



# Carving Newsletter

August 2022



Hello Carvers,

Please take a look at this month's events (listed below) and get involved by registering. The picnic will be fun and a chance to socialize, network, and borrow books or DVDs from our new library. Art in the Pearl is only a month away, and we need volunteers to help over Labor Day. Everyone who helped in the past found it very satisfying.

I want to announce the restart of Carving SIG meetings—the first since the pandemic started. These will be in-person only, with the plan to record and post demos and presentations. The term "SIG" (Special Interest Group) is a concept of the Guild of Oregon Woodworkers and has a fair amount of history. Each such group makes its own rules, and we'll make ours.

Finding a common meeting time is difficult so we are creating two, Evenings and Days. The Evening SIG will meet on the third or fourth Thursday evening at the Guild shop (bench room) from 7:00-9:00pm with an optional 6:00-7:00pm time to do more hands-on work, eat, and socialize. The Days SIG will meet at Woodcraft from noon-3:00 on either the fourth or third Thursday (alternating with the Evening group). The meetings will have the same topics and format, but of course attendance will be different and interests might vary depending on who shows up. Over time they may diverge, and over time we might be able to create a Weekend SIG. Walk first.

The focus for Sept-Oct-Nov will be sharpening demos, presentations, hands-on, and networking. Sharpening has proven to be a consistently interesting topic for both beginners and experienced carvers. We'll have a variety of sharpening systems to see and try. You'll be able to sharpen your own tools, help sharpen those in the Tool Library (we have hundreds), and both help and learn from others. Our goals are to move beyond stropping - to tackle grinding and honing, explore powered and manual systems, and help you get on the road to mastery.

To register for the Carving SIG, [click here for Evenings](#), or [click here for Days](#).

Annual club picnic, Saturday, August 13, 11:00am - 3:00pm, [click here](#).

This is purely a social opportunity and a chance to meet others you might only know on Zoom. Thanks to Jim and Susan Spitzer for hosting us at their home a bit north of Beaverton.

Art in the Pearl, Labor Day weekend, September 3-5, downtown Portland, [register here](#) to volunteer

This three day Labor Day weekend event is very inspirational and a great way for us to promote carving. We'll do demonstrations, show off a variety of examples, and interact with visitors of all ages and cultures.

Multnomah Village Street Fair, Saturday, August 20, 9:00-5:00, [register here](#) to volunteer.

I hope your summer is going well—mine is.

Larry

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**Our Mission: Encourage carvers at all levels through education, fellowship, and mentoring**

## Upcoming Classes

### Stropping for Beginners (small fee) — online and in-person

Taught by Roger Crooks, Larry Wade, or Terry Burnside

Click a date to register, [August 10](#), Wednesday, 10:00am - noon, [September 8](#), Thursday, 10:00am - noon

One of our main charters is to preserve the art of carving and to do so requires teaching beginners. We all know sharpening is critical. There are many articles and videos on-line, and they often show contradictory ways to sharpen. For a beginner with few tools, figuring out how to start sharpening is daunting.

Our philosophy is to start with good tools and keep them sharp with stropping. Reshaping tools, power sharpening, and using stones will be taught in future classes.

This beginner's class delivers information with a [handout](#), a [video](#), and hands-on coaching. There is a fine line between getting a sharp edge and rolling over the edge making it duller. Correcting stropping techniques in real time will start carvers on the right path to building muscle memory for sharpening. The class repeats monthly, and can be attended either in-person (preferably) or via Zoom.



Leather Strops

### Incised Carving Class (free) — online and in-person

Saturday, 9:30am - noon. To register, click on the desired date: [September 17](#), or [October 15](#), or [November 19](#)

This one-session, 2-1/2 hour class is for those new to carving or those who want to try incised carving. Repeats most months.

The incised style carves lines into the surface of wood and can be done safely with one tool. This workshop is for those who have never carved or for carvers who have no incised experience. Students will be provided with free basswood, a loaner tool, patterns, and a carving mat. This workshop will be taught on-line with Zoom and simultaneously in-person, unless Covid gets much worse.



Dogs Welcome Sign

Students will carve the Dogs Welcome sign shown, and wood is provided for a second project afterwards. Students will use a parting (V) tool and will be shown how an Xacto knife or equivalent can also be used.

## Small Bowls in Four Woods (small fee) – in-person or via Zoom simultaneously

Taught by Larry Wade.

[Click here](#) to register, four Tuesdays: September 13, 20, 27, and Oct 4, 2:00 - 4:00pm

This is a class for beginners to learn and practice carving small (4"), shallow bowls and experience a variety of soft and hard woods (Basswood, Alaska Yellow Cedar, Alder, Walnut). The inside of the bowl will be round or oval, shallow or deep. The outside of the bowl can be round, square, rectangular, or shaped. Learning to hold the work safely provides many lessons.



