



## JACOB WRESTLES WITH AN ANGEL

Mahogany (Koa)

**Genesis 32:25**

*...finding that he could not get the better of Jacob,  
he touched the sinew of his thigh...*

There is a little story in the background of this piece. About 1973 I was asked by Pastor John Pearson, Emanuel Lutheran Church in Pleasantville, New York, if I would put together a small display of some of my sculptures at the church. Two sisters from the Maryknoll Catholic Order, were at our church that day.

They were Sister Pierre Semler and Sister Helen Stapleton. In conversation, we learned that Sister Pierre was Maryknoll's Art Director of considerable renown and liked to work with wood as I did. She was a most gracious woman and wanted to know if she could see my studio for she said she had never seen another wood sculptor's studio. I explained that I didn't have a studio as such but I had a reclining chair and a small table which held my small collection of knives and chisels, all of which was in the living room facing the TV set. I also explained that I didn't have a vise to hold the block of wood, as I held it mostly between my knees when I was striking my chisel with a mallet.

Sister Pierre seemed to think I was kidding, so my wife and I invited both Sisters to lunch so I could show them my recliner and table. They accepted and we had a great afternoon together and we kept in contact with them for many years.

During the course of their visit, Sister Pierre asked me if I found it hard to find good wood and what did I have in mind for my next sculpture. I told her I had several ideas but the most likely one was Jacob wrestling with an angel. Shortly afterwards, I received from Sister Pierre a block of Koa wood with a note in which she said Koa is a type of Mahogany. She told me that she received the wood from one of her many students who are doing missionary work in all parts of the world and who send her gifts of wood from time to time. She thought it would be just right for my Jacob.