



Sportsman's Journal *with King Montgomery*

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The Wonderful World of Gene Bahr

We all love the outdoors, or we wouldn't be reading (or writing for) this fine monthly publication. Hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife and outdoor photography draw us and pull us in. But one thing we either didn't realize or don't remember often enough is that the outdoor sporting life has inspired some incredibly talented people to draw, paint, sculpt, carve, cast or mount the subjects of the world we hold so dear. Yes, experiencing art in many forms is a huge benefit to being an outdoors junkie. And that's where Gene Bahr comes in.

Staring at the Wall

In the early days of the 21st Century, I went to Labrador for the first time and absolutely fell in love with this pristine wilderness and its gorgeous, huge, wild native Eastern brook trout. I'll never forget walking into the main dining cabin at Three Rivers Lodge after an hour-plus ride from

The walls of the studio held works suitable for a fine-arts museum of the highest caliber, including paintings, carvings, sketches, sculptures and photos. It was so overwhelming I didn't know where to start, so I just started snapping photos.



Gene Bahr chats in his eclectic workshop, and you can tell he loves the place. All photos by King Montgomery

Wabush/Labrador City in a DeHavilland Beaver float plane. The dining room was alive with freshly arrived sports, fishing guides, and the affable staff of the lodge. But it was the wall to the left of the front door that immediately caught my eye: a perfectly painted carving of a gigan-

tic brookie graced the knotty pine, and the fish looked as though it could rise to a mouse or mayfly at any time. It was drop-dead beautiful!

I knew this work of art was from Gene Bahr's hands because I'd seen photos before, but never the real thing in the flesh, I

mean wood.

The Man, the Lady, and the Work

When I pulled into the Bahrs' driveway off of Route 107 well north of Sebago, Donna was shoveling snow in the bump-out area. After a warm greeting, we met Gene as he was coming out of his gallery and work area.

Miss Tilley, a pretty and personable black and white German Shorthair Pointer, joined us, and we all headed into the house to chat a bit before going into the building that houses a bunch of Gene's work, and parts of a wall dedicated to some of Donna's fine sketches and paintings. It seems she was an art teacher for a number of years; and she's a fine artist, too.

Over a hot cup of coffee or two, we talked a little about everything and learned how much we had in common, and how much we didn't, but it all seemed to fit seamlessly together, and we hit it off on a very high note. I soon would learn that Gene also can hit a high note or two, plus a lot of others.

Gene built his comfortable house in the country back in the mid-1980s. It sits on top of a hill with commanding views of nature's glory all around. Hills, valleys, (Continued on next page)



Donna and Gene Bahr are two of the nicest people I know, and their hospitality has no limits. That applies to Miss Tilley, a GSP, too.



A huge smallmouth bass carving mounted on an oval birch bark frame greeted me as I entered Gene's workshop. This immense bronzeback was 23 1/4 inches long and weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces. Lordy!



Donna's fine sketches and paintings grace part of wall in the gallery. She was an art teacher and is a fine artist in her own right.



In Gene's earlier times, taxidermy was the order of the day, but he's now devoting his skills to the wood carvings.



Some of Gene's painting, such as this stunning buck and doe on an early morn, are for sale in the gallery.



I looked directly up over the door and saw mounted deer, a caribou, and a wild turkey in full-flight. Taxidermy was how Gene got started in the business of outdoor art, over forty years ago.

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mountains in just about every direction. On a clear day, Donna related, Mount Washington is in view. The place – the house, the surroundings, and later I would learn, the gallery/workshop – all had a good vibe, and evoked a feeling of hospitality and comfort. A welcoming place and people, and Miss Tilley, too.

Oh, My Goodness!

I stepped into the barn-like structure next to the house, and had the sense I was being watched. I looked directly up over the door and saw mounted deer, a caribou, and a wild turkey in full-flight. Taxidermy, Gene earlier related, was how he got started in the business of outdoor art, and that was some forty-years or so ago. Now he's not tak-

ing any new taxidermy stuff, and concentrates on wood carving as his primary medium.

The high, knotty-pine walls held works of works suited to a fine-arts museum of the highest caliber. Paintings, carvings, sketches, sculptures and photos graced the gallery in an organized and fetching manner. Wow! I didn't know where to start. Or when to end. So I just started snapping photos.

"Organized Chaos"

Gene has carved a number of critters, including game- and songbirds, but his forte is the fish that grace many folks' walls all over the place. We headed into the next room where all the work is done to produce the gorgeous painted carvings that



A perfectly painted carving of a gigantic brookie graced the knotty pine, and the fish looked as though it could rise to a mouse or mayfly at anytime. The fish was caught in Labrador 1998 by Robin Reeve, owner of Three Rivers Lodge; 27 3/4 inches in length, and a 17 3/4 inch girth.