## Woodcarving Class at the Beaverton Elsie Stuhr Senior Center through the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District (ages 55 and above), tuition varies

Taught by Nancy Girard

Tuesdays 9/13 - 12/13. Weekly classes are from 10:00-11:30am (registration opens August 13).

Classes continue year round. New carvers pay a start-up fee of \$20, which includes a safety glove and thumb guard, 3 projects, and use of instructor's tools for the term along with instruction.

Experienced carvers get new projects and/or help for their own projects. And all get the company of fellow carvers which is vitally beneficial. More information at [THPRD.com](http://THPRD.com) or contact Nancy Girard at [Girardaccessories.com](http://Girardaccessories.com).



## Upcoming Programs

### SUMMER BREAK

The Oregon Carvers Guild is taking the summer off from our monthly Zoom programs. It has been our experience that many of our members are traveling and/or going to carving rendezvous.

We will resume our 2nd Tuesday monthly meetings starting September 13th, 7:00pm on Zoom (mark your calendar).



*Multnomah Days August 20th, Plan to Attend!*



# Carving Newsletter

August 2022



## Upcoming Events

# AUGUST

### Oregon Carvers Guild Annual Picnic, Beaverton area, Saturday, August 13, 11:00 - 3:00



This is purely a social opportunity and a chance to meet others you might only know on Zoom. Thanks to Jim and Susan Spitzer for hosting us at their home a bit north of Beaverton. To register, [click here](#)

### Multnomah Days Street Fair Saturday, August 20, 9:00-5:00,



This one-day annual event is spread over the four blocks of Capitol Hiway, running through the heart of Multnomah Village. Our club's 10x10 booth will promote carving with demonstrations, literature, and comfort birds. [Register here](#) to volunteer.

### Woodcarvers EXPO Boise, ID, August 27

This year's Woodcraft EXPO will take place at Woodcraft, 7005 W Overland Rd, on Saturday August 27 from 9:00am to 5:00pm. There will be demos and a few simple carvings (owls, birds, etc.) to give away to the kids. [Idaho Woodcarvers Guild <idahowoodcarvers@gmail.com>](#)

# SEPTEMBER

### Art in the Pearl Downtown Portland, Labor Day weekend, September 3-5,



This three day Labor Day weekend event is very inspirational and a great way for us to promote carving. We'll do demonstrations, show off a variety of examples, and interact with a variety of visitors of all ages and cultures. [register here](#) to volunteer

### The Oregon Woodcarver's Rendezvous Canyonview Camp near Silverton, OR, September 8- 11, 2022



This year restarts a long tradition of the [Capitol Woodcarvers](#), after two years of pandemic delay. Many classes are offered on all days of the event. See the [registration form](#) for details.

### Tri-Valley Show & Competition Veterans Memorial Hall, Pleasanton, CA, September. 10 & 11, 2022



The Tri-Valley Chapter of the California Carvers Guild is having their annual show, which happens to be their 50th Annual Wood Show. For more information on categories to enter carvings, see their [website](#).

### Columbia Flyway & Wildlife Show Clatsop County Fairgrounds in Astoria, September 30, Oct 1 and 2



This is a significant local show featuring nationally known bird and animal carvers, scheduled at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds in Astoria.

Contact [Randy Martin](#) to exhibit; save the dates and monitor the [website](#) for updates.

## Interest Lists

### Walking Sticks & Wood Spirits — Interest list only

Taught by Terry Burnside. [Click here](#) to register interest

Terry will teach this class once there is enough interest. Add your name to the list if this is a future possibility for you. No obligation.



This class is designed for those not familiar with carving a wood spirit or face carving in general. Terry developed his techniques over 25 years, incorporating the methods of several well-known carving professionals.



### Tribal Carving with Adam McIsaac — Interest list only

DATES/TIMES/LOCATION - all to be determined. [Click here](#) to register interest



Adam is a serious professional carver in the style of the tribes of the Columbia River Basin. He often teaches and conducts workshops at his studio north of Vancouver in La Center off I-5 near exit 16.

This interest list is not a class, it is simply a way for you to put your name on the list to be contacted later and to see if there is enough interest to create a tour, class, workshop, or other activity.

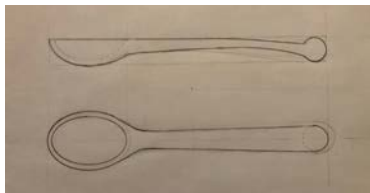
### Special Note

We are trying to find a Saturday in late September or sometime in November (after the October hunting season) to hold a one-day class at Adam's Studio. He is a busy professional, and we have to work around his availability.

### Beginner Spoon Carving — Interest list only

Taught by Al Plasch. [Click here](#) to register

This will be a class for beginners to learn the basics of carving spoons. Everyone will carve a simple shape first, then have options for exploring variations. Two Basswood blanks will be used with an option to try a harder wood. Students are welcome to provide their own wood. Loaner tools are provided (knife, spoon gouge), but students are encouraged to purchase a hook knife (Morakniv 164 or similar) and a knife (Flexcut detail knife or Morakniv 106).



