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## Carving Profile

# Behind the Badge: Bob Reitmeyer

by Regina Reitmeyer and Chris Whillock

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Thousands of Scouts earn a woodcarving badge each year and many of them have one man to thank: Bob Reitmeyer. Bob has created a national business out of his love for both woodcarving and Scouting, and has introduced many young people to the art of carving...one step at a time.

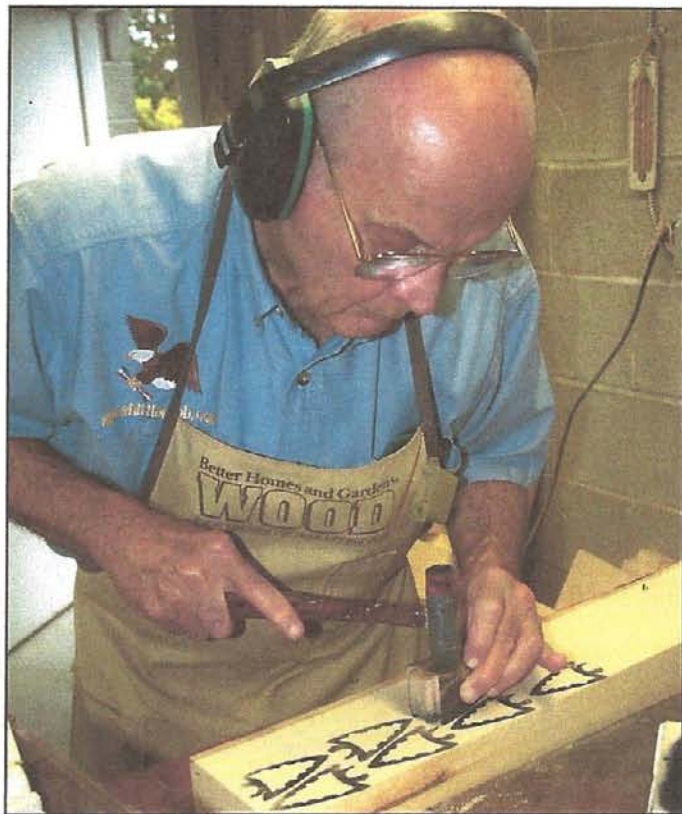
In the 1980s, Bob developed a business that produces "step boards." Each step board illustrates a basic whittling project that can be done in a few simple steps—from start to finish. Bears, foxes, eagles (all kinds of animals), axes, and arrows...you name it, Bob most likely has a step board for it.

"I wanted these young, eager learners to see what the final carving would look like and how to get there," he says. "The boards are designed to inspire them as well as instruct them," Bob said.

Bob first conceived his idea while teaching woodcarving to young boys who were attending Scout summer camps near his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Currently, about six dozen camps nationwide use these step boards as part of their merit badge program.

After he chooses his pattern, Bob carves three pieces to display the steps. The first piece (first step) shows the initial cut for the pattern. The second piece (second step) shows the pattern completely carved, and the final piece (third step) shows the recommended paint scheme.

He uses 3/8" thick plywood to make all the step boards. The single-pattern boards measure 8" x 9" and a new combo step board measures 9" x 12" (it has two carving lessons on one board).



After gluing the "steps" onto the boards, Bob affixes complete instructions below them (any additional instructions are posted on the reverse side of the board). After all the glue dries thoroughly, the boards are dipped in an oil-based polyurethane four times to ensure a long-lasting finish.

Every year, Bob makes about forty step boards to distribute to the Boy Scout camps. The step boards are provided free to the camps, and he sells the carving blanks that are

needed for each project. Bob also sells other blanks, tools, and supplies on his website ([whittlerbob.com](http://whittlerbob.com)).

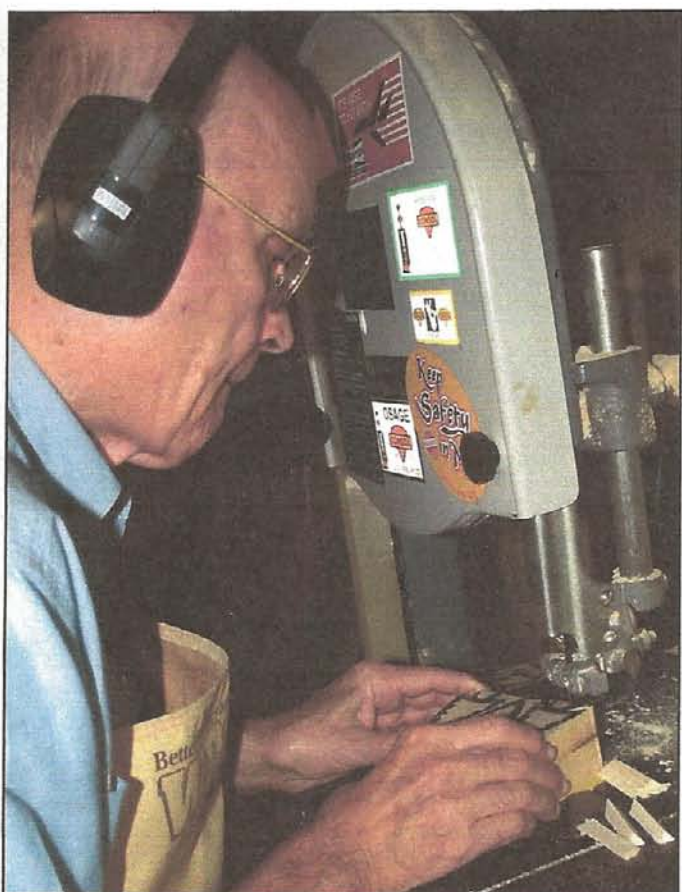
Over the years, the business has grown and it now produces more than 18,000 carving blanks annually. To meet the demand, Bob now gets help from three friends who saw the blanks from locally grown, air-dried basswood.

The business allows Bob to indulge in a hobby that took root during his four-year stint as a Boy Scout under the woodcarving tutelage of Ed Choby. When Bob enrolled his son Rick in the Cub Scout program in 1979, he contacted Ed again (who was no longer affiliated with Scouts) and asked to resume his carving lessons.

Those lessons evolved into an ongoing passion for Bob. As a military pilot (Navy and Army National Guard) and a corporate pilot, Bob has left woodchips in plenty of locations as he practiced woodcarving during his free time on trips.

Additionally, he remains active in his local Cub Scout pack and Boy Scout troop. He has attended the Boy Scouts of America National Jamboree five times as a woodcarving instructor/demonstrator at the Merit Badge Midway.

Still, three or four times a year, Bob manages to find time to submit a "how-to" article to *Chip Chats* woodcarving magazine and share his patterns with other woodcarving enthusiasts. (Originally, his articles were published from 1986 to 1988; he resumed writing for the magazine in 1994 and continues to do so today.)



For more information about Bob and his business, visit [whittlerbob.com](http://whittlerbob.com).

