

Hillbilly Head

Carve a Caricature in the Spirit of the Ozarks

By Harold Enlow

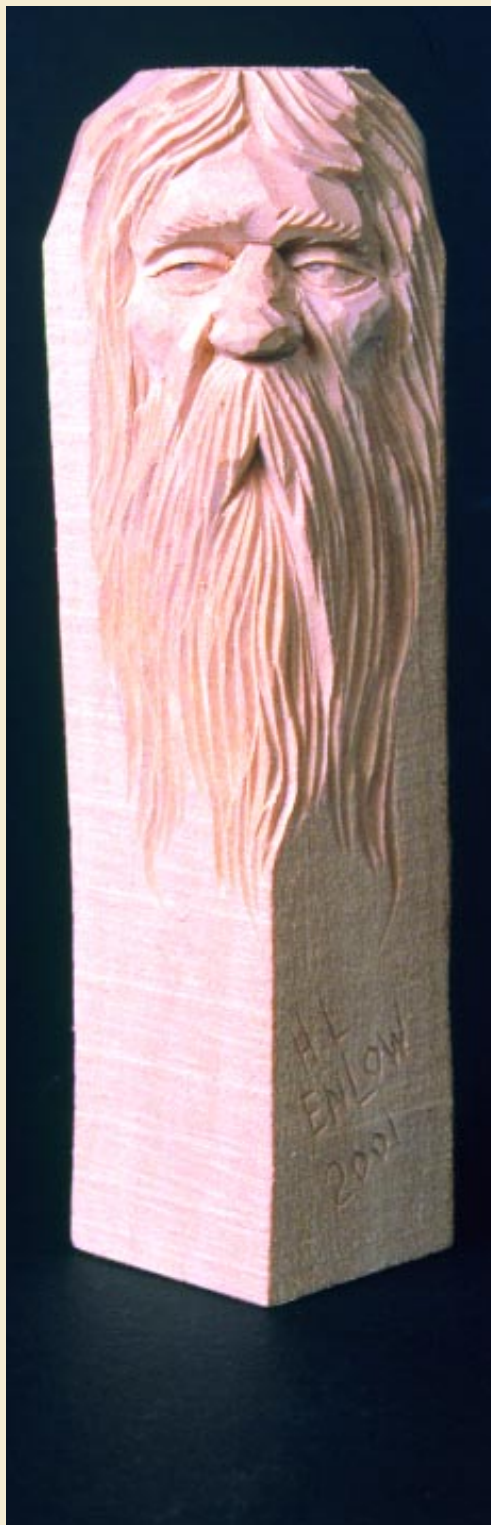
I live in the part of the United States where Li'l Abner and Daisy Mae frolicked, where scruffy hillbillies have long hair, wear stovepipe hats, eat turnips and drink moonshine. Some even struck it rich and moved on to Beverly Hills, California. Well...that's the way theme parks, comic strips and television have portrayed Ozark people.

Although I live in Dogpatch, Arkansas, I don't put on a funny hat or let my hair grow long. But I do enjoy the humor that surrounds the fictional characters of my region. Throughout my carving career I have made Ozark figures with sadly funny faces, unkempt beards, intoxicated expressions, big noses and rolling eyes. It's a style that people enjoy, and I sell many of these carvings. This same hillbilly head might be called a spirit face in another part of the country, and the techniques for making one are pretty much the same.

For this project, which uses a piece of scrap basswood bandsawed approximately it, I demonstrate how a few simple cuts can create a hillbilly head. The advantage of working on a block of wood with corners is that it lends itself to the shape of the face. Hold your hands so that the tips of the fingers meet in front of the nose and the palms rest on the cheeks. The angle is roughly 90 degrees.

Only a few tools are needed. A carving knife makes most of the cuts, but two palm V tools help with defining eyes and hair. A small palm gouge comes in handy for creating the hollow cheeks of this fellow.

Although the ears and mouth are left off and the top of the head is not defined, there is enough anatomy left to get a feel for making the eyes and nose and for texturing the beard. What I like to teach my students is that the nose is not totally



“off” the face when observed in profile. Actually, one-third of the nose is behind the upper lip. This is a detail that applies equally well to human caricatures as to realistic figures.

After some experience, you may decide to put this head on a body. If you do, be advised that hillbillies don't wear shoes, and that a stretched-out hat makes a great strainer for getting the impurities out of Ozark whiskey.

A popular carving instructor, author and the first recipient of Wood Carving Illustrated's Woodcarver of the Year Award in 2001, Harold Enlow lives in Dogpatch, Arkansas.