## Library Updates

### Book & Tool Library Update by Larry Wade

#### Book Library Update

The Book Library is almost ready. Our 180 books and ten DVDs are cataloged and stickered. You will be able to see the collection and start checking out items at the club picnic on August 13th. Ruth Holland did all the tedious and time-consuming work of creating the catalog and indexing them using Library of Congress numbers, with valuable consulting help from Ruth Warbington. The catalog will soon be posted on our website, and you will be able to search, sort, and download it. For the time being, the books will be at my house near Beaverton.

Thanks to the donors who made all this possible - the vast majority were from Tony and Kelley. If you have useful carving books, DVDs, or CDs that you want to move on and add, let me know.

Donors: Zoe Bacon, Carl Enzenberger, Jim Hall, Ann Harris, Ken Johnson, Tony Rizzutto, Kelley Stadelman, Mack Sutter, Larry Wade

Property of Oregon Carvers Guild

**DVD- 501**

**1: The Basics of European  
woodcarving with Nora Hall.**

Donated by

Kelley Stadelman



Property of Oregon Carvers Guild

**TT199.7 .M39 1981**

**A Practical Pattern Manual for  
Woodcarving and Other Crafts /  
Art McKellips.**

Donated by

Tony Rizzutto



#### Tool Library Update

The Tool Library grew again this month with a donation from Mitch Lang, who decided to retire his sculptural carving tools as he focuses exclusively on letter and chip carving. For examples of his charity work, go to <https://www.mitchlang-woodcarving.com/>, and see the article "More About Chip Carving" on page 14 in this newsletter.

Mitch donated 14 high quality, long handled gouges, 3 Flexcut unique knives, 3 Japanese rasps, a heavy-duty Wood River sculptor's vise, a small Proxxon modeler's vise, and a wooden screw clamp. The tools need to be sharpened before use, but if anyone is interested in borrowing the sculptor's vise, the gouges, or rasps for a low monthly fee, [email me](#). The gouges are mostly Swiss Made and Ashley Isles; sizes are:

- » #1 (5, 5e, 9, 14, 18 mm)
- » #6/6 spoon
- » #7/14
- » #9/12
- » #10 (4, 20 mm)
- » #11 (1, 2 mm)
- » #12 (3,6 mm)



## The Ellensburg Experience

### Northwest Carving Academy By Tom Siep

In mid-July I attended my first-ever gathering of carvers—the 5-day-long set of classes taught by outstanding instructors in Ellensburg, WA. After a two-year hiatus, the Northwest Carving Academy (NWCA) had approximately 95 participants, which was down about 10% from pre-COVID-19 times. I was told that there were a lot of first time attendees (like me) and that some of the regulars did not attend due to pandemic and gas price concerns. All in all, it was a pretty good turnout for their 12<sup>th</sup> event.

The classes included:

- » Chip Carving Intermediate - Advanced carvers, taught by Wayne Barton
- » Nantucket Basket Weaving, taught by Penny Burns
- » Bust of Big Horn Sheep with Baby, taught by Debbe Edwards
- » Cedar Waxwing with open wing, taught by Josh Guge
- » Santa with Raggedy Ann Doll, taught by Pat Moore
- » Barbershop Quartet, taught by Ryan Olsen
- » Baskets of Illusion, taught by Charlie Phillips
- » Caricature Carving, taught by Bob Travis
- » Mountain Man Bust in Butternut, taught by Rich Wetherbee
- » NW Style Carving Small Totem, taught by Dick Wilk

They also set aside an area for quilters and crafters, but only one (my wife) attended.

The Academy will follow up this year's event in Ellensburg on the week July 10-14, 2023. Details on next year's classes should be available in November.

Although I spent most of my time in Bob Travis' caricature carving class, I did get a chance to see what some of the others were doing in their classes. The following pictures are a sampling of the activities this year.





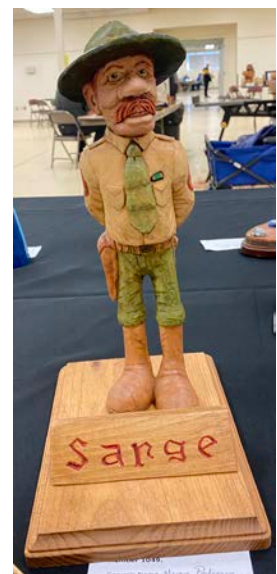
*"I really recommend the NW Carving Academy. It is well run and offers great instructors. I had Ryan Olsen. He is an outstanding caricature instructor. There were only 5 students, so we got a lot of attention. The project was a Barber Shop Quartet. " – Al Plasch*

