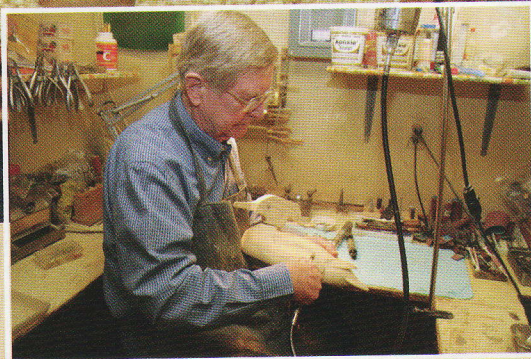


Retired Dentist is WILD



ABOVE: One of Dr. Gorr's final creations sits on its pedestal. **INSET:** Dr. Gorr carves one of his creations, which will later receive a detailed painting process, followed by mounting. **RIGHT:** Dr. Gorr with a multitude of his bird creations.

At some point in our lives, we all ask ourselves, "What would I love to do even if I weren't being paid to do it?"

We all have a longing to find our passion; to find that one thing that we enjoy no matter how much work goes into it. Some of us find our passion when we're children, while others don't find their passion until their golden years. The 76-year-old Dr. Walt Gorr was fortunate; he found his passion early on in life.

For 48 years, the retired dentist from Moon Township has been what he calls "a wildlife geek." A wildlife photographer, he and his wife, Jan, have taken photo trips for polar bears and grizzly bears, and they've been on several winter trips to Yellowstone to look for wildlife.

Now, Dr. Gorr brings his passion home with him – literally.

A self-taught wood carver, Dr. Gorr carves birds of all shapes and sizes, from small song birds to huge owls and hawks. "It all depends on my mood and what interests me at that moment," he says.

The only formal training Dr. Gorr has ever taken was a one-week course from internationally known bird carver, Floyd Scholz, in Hanover, Vermont.

His fascination with carving birds began 30 years ago, when Dr. Gorr saw some duck decoys on a trip to Pymatuning State Park. "I was interested in the colors," he says. "I was intrigued that someone could make them look that realistic."

In 1959 there were no professional buildings for dentists in Moon Township, so Dr. Gorr worked out of his home. Now, his former dentist office acts as his studio. And that's not the only part of his dentistry past that has made its way into his latest work.

"When I first started carving, I used a dental drill," he says. "Now I use other rotary tools. I use a Foredom motor with a flexible shaft and a hand piece that holds either diamond or carbide steel cutters."

Taking a piece of wood and turning it into a piece of art takes a lot of time, patience, and hard work.

It all begins with finding a pattern that interests him. From there, Dr. Gorr will make the templates and have those sent to a place in Louisiana, where he buys the wood. The wood he uses comes from the

About Bird Carvings

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Tupelo tree, which grows in the swampy areas of Louisiana and is used by artistic woodcarvers. Using a band saw, they cut out the wood according to the template.

Then comes the research.

Dr. Gorr will usually contact the bird department at the Carnegie Museums and request skins to look at. He takes photographs of the bird from all angles and uses those as a reference. He has a variety of other references as well, including cutting birds out of magazines.

Using acrylic paint, he'll paint the birds in their natural colors. "I want the bird to look like it could jump away if you touch it," he says.

The birds are generally sitting on a branch that is attached to a wood base. There are no wall mounts. Instead, they're made to sit on top of a shelf, table, bookcase, or other display medium.

Dr. Gorr doesn't work on commission, saying, "I was a dentist for 39 years and wanted to get away from demands of the public. I do this for my own satisfaction." However, he is looking to sell his birds, which are currently taking over his home.

"My wife, Jan, thinks I ought to start selling them because we have no room. We have two curio cabinets loaded with birds, and they're all through our dining room, living room, and family room," he says.

"I'd like to sell them, but haven't found a venue yet, and if I don't start selling some soon, I'm going to have to build a room to display them."

Currently, the only people who see his birds are house guests.

Interested parties who would like to purchase a bird can contact Dr. Gorr by either calling him at (412) 262-5618 or by sending him an e-mail to: jwgorr@verizon.net.