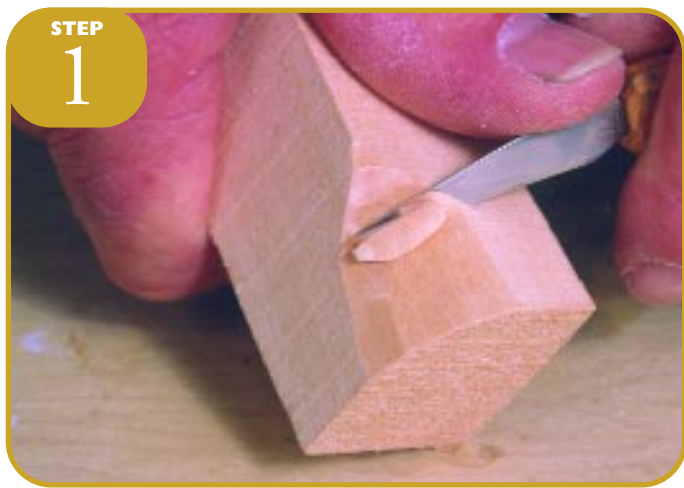
Materials & TOOLS

WOOD:

1/4 -in.-thick by at least 1 1/4-in.-wide by 6-in.-long basswood

TOOLS:

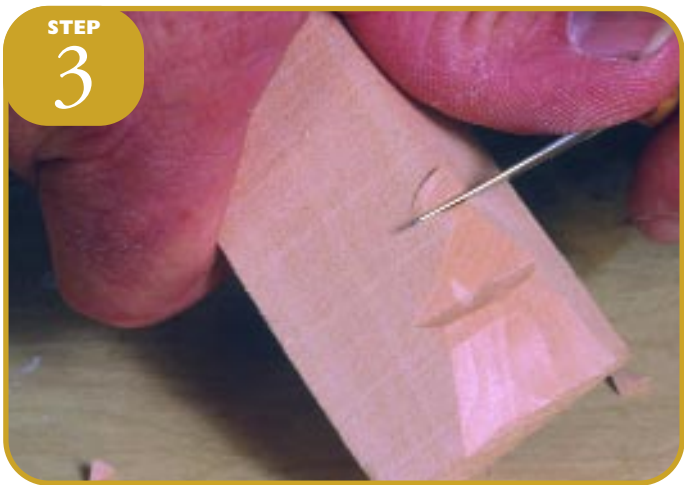
Carving knife
1/8-in. V tool
1/4-in. V tool
1/4-in. no. 9 gouge



Using a carving knife, start by rounding the front corner of the block at the top. This is the forehead that is flat from top to bottom but rounded from side to side.



About $\frac{3}{4}$ in. down from the top of the block, cut in a notch that defines both the eyebrow line and nose.



Cut another notch that locates the base of the nose.



Two stop cuts with the knife set off the width of the nose.



Carve away wood to create the sides of the nose.



Use scooping cuts to make the eye sockets.



One side of the nose and its corresponding eye socket are roughly shaped. Take out some wood to provide guidelines for the width of the face.



Round the eye sockets so they blend into the cuts made on the sides of the head. This ensures that the eyes are not flat from side to side.



Make stop cuts on both sides of the nose for the smile line.



Round the dental mound into the stop cuts.



Check your progress. If you made the cuts correctly, one third of the nose should be "inside" the face.



Use a 1/4 in. no. 9 gouge to make the hollows for the cheeks.



Draw some simple pencil lines to represent the flow of the beard. Individual strands are not necessary at this stage.



To locate the hairline on the forehead, use a 1/4 in. V tool. Putting a peak in the middle of the forehead allows the hair to flow naturally down the sides of the head.



Use the knife to take away wood up to the V cut made in the previous step.



Carve a few strands of the beard with the 1/4 in. V tool and carve a notch where the mustache separates on the upper lip.



The major features of the head are blocked out.



After carving more strands of hair, make eyebrows with the 1/4 in. V tool.



STEP 19
Round the end of the nose. Shaping it like a potato gives this hillbilly some character.



STEP 20
After making a stop cut for the upper eyelid, use a 1/8 in. V tool to give it definition.



STEP 21
Use the V tool in the previous step to shape the lower eyelid.



STEP 22
Overlap the bottom lid with the top lid by making a stop cut and carving away wood up to it



STEP 23
Make a stop cut along the bottom of the upper lid and top of the lower lid.



STEP 24
When hillbillies drink a lot, their eyes tend to roll up under the upper lids. Pencil dots for pupils and irises tell the intoxicating story.

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