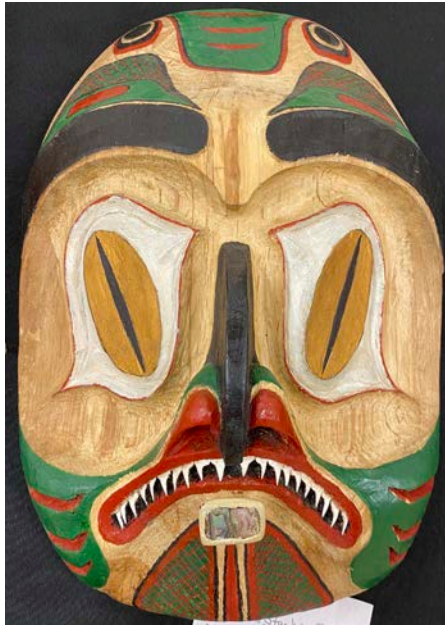


Classes and instruction were not the only thing going on at the NWCA. Entertainment was also part of the experience:

*"These instructors are very talented, some in music and singing as well. On Tuesday night some of the instructors put on a show. Some played a guitar with a history on Johnny Cash's guitarist that made his distinctive sound. Ryan Olsen is a trained Opera singer, but was able to pull off a couple Johnny Cash songs. Not to leave out opera, Ryan sang the ingredients of a Doritos pack to the tune of Ave Maria. Ryan then sang a "campy" duet with his wife, Amy that was hilarious. Rich Weatherby played a mandolin and sang a few songs and even did a duet with his wife too. Then a lady played flying saucer looking thing called a hand pan. Very unusual." – Al Plasch*

In addition to carving at the Northwest Carving Academy, there was also a carving competition. The entries ranged from chip carving to woodburning to caricatures to NW native to realistic animal renderings.





... and the winners of the NWCA competition were:



First Place went to Debbie Lawliss,  
for her walking stick



Second Place went to Leni Williams,  
for "Fluff McPuff"



Third went to Scott Jeffrey,  
for his Ancestry mask

## Chip Carving Class

### Notes from the OCG chip carving class

by Jerry F. Boone

If you are not an artist, can you still create art?

Most people would say “no”.

Marty Leenhouts says “yes”.

And to prove it, he took a dozen students—some of whom had little experience in carving—and taught them how to create intricate, artistic designs using only two very sharp knives and squares of basswood during a day-long session at Woodcraft of Portland on July 12.

Leenhouts ([mychipcarving.com](http://mychipcarving.com)) is a nationally recognized chip carver whose work has appeared for years in magazines such as Woodcarving Illustrated. He is a sought-after teacher and was one of the first Zoom presenters when the Oregon Carvers Guild was created two years ago. He was scheduled to be in the Seattle area in July and offered to come to Portland for a day to do an in-person class. Woodcraft is a sponsor of the Oregon Carvers Guild and Eric Backstrom, the store manager, has opened the store’s classroom to the OCG for lessons.

Chip carving is a centuries-old art. It involves making small, precise cuts to create v-shaped depressions in the surface of wood. Given that enough cuts follow along pattern lines, an intricate piece of artwork emerges. Because it uses only a couple of knives, it is a highly-portable form of carving. It creates little debris at the end of the project.

A teacher by both profession and avocation, Marty’s presentations were easy to follow. He methodically takes novice carvers from how to hold a knife to how to best finish a completed work.

*“What a treat to have in-person, hands-on instruction from a nationally known master chip carver. Marty is also a terrific teacher - he introduced techniques progressively, starting with the basics, then offered individual instruction to each participant. Even though I’ve been learning chip carving through Marty’s online lessons for several years, I still came away with lots of helpful tips.” – Mitch Lang*

For some carvers, like Tony Rizzutto, a day with Leenhouts was an opportunity to hone skills face-to-face.

*“I am fairly self taught, so it was good to get some feedback from Marty on my carving.*

*– Tony Rizzutto”*

Marty began with the basics, and had students use a practice board to learn the cuts before going on to work on more complex patterns.



Mitch and Marty

*"I really enjoyed the class and appreciate the level of instruction for beginner carvers, Seeing how a chip is made and than using the practice board to make the cut furnished an opportunity to obtain individual instruction on proper techniques as Marty walked around the room to answer questions and correct hand positions." – Jon Harvey*

For a carver such as Corey Levine, who is still learning the basics, the class was like opening the door to a new element of the art.

*"I really appreciate the info Marty was able to provide and demonstrate. Kudos to the Guild for providing the big screen TV and Bland for his help setting up the video." – Corey Levine*

The chip carving class was one of the first times the Guild has used the large screen TV and camera at Woodcraft, thanks to the efforts of Larry Wade and Bland McCartha.

