

Artist's Statement

Dr. Charles Scheil, Lenoir NC



I was born in Jersey City, NJ. Both my Grandfather and Father were Master Carpenters. I feel this piqued my interest in carpentry and working with wood.

Duke University took me south for undergraduate school, and while in medical school I married my childhood sweetheart Fran. After graduating in 1958, I entered the Army with an Internship in El Paso, TX followed by Flight training in Pensacola FL, and became Flight Surgeon for the First Army Area at Fort Devens MA. While there, I was attending physician at the female and infectious disease ward. I was also family doctor for all the pilots and their family members.

During these years, our family grew with the arrival of Carolyn, Chuck and Mark. After my army experience, our family of five settled in Big Stone Gap, VA. Discovering that practicing without a local hospital was not desirable, we moved two years later to Lenoir. I began family practice at Blackwelder Clinic and Hospital in 1964. Later I moved to Mulberry Medical Park and shared an office with Dr. Jane Carswell. After 34 years of family practice in Lenoir, I retired in 1998.

At this time I joined with Lawrence Kanipe to venture into the world of wood turning. We attended workshops and joined the NC Wood Turners Club in Hickory, NC. Here we experienced wood turners demonstrating and teaching at monthly meetings. I attended seminars by Jimmy Clewes (Australia), Alan Batty (England), Ray Keyes (England) and Frank Penta (North Carolina). I also attended a week-long course at Arrowmont in Gatlinburg, TN.

My approach to woodturning is somewhat unique, for I let the wood help me decide what to do. Seldom have I made the same carving more than once. As I put the wood in the lathe, the wood seems to guide my course. After turning a piece for 2-4 hours you suddenly have something to be proud of. However, there is still finishing for the next two weeks as you apply 4-5 coats of polyurethane or lacquer. If it is a dark wood, such as Black walnut, several coats of tung oil will be needed. Buffing repeatedly will bring out the glossy finish that is desired. We are lucky in Western NC as there is a ready supply of hardwoods and burls. Maple represents itself as a hard or soft maple. It may be spalted, curly or figured. Black walnut, crabapple, osage orange and pecan are readily available as well as many other species of wood. The variety of these woods and the different objects you can design makes wood turning a great hobby. Whether the wood becomes a bowl or platter – natural or plain edge – it becomes an interesting challenge. For the last twenty years I have been on this journey with wood.