

Carvings from the Heart

woodcarvings by
Glenn Knak
of Salina, Kansas



Could I Have This Dance by Glenn Knak

Statement

I am a woodcarver specializing in realistic human carvings set in a scene that tells a story and hopefully “touches the heart” or draws an emotional response from viewers.

To achieve the detail in the carvings I use basswood as my preferred carving material. I appreciate the natural wood look so I do not paint. The carvings are sealed with a spray lacquer and then a light spray stain is used to help highlight the details.

Many of my carvings were inspired by my dad’s service in WW II. He had entered the service as a non-combatant, for religious reasons and was assigned to a hospital unit. We had always assumed he would be in a hospital near the rear of the fighting. It was very late in his life when we found out he was in a front-line hospital, including Anzio, where the hospital was three miles from the front and received the wounded straight off the battle field. When he passed away, we found out that he had been wounded and received a purple heart. Like many WW II vets, he never talked about his time in service, the only story he ever told was about a small church in Italy that was totally destroyed, the only thing standing was the Cross. This inspired the first of the nine carvings in the military series.

Biography

I am a Professional Engineer and spent my working career designing highways, streets, and drainage projects.

I started carving in 1979 when I learned how to sharpen a knife. A pointy stick I was working on began to look more like a person than a pointy stick. I then

tried and completed three more carvings of people ranging in height from 4 to 8 inches and surprised myself with the results.

I am a self-taught woodcarver with my formal training limited to one weekend seminar for beginning carvers on how to carve hillbilly characters and one weeklong seminar for carving realistic human faces. These seminars did help with how to sharpen and use the tools as well as general techniques and woodcarving skills. The seminars also served as an introduction to anatomy of the human face. I have several books for drawing or sculpting the human figure to use as references to help with my carvings.

I spent 20 years carving caricatures, realistic humans, and experimenting with different carvings and styles to see what worked best. Over the years I developed my own style of carving realistic humans—including the wrinkles in their clothes—and setting them in a scene to “tell a story.” I also found that when I developed a scene or carving that had a special meaning to me, it often brought out an emotional response from the people viewing the carvings.

As I noted in the Artist Statement, many of my carvings were inspired by my dad’s service in WW II. I have also always been interested in the history of WW II. Many people that do military subjects tend to be the heroic battlefield encounters or the officers who led the campaign. To me there are other stories that need told such as, the *Army Chaplin in Communion on the Battlefield*, the *Letter from Home*, the *Letter from the Front*, *Lost at Sea*, or *Christmas at the Front*.

My carvings have been featured in an article in *Chip Chats Magazine* on two occasions, including the *Cello Player* featured on the cover with an article in the March/April issue in 2010 and *Through the Rubble of Time, the Cross Stands Shining* featured in an article in the March/April issue in 2012.

I have worked with Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts teaching boys from 8 to 18 years old as well as teaching introduction to woodcarving for adults up to 70 years old.

I have entered numerous woodcarving shows and competitions since 2012. My carvings have earned People’s Choice eleven times, Woodcarvers Choice three times, Best Table Display one time and Best of Show six times including the 2023 International Woodcarvers Congress at the Jackson County Fairgrounds in Maquoketa, Iowa.

This exhibition is sponsored in part by Radio Kansas



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