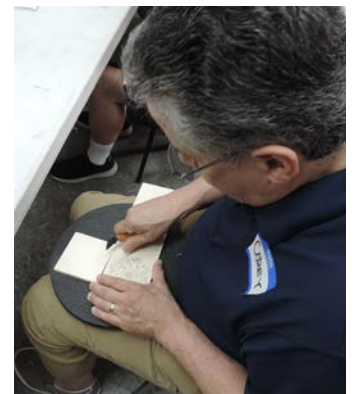
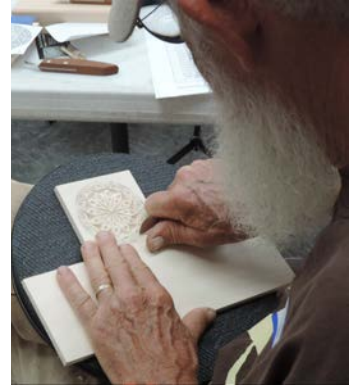
*"This was a good class by a very good presenter. Marty Leenhouts did an excellent job of explaining the ins and outs of chip carving on a entry level understanding. Hats off to the Oregon Carvers Guild for procuring a fine presenter." – John Wheeler*

Of course, not everyone was on an entry level.

Partway through the class, students were treated to photos of the work of Mitch Lang, a retired jewelry designer whose work in wood can be called nothing less than stunning. His work shows how far the concept of chip carving can go in the hands of an artist. Even Marty was impressed.

But perhaps the best critique of the class came from Joe Jedrychowski, who was active in the old Western Woodcarvers Association but dropped out because the organization no longer met his needs.

*"These are the kinds of classes we wanted. This is what we need." – Joe Jedrychowski*



## More About Chip Carving

To supplement the information provided in the Chip Carving Class descriptions, here are some additional resources:

### Current Issue of Woodcraft Magazine

The parent company of one of our local sponsors, [WoodCraft](#), publishes a very good woodworking magazine. In the July issue of that magazine, they had the article [Get Started in Chip Carving](#). In that article the authors explain about the knives and techniques for carving geometric patterns.

The article covers applying patterns to wood, gripping the knife, making the cuts, as well as the basics of sharpening.

### OCG Member Roman Chernikov's Website

Roman has a [personal website](#) that, among other things, features many articles and offerings on chip carving. As he states in his website:

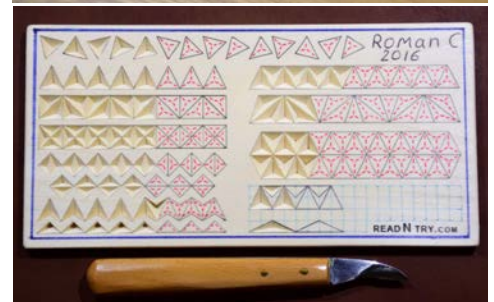
*“Chip-carving is a very simple way of carving a flat or slightly curved wooden surface that produces faceted chips. Chip carving has been known for thousands of years but very few really old wooden pieces survived to these days as wood deteriorates with time relatively fast. Even now woodworkers often decorate their projects with chip carvings of geometric patterns or free style figures such as birds or flowers.”*

Chip carvers often start out in their craft by using what is known as *practice boards*. Roman sells these practice boards at a very nominal price. See <https://readntry.com/blog/chip-carving-practice-board/>.

You can contact Roman by email: [learn@readNtry.com](mailto:learn@readNtry.com)

### Mitch Lang's Website

Mitch's [commercial website](#) features many examples of high-quality chip and letter carvings. He also has brief descriptions of the process he uses to create his art. Mitch can be contacted by email: [langdes49@gmail.com](mailto:langdes49@gmail.com)



## Carving on the Road

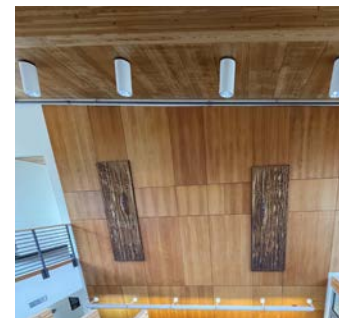
### Carving on the Road - Leroy Setziol Garden Art and other wood sculptures at Oregon State University By Jim Spitzer

My wife and I recently went to the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis, OR to support the Cycle Oregon Weekender Bike Ride. While I was there, I recalled that the magnificent 75 page Leroy Setziol<sup>1</sup> Exhibition catalog published by the University of Oregon Museum of Art in 1991<sup>2</sup>. The catalog had photographs of several pieces by Setziol that were installed at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Pacific Northwest Center on campus. So before the event and in evenings, this Duck (University of Oregon) explored Beaver Country (Oregon State University). Of course, my explorations had to include a search for Setziol pieces, as well as other carvings of interest.

