

Ross and CVA help revive 'marquetry'

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer

Ross Colter doesn't buy tacky souvenirs to remind him of countries he's visited with his wife Terry.

Instead, the McIntyre Crescent man makes his souvenirs after his trips, spending hours transforming a garish postcard scene into a lovely wooden plaque depicting the same scene with different grains and colors of wood veneer.

Called marquetry, Mr. Colter's hobby dates back to the glory days of kings and queens, when royalty hired craftsmen to decorate their furniture with such time-consuming and attractive handwork.

The art form disappeared when monarchies gave way in most countries, and has only recently been revived.

Mr. Colter said he got into the craft 12 years ago after buying a marquetry kit in a store. The kit contained everything he needed, from a pattern to bits of wood to the instructions. Nowadays, he says, such kits can't be found.

HARD TIME
Those who do marquetry are few, about 50 he estimates in Canada, and they have a hard time finding the wood veneer they want.

Although the craft requires only basic tools — a cutting board, an Exacto knife, and sand paper — getting the thin sheets of wood veneer integral to the art is more than half the struggle.

With wood veneer coming from many different countries, it's sometimes hard to get the basic material for the craft. Mr. Colter said he buys most of it by mail order from the U.S.

Varying in thickness from one-twenty-eighth to one-fourth of an inch, the veneer comes from trees in South America, Hawaii, India and other countries.

Mr. Colter said the veneer is sometimes peeled off a log with a lathe, or sawed off in slices from the centre. It costs from 30 cents to \$1.50 a square foot depending on the type of wood, he said.

Once you have enough colors and grains in veneer to fill up the various sections of your design, you start carving up the thin veneer with the Exacto knife and fit the bits of veneer together like a jigsaw



Using over 20 different kinds of wood, Ross Colter of Georgetown practises the centuries-old skill of marquetry, a craft in which thin wood veneer is cut into shapes to make up a

puzzle. Scotch tape holds the pieces together. Mr. Colter then turns the taped picture over to examine a clean version of his design made up entirely of bits of wood veneer.

SMOOTH FINISH
The work is glued to a wooden board, sanded carefully and varnished or linseed oil is applied to give it a smooth finish.

"It's better to do the sanding by hand unless you have experience with the electric sander, as the veneer is very thin and you could end up with a big hole in your picture," Mr. Colter warned.

Lining his basement walls are samples of Mr. Colter's work. Each reminds him and his wife of their trips to Europe and Hawaii.

picture like a jigsaw puzzle. He'll be teaching a course on how to make the lovely pictures starting in January for the Credit Valley Artisans.

Although patterns can be bought for making a plaque from the marquetry association in the U.S. or England, (there isn't one in Canada) Mr. Colter has made most of his own, drawing them off slides or postcards of his travels.

"The numbers on the patterns indicate the type of wood to be used," he said. "You often have to substitute for what the pattern asks for, and that's where the art comes in."

Mr. Colter said marquetry is common in Italy, where the finished products are sold to tourists. He himself has never sold any of his work, but he said he has given many pieces away as presents.

Hesitant to use dyed veneer which Mr. Colter said is sold in a variety of colors, he warned that using too much of it can make a picture gaudy, where-

as a little bit can enhance a picture.

An engineering technician with CNCP Telecommunications during the day, Mr. Colter is taking up teaching his rare skill in marquetry Monday nights at Cedarvale Cottage in Georgetown for the Credit Valley Artisans. The classes run from Jan. 18 to Feb. 22 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Those interested in registering may register Jan. 8 and 9. For further information, contact Janice Smith at 877-6784.

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Bottle-neck cure

Westbound motorists travelling along Guelph Street won't have to bear that dangerous bottle-neck at the Mountainview Road intersection. Town engineer Bob Austin told council Monday night that the situation should be corrected at the end of January when new traffic lights are installed. The light currently causing problems at the intersection juts into the right-hand westbound lane, forcing the squeeze in heavy traffic.

Speed limit increase

Speed limits on Mountainview Road North will go back to 50 kilometres an hour, council has decided. Recent road reconstruction at the River Drive and John Street intersection has largely been completed and the engineering department advised that the speed limits could safely go up.

Y's winter is here

There is still time to register in the Y's Winter Programs. The Georgetown Y will hold an evening registration Jan. 5 from 6 to 9 p.m. at 89 Mountainview Rd. S. The Y is also accepting registrations for all programs, from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the same address.

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Making a picture like this requires only very basic tools. An Exacto knife, a bread board, and sand paper are all that's needed to cut thin layers of exotic woods to create a picture. Local artisan Ross Colter says the hardest part is getting the wood veneer needed to make up the picture. He buys his by mail order from the U.S.

(Herald photo)

Let us exult in the miracle of His Birth, and in the re-creation which we may celebrate. That the message of love, faith and hope are ours now and forever.

Georgetown Decorating Centre

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