so please join in the fun and email me pictures of what you are doing (pikespeakwhittlers.com). It is just one little way in which we all can stay connected in this isolating and unpredictable time. Stay safe, let the chips fly, and send in your pictures!



**CARVINGS BY
DOC BENJAMIN**



**CORONA CARVING
CHALLENGE**

Ken Schroer



**100 CARVINGS
COMPLETED!!!**



Andy and Aaron Mayer are available to teach classes on bark carving whimsical houses , small and large realistic bark churches and holiday basswood houses. Contact them via cell phone : (719) 641-0424.



Bob Zettler

Want to learn how to draw, paint or carve?
or need in need of a sign - routed - engraved or vinyl.
I offer these services here in Perry Park.
email your needs to bobcatcarving@gmail.com

Mailing address for the club:

Pike's Peak Whittlers

P.O. Box 26595

Colorado Springs, CO

80918

JON NELSON

WOODCARVER/TEACHER

Jon Nelson teaches seminars across the U. S., and has won many awards for his woodcarvings at various woodcarving shows. But his greatest satisfaction comes from seeing the joy on peoples faces when they choose one of his carvings for their collections. In addition to the galleries carrying his work in Grand Lake, Colorado and Cody, Wyoming, you can see his work at selected wood carving shows and seminars across the U.S. His 25th anniversary of carving finds Jon more excited about it than ever and it's very rewarding to help budding carvers with the techniques they can use to create their own rewarding carving experience. Check out Jon's website for photos and more information. To request available dates and detailed information on teaching a seminar in your area or for information on acquiring some of Jon's carvings or roughouts you can contact him at:

4310 San Miguel

Colorado Springs, CO 80915

1-719-573-5986, jonndon@msn.com

<http://www.jonnelsonwoodcarving.com>

Dan Noble teaches woodcarving and pyrography classes at the Colorado Springs Senior Center. You can check his schedule on the Senior Center website:

<http://www.csseniorcenter.com>

His classes are usually on Mondays.
The rates for his classes are very good for someone with his experience.