

Silver Dollar City and Branson, MO-are special !



Gaylen

Montgomery

This is the story of how special Silver Dollar City has been in my life. I simply want to share the story of what brought this all about, and how it has completely changed my retirement years. It is also making it possible for me to share some of the 'Hand Made' craftsmanship and skills that were shared with me. Many of these talents have been lost in this 'High Speed' world we live in, and I hope to help restore the joy and satisfaction of making creative wood art the "Old Fashioned Way", as it was done in the Ozarks for so many years.



This was the Toy Shop in 1991.

Over 20 years ago I was introduced to the art of Scroll Saw work by Jim Adam who was the master Scroll Saw Cutter at the 'Toy Shop' in Silver Dollar City. I met him one summer afternoon in 1991. He was cutting with the old pedal scroll saw, and he made it look so easy to do. I told him that only a few months before I had given up on my attempts at scroll sawing because all I seemed to be able to do was break blades, burn wood and get totally frustrated, so I threw the saw on the shelf and planned to never attempt it again.

Jim convinced me I could do it, if I would get "a saw that worked", and follow the instruction he offered. So I went home, 400 miles away in Underwood, Iowa, sold my scroll saw, and got a new one. I got some new saw blades that Jim had recommended and proceeded to start again. For the next 3 or 4 summers I always made it a point to see Jim when we made our annual visit to Silver Dollar City. Each year I looked forward to having my work critiqued by him and to learn the next level of techniques to improve my skills. With time and practice, I became an accomplished craftsman. We lost touch for the next few years while I did a lot of scroll saw work. I cut a variety of wood projects, and my wife Karen painted them. We made these items for Craft Shows, Christmas gifts, and for almost anything else we could think of.



Jim & Myself

Our first meeting --2011

After retiring from teaching in 1997, I kept up my cutting and at the request of a friend I eventually ended up teaching Scroll Saw Classes in the Continuing Education Department at Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, Iowa. I started the classes in 2006, and in 2009, I had the opportunity to expand my classes to include the Midwest Woodworkers Store in Omaha, Nebraska. There I taught both Scroll Saw Classes and Pen Making Classes on the mini wood-lathe until 2015.



Dennis & Eileen

Soon after I started teaching, I realized how Jim had made my retirement years so much more enjoyable and meaningful, so I started looking for him. Everywhere I looked I could not find anyone that could give me a lead to help me locate him, but I kept looking. Finally, in the September of 2010, I was visiting Silver Dollar City, and one of the woodturning craftsmen I was visiting with, Dennis Villwok, recognized my name, and informed me I was a cousin to his wife, Eileen. We had not seen each other since our High School days over 50 years ago back in Nebraska.

That was a very special meeting that I do not believe “just happened”. I believe God brought me back to Silver Dollar City at that precise moment, so that Denny and I would meet. We surprised Eileen that evening and my wife and we shared dinner with her and Denny. We enjoyed catching up on all of those lost years. During the conversation I brought up the fact that I was looking for Jim Adam, because I had learned Scroll Saw from him at Silver Dollar City years before. Much to my surprise and extreme delight, I discovered Jim was a member of Denny and Eileen’s Church.



Jim & Myself 2012

Now it was complete, God’s plan had come together. I had fulfilled my dream of locating Jim, plus I found my cousin, Eileen, that I had lost track of, and all of this happened on the same afternoon back at Silver Dollar City where it all started. That event was an answer to a prayer and the end of my five year search to find Jim. I contacted him and shared some of the facts and details that I remembered from 1991. We discovered that he was indeed the person that had taught me the art of Scroll Saw so many years ago. We have shared a number of meals since to reminisce and swap stories. It is indeed a blessing and a joy to have become friends with Jim and his wife Nancy.



Art Reed

During my search for Jim I became friends with Art Reed. Art makes acoustical music instruments and is a big believer in hand made ‘craftsmanship’. I shared my love for Scroll Saw with him, and showed him many of the items I had made. I also shared the story of how I had learned the art of Scroll Saw from Jim at Silver Dollar City years before. If you visit Art at the I Max Theater, the scroll saw portrait he displays, is a gift I made for him about three years ago.



Art’s scroll saw portrait

At the time I first met Art he was at the Engler Block and is now at the Branson Mill Craft Village and the I Max. He has known that I have been teaching for over six years and have had over 500 students take my classes. With that in mind, he asked if I would come to Branson and be a part of rejuvenating the skills and craftsmanship of ‘Wood Art’ on the Scroll Saw.

Thus, the circle of sharing these skills is being completed, and it has brought me back to Branson. I find a great deal of satisfaction in being able to pass on to others, the skill, and knowledge that Jim has shared with me. So, in turn, I wish to do the same, and share all of this information with anyone that may want to learn it. I encourage them to enjoy scroll sawing as much as I do. My hope was to be offering my classes back at Silver Dollar City and sharing it there. But thanks to many great friends, that helped along the way, my dream of being a part of the Branson culture is now coming true at the Branson Mill Craft Village. It is a ‘Family’ of demonstrating crafters that are truly amazing, and Karen and I could not be happier to be here.

Thank you,

Jim Adam , Silver Dollar City, and
The Branson Mill!

I am

Gaylen Montgomery

This is some of what Jim helped
me make possible →