The USFS facility includes a very impressive research station and is headquarters of the Siuslaw National Forest. It is located on a part of the campus, which includes the College of



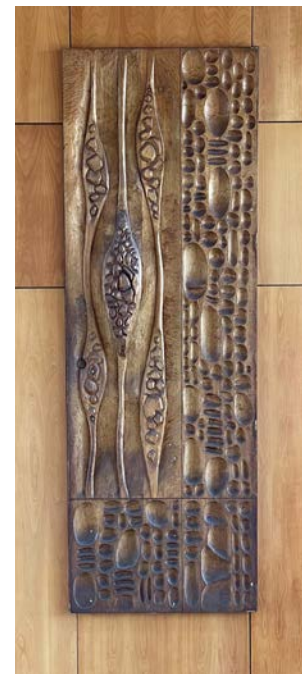
Forestry and various research centers related to wood product industries. I expected to walk through the Setziol-carved doors shown in the catalog. Instead, I opened glass doors and saw those large carved doors mounted high in the building's lobby. An administration wing had been added to the building about nine years ago and the old exterior doors were saved and displayed there.



I went into the courtyard garden and was impressed with the scale of the Ode to a Tree sculptures. The vertical piece was a 2x2 foot column some 20 feet high with four wings, three of which aimed toward a row of vertical, stylized sculptures. I think this symbolized our transformation of grand trees into buildings and other articles useful to man.



However, I was not quite so pleased with new orientation, condition, and lack of attribution and description of these pieces. The black and white photograph



1 Leroy Setziol (1915-2005) has been referred to as the father of wood carving in the Pacific Northwest.  
2 <https://www.oregoncarversguild.com/Leroy-Setziol>



from the catalog shows the original installation. The catalog photo was likely taken shortly after the art was installed in 1977.

Note that the large beam connecting the two works no longer exists. A metal plate now keeps the column from tipping. The close up photograph shows how even rot resistant woods like the Alaska Yellow Cedar that Setziol used for these carvings will quickly suffer in our northwest climate. There has been a lack of maintenance and application of water and UV resistant coatings, so these works of art are quickly degrading.

On a brighter note, I also walked around and through the magnificent College of Forestry



Building, It has walkways with glass walls overlooking the grounds include many life-size wood carvings of the Kalapuyan peoples that once lived on this land (and who are now part of the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde. I am not certain who the artist(s) is.

Elsewhere on a wall over a two story atrium, there were two carvings by Totem Shriver, an



Oregon carver who is represented by a number of coastal Oregon art galleries.

This was but a small sample of art enjoyed while strolling around campus and in Corvallis neighborhoods and downtown.

Happy carving and searching for inspiration to all my fellow carvers!





## Flat-Plane Carving

### What is Flat-Plane Carving? By Terry Burnside

#### Introduction

Scandinavian Flat-Plane carving is a style of woodcarving that leaves large flat surfaces with clear angles between them. Typically, a single tool is used for all carving, a medium-sized fixed-blade knife. Although it is common to see these pieces painted, there is little or no sanding or other types of finishing performed at the end of a carve. Rather than rounding edges, angles are left, forming distinct lines between flat surfaces. When combined, these planes form a faceted appearance, similar to the surface of a cut precious stone.

I have heard comments that this is just a highly stylized form of caricature carving. That is not the general feeling of Flat-Plane carvers, and this shows in the work produced using this technique. The subject of a Flat-Plane carving may be a caricature, but not necessarily.

These carvings are simplified, so you could say this technique results in stylized carvings. It could also be argued that this is a sophisticated form of whittling since the technique calls for a single knife with little or no finishing after the carve is completed.

A common subject is the human figure with exaggerated features. However, other objects, such as animals, are also part of the style.

Historically speaking, this style of carving originated in Scandinavia and is considered folk wood craft. Traditionally the knife used in Flat-Plane carving was called a Sloyd knife. It is interesting that the Swedish word Sloyd, translated into English, is wood craft.

One of the joys of Flat-Plane carving is connected to its minimalist nature. There is only one tool, a carving knife, therefore there is only one tool to sharpen, one tool to carry, and only one choice when deciding what tool is to be used for carving the next feature. This also encourages the development of fundamental carving skills like sharpening and basic knife wood cuts like paring, stop and chip cuts. The pictures near the end of this article illustrate the characteristics of completed Flat-Plane carvings. It is my belief that even if a carver does not adopt this style as a primary technique, the skills acquired will help improve their overall carving skills.

#### Origins

There are several theories concerning the origins of Flat-Plane carving, but it is probable that many traditions contributed to the development of this style.

One possible origin is that in the past there were protectionist labor laws in many parts of Scandinavian countries that prohibited non-guild members from owning fine woodworking tools, such as gouges. Specialized wood carving tools and sanding abrasives were also rare, expensive, and cumbersome to transport and store. On the other hand, most people who worked in the out of doors had a sharp work knife. When not working, some of these workers would whittle scraps of wood and developed techniques to carve features that could be executed with their work knife.



Two Flat-Plane Figures Carved  
From Harley Refsal Patterns

Another theory holds that in lumber camps there were always periods of idle time. A common way to fill this downtime was to whittle. As skill increased, these carvers found that their work was cherished by family and friends and could even be used to supplement their income through sale and trade.

