



August, 2011

CHARLOTTE WOODCARVERS CLUB
SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER
AS A TRIBUTE TO LEE STOLL DUKES, JR.
AUGUST, 2011

Lee Dukes, founder of the Charlotte Woodcarvers Club in the early 1980s passed away on June 19, 2011 at age 91. Lee provided the leadership and direction for the club during those early years and has literally trained hundreds of carvers over his carving career. It is because of Lee's impact on our club and his numerous friends within the carving community – locally, regionally and nationally – that we wanted to pay tribute to Lee Dukes and his legacy.

Bill Dominick, a longtime friend since the early 1980s and also one who was instructed by Lee has written this tribute to Lee which speaks to who Lee really was to all of us who knew him. His love for furthering the art of woodcarving led him to teach woodcarving at Shepherd's Center for 25 years. I am a product of those classes. All who knew Lee have stories about him and Bill has covered this so well in his tribute.

And Lee is the “gift that keeps on giving”. The Dukes family contacted the Charlotte Woodcarvers Club and gave the club Lee's collection of books and magazines. As a result of that, the club now has a Woodcarving Library of over 200 books and 87 magazines for club members' use. Additionally, the family designated the Charlotte Woodcarvers Club as the recipient of memorial contributions in Lee's honor. Several hundred dollars has been collected to date and we plan to use these funds to promote the instruction of woodcarving to new carvers – exactly what Lee would have done! (If you wish to make a contribution in Lee's honor to the club, make checks out to: The Charlotte Woodcarvers Club, PO Box 11894, Charlotte, NC 28220. Note for the Lee Dukes Memorial Fund)

From all of us, Lee, thank you for a life well lived - and God speed.

**Ray Branch
President
Charlotte Woodcarvers Club**

Lee Dukes Memorial 2011

by Bill Dominick

Lee Dukes, founder of the Charlotte Woodcarvers Club, who died on June 19, 2011 will surely be missed. His efforts to generate interest in carving in the Charlotte area was the driving force that led to our club's formation in 1982, and his continuing teaching and guidance nurtured many of us who are here today. Lee was well known and respected in the woodcarving arena, both locally and nationally. He served as a Director for the National Woodcarving Association since 1993 and supported many other carving clubs and activities over the years.

While Lee was recognized in woodcarving circles, he was equally recognized for his contributions as Director of the Mecklenburg Water Works and consulted for many water treatment facilities throughout North Carolina.

Lee was a strong family man. His love for his wife, Doris, and his children and grandchildren was evident as he spoke fondly of them often. His love for fishing was close to that of carving, but fishing was just another way for Lee to socialize with family and friends.

And, don't forget gardening. Lee loved his vegetable garden and spent considerable time working there. He loved fresh vegetables and, true to his Southern heritage, ate the traditional meal of collards, black-eye peas and cornbread on New Year's Day.

Lee inherited his Father's heart ailments and after a heart attack decided to retire early from the City Water Works in 1980. Even though Lee had been carving for years before retirement, he was now able to focus and spend major time on carving. He often commented that this was his big growth time in carving and he took courses and taught courses but mainly he just carved. He commented that he would get up and after breakfast would go to his woodcarving shop and carve. Often he would forget lunch until Doris would remind him that it was time to eat. One of his favorite sayings was, "If woodcarving is a sin, I know where I'm going." However, those who knew him well knew of his strong dedication to his church, Myers Park Methodist, where he taught Sunday school for 70 years.

Over the years, Lee carved thousands of pieces. Many were done in classes he taught at the Sheppard's Center and other teaching venues. He carved so many duplicates to help students that he filled boxes with "almost finished carvings". I recall seeing a bushel basket full of carved faces the size of tea cups. In Lee's house were additional finished carvings numbering well over a thousand carvings. In fact, he added a room to his house so he could display those great carvings. To visit Lee and see all those carvings was impressive but more than that, Lee had a story to tell about many of the individual carvings...such as, what inspired him or what piece of wood he used or how many times he carved the piece to "get it right". He said, "Practice, practice, practice is how to learn to carve." One interesting fact is that Lee never sold any of his work. However, he gave away hundreds and hundreds of them and enjoyed seeing the joy in the faces of those receiving them.

After the death of his wife, Doris, Lee downsized and moved into a smaller home. With that came the question of "What to do with my carvings?" Special carvings were given to family members and friends. The multitudes of remaining carvings were donated to the Charlotte City Utilities who had display cases constructed to exhibit these carvings with plans to rotate them throughout the year. The main display of Lee's works is at the Lee S. Dukes Water Treatment Plant in Huntersville, NC. At a separate Water Treatment Plant on Highway 16 in Charlotte, NC, another exhibit has been set up for similar rotations. During Christmas, 2007, this exhibit showcased Lee's Santa Claus carvings.

You can summarize Lee's life many ways, but I would characterize him as:

A true Southern Gentleman

A dedicated family man

A man devoted to God and his church

A gentle man...never personally saw him angry

An educated man who never stopped learning and teaching

A man who loved music and played several stringed instruments – in fact, he purchased a new six string guitar just weeks before his death

A man who loved nature and gardening

A man who loved to fish

But he will be long remembered for his love of woodcarving and his passion for teaching others to enjoy carving and promoting woodcarving as a hobby.

“Lee – thank you for being a good friend.”





Lee enjoying food and fellowship at Bill and Judy's during recent Showcase.



Lee Dukes, Ray Branch and Ken Buker



2011 Showcase of Woodcarvings.

This Showcase was dedicated to Lee Dukes for a lifetime of outstanding service to the Charlotte Woodcarvers Club. Bill Dominick, a longtime friend of Lee, makes a presentation of a carved bust to Lee in his honor.



Lee Dukes, Bill Dominick and Ken Buker.

Ken worked with Lee in teaching Woodcarving at Shepherd's Center for 25 years.



Bill Dominick, Lee Dukes and Jim Watson at Jim's workshop in Concord, NC in fall, 2010.

Lee introduced Jim to basswood and sharp tools in the early 1980s. Lee carved a 15 inch tall cowboy and brought it back finished about a week after Jim gave Lee the blank.



Foundng members of the Charlotte Woodcarving Club. Taken at the 25th Showcase of Woodcarvings. Pictured are Lee Dukes, Vern Parrish, Barbara Conners, Bill Dominick, Bill Ensley and Ken Buker.



Lee Dukes with the bust of him carved by Art Heisler on the occasion of the ShowCase of Woodcarvings - 2011. This show was dedicated to Lee in honor of his founding, vision and support of the Charlotte Woodcarving Club over the years.



From all of us, Lee, thank you for a life well lived - and God speed