



INTRODUCTION

The purpose in writing about my long time hobby is that, at some point in the future for one reason or another, I expect some of the sculptures in my collection may get lost or separated from the others. Thus, I have been encouraged to provide a pictorial record with some appropriate background information on each of the pieces.

Most of the pieces in my collection at this time are of a Biblical nature. The reason is simply that my nightly Bible readings have often inspired and challenged me to try to capture and depict the strength and character that I have envisioned in some of the great stories in the Old and New Testaments. For instance, Job, who suffered so deeply; the love between King Saul and David; the fright of the women trying to escape from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and the anguish and helpless feeling of the two Marys at the foot of the cross as Jesus' life is slowly seeping away.

There are many more religious paintings surviving today than religious wood sculptures. Sculpting in wood has some distinct drawbacks compared to sculpting in clay, wax or some other pliable medium. For instance, other mediums allow you to sculpt a head bent over with a face looking down or one that is behind another head which can later be joined to a body. This is generally not possible when you are working with a single block of wood and where even the smallest knives and chisels do not have the room to give the needed cutting angle.

There are other challenging problems working with a solid block of wood, such as size and imperfections. Size is limited to blocks roughly four to eight inches in thickness because it is difficult, with kiln or natural drying, to remove the moisture content from larger pieces. Wood that is not properly dried will have the tendency to split or crack. Usually, as you can imagine, the crack will be where it is most noticeable.

Another problem which is most frustrating is when there is a knot in the wood that is not evident from any of the outside surfaces when you are laying out your design. Even a slight discoloration, particularly when it is on a face, can be disastrous and ruin the whole piece.

Sometimes the piece of wood that I have on hand dictates which carving I will do next. Usually, I have several ideas in mind that I plan to do and just by checking the wood I have in my shop seems to trigger the right idea.

Much of my wood is given to me by friends who come across a block of wood that they had been saving for some unknown purpose, or as a present from a family member who knows I would appreciate a nice piece of wood rather than another shirt for Christmas. I will comment on the particular source of a piece of wood where it may be of interest.