## Tools for Flat-Plane Carving

One of the most striking features of Flat-Plane carving is that the only tool used is a fixed blade carving knife. You can read the opinions of what the perfect Flat-Plane carving knife is for hours on end. This can be interesting and informative, but I found that my interest was satisfied long before the available material on the subject was exhausted.

I decided the best way to select a good knife for this type of carving would be to study tutorials on the subject. To this end I watched a few tutorial videos and bought a few books. The consensus was to use a fixed blade knife with a straight or slightly curved edge. The recommended blade length varies from 2 to 4 inches.

I ended up buying not one but two Sloyd-type knives because, well, I love knives. The Sloyd knives are manufactured by Morakniv. Morakniv have been manufacturing these Swedish Sloyd knives for over a hundred years. These knives are also very reasonably priced. The Sloyd knife form is such a broadly accepted design that you will also find reasonably priced knives from many other manufacturers. Those manufacturers include Flexcut, Ramelson, Beavercraft, Frost, Deepwoods and Pfeil Swiss Made.



**A Helvie Rough-out Knife  
and Two Morakniv Sloyd Knives**

The knife you use should be strong, not brittle, and have a blade length of 2-4 inches. The knife should be capable of holding an edge and able to be resharpened easily. The handle should fit your hand comfortably. My hand had to adjust to the shape of the Morakniv knives, but after I adapted, my carving strength and control returned to normal.

Other equipment is the same as that used in most styles of hand carving, including stropping and sharpening equipment, carving glove and thumb guard, bench hook and painting supplies.

Although not a hard requirement, a bandsaw or coping saw can help create contoured blanks. Using a prepared blank eliminates a huge amount of very tedious carving that is needed when starting from a rectangular block of basswood. There are many sources of pre-cut blanks.

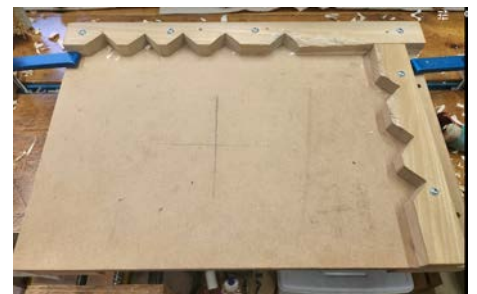


**A Four-sided Strop**



**Carving Glove and Thumb Guard**

While the original Swedish lumberjacks probably did not use a glove to protect the hand that is holding the work, I highly recommend that you do. I recommend using a carving glove, even if you use some sort of bench hook to rest the piece on.



**Bench Hook**

## General Flat-Plane Carving Approach

The idea behind this style is to create an object that approximates the subject with as few carving strokes as possible, using a single knife. Leaving flat surfaces, a rough finish and a faceted look is all intentional. Flat-Plane carving is similar to a sketch that only goes far enough to give a strong impression of the subject. Large, flat, paring strokes are used to create flat surfaces.

Care must be taken to strike a balance between necessary detail and simplicity. There is a real skill required to create a recognizable finger, cheek or nose using just a few strokes. When executed correctly, the outcome is a marvel of carving impressionism. The idea then is to do more with less, elegant and precise.

At first look the carvings seem casual and a bit imprecise but nothing could be further from the truth. Acquiring this skill is both challenging and rewarding. My biggest problem with adopting this technique is that I was taught to round everything I carved. Round, then round some more, and round one more time, was my mantra. It is hard to leave those angles and flat surfaces. It is even harder to put those flat surfaces together to create a piece that looks like the desired subject. It is a bit like creating a wire frame of a person, or a first loose sketch.

It is customary to leave rough carving marks made by the knife. Since sanding is discouraged, there will most probably be a number of these rough carving lines and divots. There is also a skill associated with minimizing these number of rough spots left of the finished carving. This is a style of carving that encouraging painting. While painting is not a hard and fast rule, color does seem to enhance many of these pieces.

## Notable Carvers

This style has regained popularity and there are a number of contemporary Flat-Plane carvers. I will mention two men here who arguably did more to refine and revive this technique than anyone else. In the early 20th century, the technique evolved to a true folk-art form through the work of men like Axel Petersson Doderfultarn, and later, Harley Refsal, an American.

Harley Refsal has been credited with reviving and popularizing this style both in the United States and in Scandinavian countries. He is thought to have introduced the term "Flat-Plane carving" in the early 1980s, giving Scandinavian folk carving a new name, less than 50 years ago. So, while the craft that evolved into this carving form began over 200 years ago in Scandanavia, the name that it is recognized by is relatively new and from an American carver.



