

Disability won't keep George idle

Ubly man carves dreams from wood

If the devil's workshop is manned by idle hands, then that probably is the only shop in which George Simmerlein would feel uncomfortable.

For his hands are rarely idle.

Simmerlein, of 320 Morrison Road, Ubly, was forced to retire in 1978 when a heart attack and subsequent surgery made it impossible for him to continue as a tool and die maker. That setback has

not stopped him from working altogether.

Simmerlein's home is adorned with wood carvings and sculptures fashioned by his skilled hands.

Until recently, Simmer-

lein also made jewelry.

"I'm always getting compliments on these," his wife, Mary, says, showing off one example of her husband's jewelry making, a brightly polished pendant which began life in 1927 as a silver dollar. Much of the coin had been carved away leaving only the face of Miss Liberty, the date and the word "Liberty" inside the ring of silver.

Simmerlein has made everything from tie tacks to earrings but had to stop making the jewelry due to the high cost of silver.

AT THE MOMENT, HIS main love is woodcarving. Simmerlein is more than just a nickle-and-dime whittler.

His most recent accomplishment, which he claims is "my pride and joy until I make something better," is a pinewood bald eagle measuring approximately 3 feet long and 1 1/2 feet high.

The project took him three months to complete and after examining its workmanship, the time was clearly worth it.

The flags furling below the eagle are stained red, white and blue with colored stain made by Simmerlein. The stain is better than paint because it shows off the beauty of the grain, he says.

SIMMERLEIN IS NOW working on his next "pride and joy," a scale model of the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. The eight-horse team, recognizable from television commercials, sits in various stages

of completion on Simmerlein's worktable. He also has plans for a wagon and detailed rigging.

Although not sure whether the project will be sold to the beer company, Simmerlein has talked to representatives of Anheuser-Busch Inc. and "They seemed very impressed."

So far, Simmerlein has sold none of his handiwork, preferring to keep it himself after all the work is done.

Aside from the sculptures, Simmerlein also carves wall plaques, which is how he got started in the art about two years ago. The main problem with his hobby is getting the right kind of wood in large enough quantities.

SIMMERLEIN LIKES TO use hardwoods for their rich grain, but usually uses softer scrap wood, such as pine.

Oak, maple, mahogany and cherry are all beautiful woods, he says. The problem is the beautiful wood is expensive and harder to work with but Simmerlein said if he could get it, the extra trouble would not bother him.

When working to turn a piece of lumber into a work of art, problems arise with cracking and knots in the wood.

Often he tries to work the knots into the design of the sculpture.

"You've got to look at a piece of wood and see how you can utilize it," Simmerlein says. "You've more or less got to make the design to fit the wood."



"PRIDE AND JOY" -- George Simmerlein shows the pinewood eagle that took him three months to carve. Unable to find wood large enough, Simmerlein glued several pieces together, then carved his masterpiece.



STEADY NOW -- A discerning eye and a well-placed tap of the mallet are needed as George Simmerlein works on a model of one of the Budweiser Clydesdales. He prefers the large end of an old baseball bat when carving, rather than a regular mallet.

Aspiring young authors display literary efforts

Budding literary giants had an opportunity to show their stuff at Campbell Elementary School's first "Young Author's Day" Monday, June 2.

Carol Farley of Mount Pleasant, an author of 10 children's books, was guest speaker at an assembly.

Winners from the first grade, all submitting books, were Mindy Fulcher -- I Am a Little Flower; Marney Konkel -- Sunshine, My Horse; Brian Moore -- The Dinosaur and I; Steven Tuckey -- Something About Horses.

Six books were chosen to be the best from the second grade.

They were Oh Poor Squirmy by Jim Stimpfel; Jass From Outside of Outer Space, Ken Micklash; The Knitted Bear, Janet Eria; The Little Red Bug in Battle, Steven Bills; Super Robin and the Five Blue Jays, Michael Bills.

In the third grade, short story awards were given to Mike Scollon, A Fishy Story; Bill Zeidler, A Surprise; Pat McDonald, If I Were an Ox, and Melissa Knowlton, If I Could Join the Circus.

Third graders who won awards for books were Julie Loomis, Bad Luck, Good Luck; Amy Francis, Droppy the Dog; Stacey Capps, Two Stray, Lonely Dogs; Brent Beecher, My Dog Junior, and Lisa Edwards, Rich Dogs, Poor Dogs.

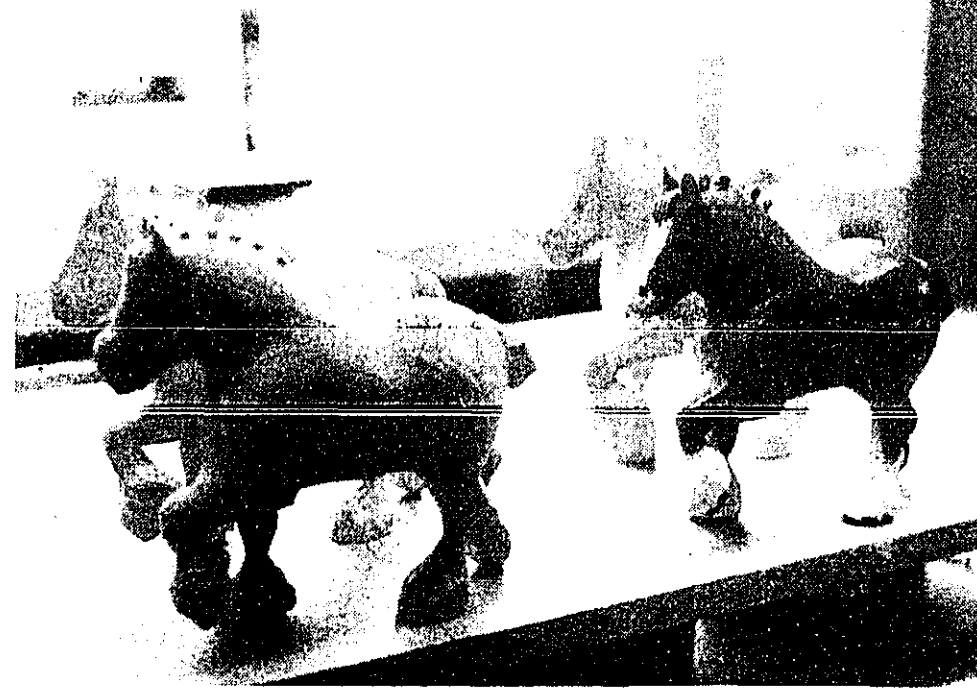
In the fourth grade, Roy Schaft won an award for his play Snoopy Goes to College. Chris Kico was given a poetry award for Rhyme Time and Paul Asher and Deanna Hutchinson won specialty awards for Felt-n-Fun Baby Animal Book and My Book of Animals, respectively.

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HERE COME THE "CLYDES" -- The detailed precision of George Simmerlein's woodworking skill is displayed in his model of the Budweiser Clydesdales. Far from finished, the project includes a wagon and scaled rigging for the eight-horse team.



than their former home, Dearborn Heights.

"You have to live in the city and work in the city to appreciate it up here," Simmerlein says.

Always looking for something bigger and better, Simmerlein said he would like to try his hand at sculpting a life-size cigar store Indian.

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