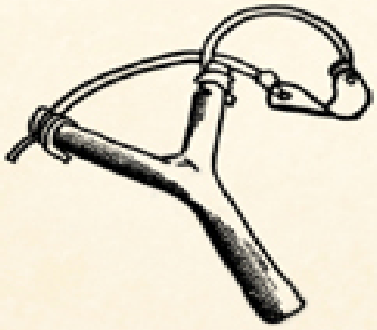
AMERICANA LIBRARY

FOXFIRE

Blowguns and Bouncing Pigs

TRADITIONAL TOY MAKING



Edited by

FOXFIRE STUDENTS

Blowguns and Bouncing Pigs: Traditional Toy-Making

The Foxfire Americana Library
Edited by Foxfire Students

Anchor Books
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A NOTE ABOUT THE FOXFIRE AMERICANA LIBRARY SERIES

For almost half a century, high school students in the Foxfire program in Rabun County, Georgia, have collected oral histories of their elders from the southern Appalachian region in an attempt to preserve a part of the rapidly vanishing heritage and dialect. The Foxfire Fund, Inc., has brought that philosophy of simple living to millions of readers, starting with the bestselling success of *The Foxfire Book* in the early 1970s. Their series of fifteen books and counting has taught creative self-sufficiency and has preserved the stories, crafts, and customs of the unique Appalachian culture for future generations.

Traditionally, books in the Foxfire series have included a little something for everyone in each and every volume. For the first time ever, through the creation of The Foxfire Americana Library, this forty-five-year collection of knowledge has been organized by subject. Whether down-home recipes or simple tips for both your household and garden, each book holds a wealth of tried-and-true information, all passed down by unforgettable people with unforgettable voices.

ILLUSTRATION 1 Mr. Davis glues the cup to the stick.

TOYS

Ball and Cup

ARTHUR DAVIS: I haven't been making these all my life and I don't know anything about their history. It's a good game, though. If you practice a while, you can get pretty good at it.

The pieces are whittled out of mountain laurel or rhododendron, but you could use other kinds. The handles and the cups are glued together, and I make the balls out of pine wood. But you can use whatever you have. The main idea is to swing the stick with one hand so the ball drops into the cup without touching it with the other hand.

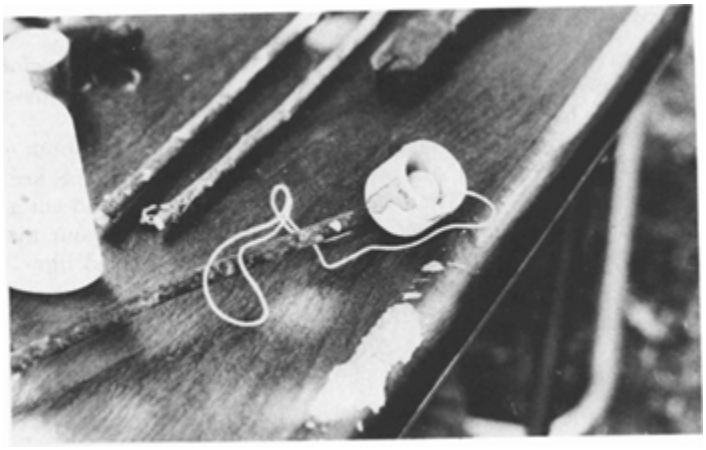


ILLUSTRATION 2 The finished toy.

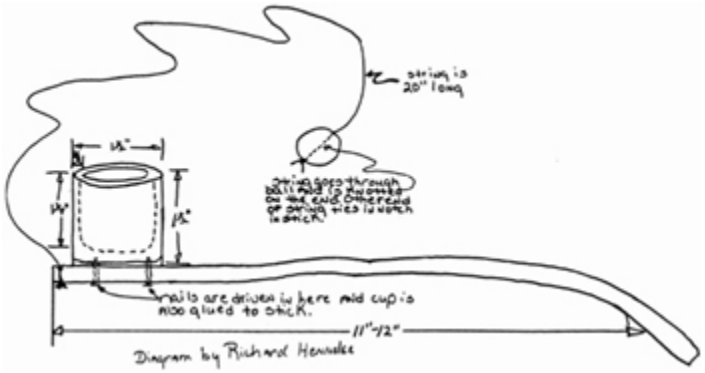


ILLUSTRATION 3

Blowgun

ERNEST FRANKLIN: Take a hollow weed, or something that doesn't have any sections in it like bamboo, and cut a piece of it anywhere from four to six feet long.