Gene is so renowned for creating. Immediately to the right at eye-level was a huge smallmouth bass carving mounted on an oval birch bark frame. This immense bronze-back was 23 1/4 inches long and weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces. Lordy, I thought. This special creature prob-

ably is still swimming around in wherever it was caught.

"Gene," I said after taking in the work room studio, "this is what I'd call organized chaos. I bet you know where everything is located in here." He replied in the affirmative and sat down on a rolling chair that al-

lowed a degree of mobility without having to get up.

Work benches, tools, posters, photos, molds, fish templates, paints, brushes, carving instruments, and whatnot lined the walls and filled the flat surfaces. The main work bench, a sturdy (Continued on next page)



A work of art on a work of art, layers of Gene Bahr's incredible eye and talent. Funny how the background looks like an artist's palette.



Beginnings of a tigerfish carving that a Virginia gentleman ordered to commemorate the unusual specimen he caught on a trip to Tanzania.



Gene picked up his guitar and harmonica rig. Donna, Miss Tilley and I were treated to several songs, including two that Gene wrote. He's an artist with music, too.



“Snapshots in Time”

Historical Glimpses from Maine’s Sporting Past

Compiled by Bill Pierce, Former Executive Director, Outdoor Heritage Museum



Skunks, a Mouse and a Bear

I love reading vintage short stories about the Maine woods. I found these three items in the “Fish & Game Oddities” section of the January 3, 1902, edition of the MAINE WOODS newspaper.

I hope you enjoy them, and be sure to get outside and make some outdoor history of your own!

A Den of Skunks

At the approach of winter skunks come together in good numbers and pass the winter in holes or dens.

A Mr. Austin, who lives about five miles from Skowhegan, dug into a den the other day and found eleven skunks.

This seems like quite a family, yet



Classic skunk harvest using a hound.
Photo: Gant Daily

we hear others tell of getting thirteen of these same animals out of one hole.

“Kangaroo Mouse” Revived

The workmen on the Phillips & Rangeley railroad repair shop found a “kangaroo mouse” in the gravel pit near Dead River Station that was “frozen stiff.”

He was curled up in an almost perfectly round ball. His head was between his hind legs. The front “hands” were hooked over the head, and the long tail formed many even circles over the head.



The mouse had curled itself into a tight ball to stay warm, and did not appreciate the railworkers interrupting its winter nap. Photo: Wild Dales

This strange little “pet” was put in a warm place in the engine and finally in the top of one of the dinner pails to get warm and revive. He finally came

to, and when he did, he didn’t look so funny.

Gripped Bruin’s Tongue

While in the army, Mr. Aaron Beedy was intimately acquainted with a man who had been bitten on the left arm by black bear in the woods of Maine. Mr. Beedy had seen the scars many times.

The way the gentleman told it to Mr. Beedy is this: “I started up over a ridge, a very sharp one, and just as I reached the crest, two much-surprised creatures met. One was myself; the other an enormous black bear.

I had no gun, and probably should not have used it if had had one. The first thing I did was to throw up my hands to sort of protect myself and at the same time I made a backward fall down the hill.

As I did, the bear grabbed my left arm in his mouth, and down over the hill we went. I managed during the contest to get hold of the bear’s tongue, and while I held on to that he could do no biting.

I had my right hand to work with, and I assure you it was not long, although it seemed hours, before I had my knife out and with many desperate lunges and plunges, I finally cut the bruin and he ran away, but you wouldn’t have believed it if you’d seen that bear try to spit my arm from his mouth after I had taken the grip on his tongue.”

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metal structure, was itself a work of art, with all the paint dripped onto and down it over the decades.

Tigerfish

A stark white, rather weird looking toothy fish carving hugged part of one wall, and Gene said it was a tigerfish that a Virginia gentleman ordered to commemorate the unique specimen he caught on a trip to South Africa. Gene

had used a scale stencil he fabricated, and the subtle scale pattern was the only mark on the bare wooden canvas that would blossom into a beautifully painted wall mount. I asked him to send me a picture of the final product before the lucky owner picked it up.

Back at the house, a wonderful Reuben sandwich awaited me, and it didn’t last long, a testament to Donna’s cooking skills. I settled back in my chair and Gene picked up his guitar and harmonica rig. Donna, Miss Tilley and I were treated to a couple of songs, including two that Gene wrote. I easily

could hear that Gene Bahr also is an artist with music, and I continued to be very impressed. I’ll be back for another concert of hospitality with these very fine folks.

Give Gene a call or email if you need his services, and to visit his gallery. I guarantee you’ll experience a fine reception. Be prepared to be dazzled by the glory of the outdoors when you visit. *Gene Bahr Wildlife Creations* on Bridgton Road, Sebago. 207-647-5238. www.genebahr.com.

