

Ken Snelson

Artist, Wood Carver, Model Maker

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“I love and dream about art. I enjoy drawing railroads, cars, trucks, houses, and animals. The subject doesn’t matter, I just love art.”

Ken Snelson’s passion for recreating the world around him has been evident since he was a youngster growing up in Mount Savage and Grantsville, Maryland. His early artistic interests did not fade with time, instead they intensified and provided Ken with a vocation that embraced the creativity he always desired. The artistic expression that was evident during his employment years has since given way to the full time enjoyment of an artisan in residence.

Artistic expression proved to be a factor in making decisions early in life. As Ken recalled, “Following discharge from the military in 1960, my first thought

was to join the police force. My wife, Joyce, recognized my artistic interests and recommended that we start a sign shop. We kept the shop for 17 years before selling it to start a gold leaf lettering business.”

Ken has since retired from the commercial world and now enjoys carving, drawing, painting, creating models and anything else that strikes his fancy. Imagination and historical interests provide the inspiration for fashioning intricate works in different mediums.

Of particular interest to Ken are carving replicas of freshwater fish that are typically found in local streams. According to the artist, the carving process requires keen observations. “I consult with a taxidermist who allows me to take photographs. It is also necessary to observe fish in natural settings before the carving begins.”

The carvings, fashioned from bass wood, appear remarkably similar to specimens prepared by a skilled taxidermist. Carving birds, horses, and historical figures also intrigue Ken. One of his ongoing projects is carving miniature figures of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.





The railroad industry provides Ken with inspiration for creating detailed models like the switch tower shown above. The C&P and Western Maryland railroads were part of daily life in Mt. Savage, Maryland, where Ken spent his early years.

Left: Two of the many freshwater fish carved and painted by Ken.



Memories of growing up in Mount Savage have also generated ideas, particularly those of the Cumberland & Pennsylvania and Western Maryland railroads that serviced industries in the town. Custom painted cabooses, gondolas, and lumber cars are displayed in his Meyersdale, Pennsylvania home. Reminders of more recent businesses are reflected in models of service trucks that operated in the region. The vehicles are carved from a wooden block or modified from a manufactured model, depending on the subject.

Experimentation, observation, and modification are the keys to Ken's success and enjoyment. "I come up with my own ideas. Sometimes I will see a work of art and think, 'I can do that.' I return home and try to create what I saw using my own techniques."

Joyce Snelson has witnessed her husband's passion for art over the decades. "Ken will see something that interests him. When we arrive home, he will move to the workshop and start working. It isn't unusual for him to spend hours working on a project."

A self-taught artist, Ken sells his creations from his home studio at 101 Willow Road, Meyersdale, PA 15552 (call 814-634-0651). He also displays and sells railroad drawings at the nearby Traditions Restaurant in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania and Penn Alps Gift Shop in Grantsville, Maryland. Another place to appreciate the artisan's work is the Garrett County Museum of Transportation located at 107 South Second Street, Oakland, Maryland, where Ken is a regular exhibitor.



Ken and some of his many creations.