That makes your gun.

For the darts, we'd take a round piece of hickory about 3/16 inch in diameter and sharpen one end and put it in the fire and temper it a little bit. Then we'd take a squirrel's tail and cut about a third of it off and fasten that on the other end of your hickory dart. Then you stick that dart in the hollow weed and blow up a storm!

Bouncing Pig

One of the toys Willard Watson makes is called a bouncing pig. A rod runs through the front feet of the pig so that its hindquarters are free to rise up and down. As the crank at the back end of the toy is turned, the man's right arm moves up and down to whip the pig, and each time the pig is whipped, its hindquarters rise off the platform (the man's left leg moves forward, and a rod connected to his left foot and left hand causes his left hand to rise; a rod connecting his left hand and the pig's hindquarters pulls the hindquarters into the air).

Bow and Arrow

LAWTON BROOKS: We made bows and arrows out of hickory wood. We'd take a springy sapling or branch for a bow, shape it right with a knife and put little notches in the ends, and string it with a string. We'd make arrows out of shorter pieces—straight as we could get them. We took umbrella staves one time and made spikes [for the arrows] out of them. We'd tore up somebody's umbrella, got the spikes out of it, and put them in the arrows to kill rabbits, birds, things like that.

LELIA GIBSON: My brother would get a piece of wood, a green sapling—it had to be green so it would bend. He'd cut it to the right length, and string a cord on that. Then he'd get a straight stick [for the arrow] and he'd go to the fields and find stones—old arrowheads the Indians had made—and tie that on the end of the arrow. If they couldn't find arrowheads, they'd use a big twenty-penny nail, but I don't recall now how they fixed that nail on the end of the arrow. They could make the arrows stick into trees.

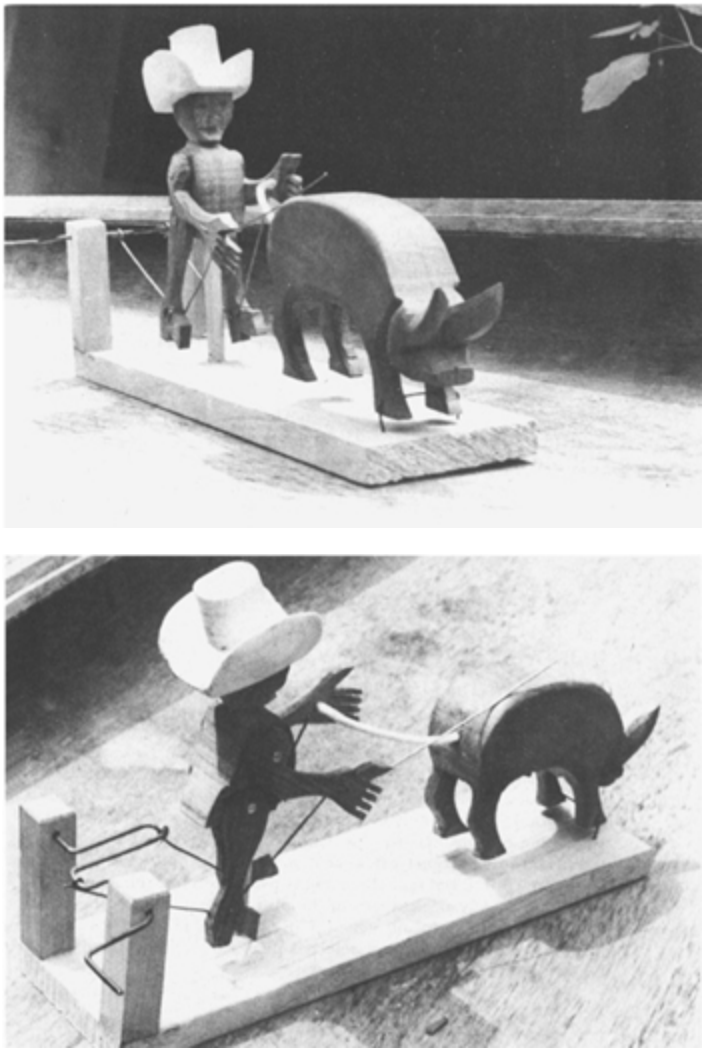


ILLUSTRATION 4 Willard Watson's bouncing pig.