Axel Petersson Doderfultarn  
from [Mutual Art Site](#)



Harley Refsal from [Craft in America Site](#)

The pictures here are representative of traditional Flat-Plane carving. I am using examples from the two iconic carvers mentioned above. Harley Refsal often exaggerated facial or body features to create a caricature-like effect. Axel Petersson Doderfultarn, on the other hand, usually carved simple but very realistic forms representing everyday life. Even though the overall effect of each carver has a different look, note that they both adhere to the basic stylistic rules of this technique, resulting in large flat surfaces and a rough appearance that leaves carving imperfections.

## Going Forward with Flat-Plane Carving

This is a very satisfying carving style and one that will help any carver, beginner or old hand, build or reinforce a number of fundamental skills. I have come to think of it as Zen carving. There are many tutorials available in both book and video format to help learn this style. I personally like books. Two that have helped me learn this style are Carving Flat-Plane Style Caricatures by Harley Refsal and Whittling Flat-Plane Animals by James Miller, both are published by Fox Chapel.

You will find additional books and videos if you look around a bit on line.

The Sloyd knife I normally use is one of two that I purchased from Morakniv. For smaller carvings I have used a rough out knife from Helvie. Those are the three knives shown in this article. These knives range in price from \$30-\$45. You might want to shop around a bit on the Internet or in local wood working stores. Other Sloyd style knife manufacturers include Flexcut, Ramelson, Frost, BeaverCraft, Deepwoods, and peil Swiss Made.

I have a final question for you readers. We are considering developing a class on this topic. If there is sufficient interest, a pilot class will be held in the fall of this year. An interest post in the events section of the Oregon Carvers Guild website ([www.oregoncarvers.com](http://www.oregoncarvers.com)) will also have basic class information. If this is something you would like to try, please respond to the Interest List post on our website ([click here](#)) or by email to [oregoncarvers@gmail.com](mailto:oregoncarvers@gmail.com).



Troll Queen  
Carved by Harley Refsal  
for [Woodcarving Illustrated](#)



# Carving Newsletter

August 2022



## Clubs and Guilds

### Coastal Carvers — Lincoln City

The club meets at the Lincoln City SDA School. Usually, monthly meetings are held the first Sunday of October through May, at 1:30pm. Club members also meet weekly on Tuesday evenings, from 6 to 8pm for unstructured carving. For details, [click here](#).

### Capitol Woodcarvers — Salem

For information, [click here](#). Their annual April carving show is well known, but it had to be cancelled for 2022. However, on their website, they announced that there will be a 2022 Virtual Show and Auction. More information and entry forms are to be posted soon on their website.

### Vancouver / King's Way Carvers — weekly on Thursdays

Thursday evenings 6:00 - 9:00 PM (summer 9:00 - noon). Contact Jim Mather at [jimmatherxx@gmail.com](mailto:jimmatherxx@gmail.com) or 360-931-0079. This group has been meeting since 2007 in a first class art room at a large private high school at 3606 NE 78th in Vancouver (Hazel Dell). The facility is locked so call ahead for the access code. They are a friendly and experienced group of carvers with a variety of interests.

### Milwaukie Woodcarvers — Milwaukie

This established group has recently restarted in-person carving sessions weekly on Wednesdays, 8:00 - 11:00am at the Milwaukie Center. Drop-ins welcome, for a small fee of \$1 or \$2 fee per session. Support for beginning carvers is provided. The address is 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Dr, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (off Hwy 224 near Rusk Rd).

### Central Oregon Wood Carvers — Bend

Central Oregon Wood Carvers is a group of carvers in and around Bend, for information, contact Scott Beyer at [dxdevolt@gmail.com](mailto:dxdevolt@gmail.com).

### Olympia Woodworkers Guild— Olympia

They occasionally have interesting carving presenters for their monthly meetings. For information contact Bill Cogswell at [info@owwg.org](mailto:info@owwg.org) or see [owwg.org/blog](http://owwg.org/blog).

### Idaho Carvers Guild

This is a long-established group of carvers in and around Boise that have some meetings online and some in person. For information, contact Eric Owens at [idahowoodcarvers@gmail.com](mailto:idahowoodcarvers@gmail.com).

### California Carvers Guild (CCG)

This statewide umbrella organization supports over 40 clubs throughout the state and has a very long and deep history. Local clubs produce a variety of notable shows and events, while CCG produces a comprehensive newsletter called *The Log*, and trains judges for shows. Click here for their [website](#).





# Carving Newsletter

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## Educational Opportunities

### Wildcraft Studio

A multi-arts non-profit that frequently has carving classes—[click here](#) for their website then scroll through their calendar. Rose Holdorf frequently teaches carving classes on the Scandinavian Dala Horse, spoons, and kitchen utensils. Their classroom is now at 50th and SE Division, Portland OR.

### Port Townsend School of Woodworking

A very important regional resource that frequently has visiting carving professionals, including Mary May. For information, see the [Port Townsend School of Woodworking](#) website.

### Sitka Center for Art and Ecology

Among the many workshops the Sitka Center offers, there are 2 woodcarving classes and a pyrography class. You can check out the classes at the [Sitka Center website](#).

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