HATTIE KENNY: Arrows were made out of sourwood that grows up in the spring. Let 'em stand over the winter and cut 'em to make your arrows.

BUCK CARVER: For the bows we'd use hickory or white-oak saplings. Instead of string we'd use what they called whang leather, which was strips of ground-hog hide. Then we'd wire or tie a nail up in a straight stick for an arrow.

EDD HODGINS: We used string out of cottonseed meal sacks for the string. That's about all the string we ever got when I was little.

Bubble Blower

LELIA GIBSON: We used to get an old sewing-thread spool, take some soap, and make a lather in water. We'd [dip one end of the spool in the lather] and

blow through the other end and make bubbles. They'd be different colors. They'd be red, pink, blue—all colors.

Bull Grinder

DAVE PICKETT: The Ozark bull grinder was something people say started in the Ozarks. Of course, bull grinders ain't the only name it had. I've heard them called do nothings and smoke grinders. I call them bull grinders because the guy I got the pattern from, that's what he called it. I asked for his permission to use the label off the back of his and I just changed it a little bit. It's a little toy that's good for absolutely nothing except for passifying oneself with something to do other than twiddling his thumbs. I put a label on the back to tell people just what it is: It's for people going either direction, cutting red tape, breaking conversation ice, relieving nervous tension, advanced stages of thumb twiddling, sharpening dull conversations, a reducing gear for big wheels. The world's most useless necessity is made of selected pieces of well-seasoned out-house wood by retired moonshiners.

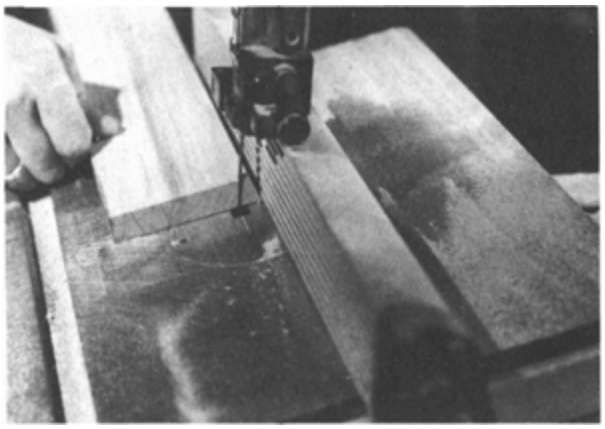


ILLUSTRATION 5 First Dave cuts strips off a poplar board at a 15° angle for the pistons.

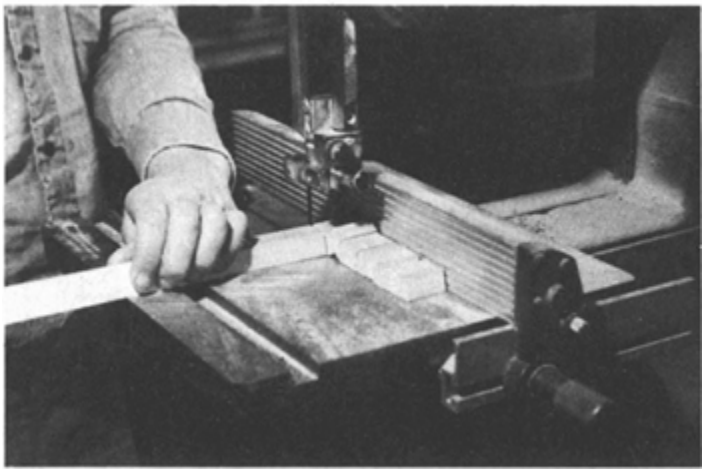


ILLUSTRATION 6 He then cuts the pistons into 1¼″ lengths.

ILLUSTRATION 7 The handles are made of poplar cut $^{3}/_{8}$″ square and 4¼″ long.

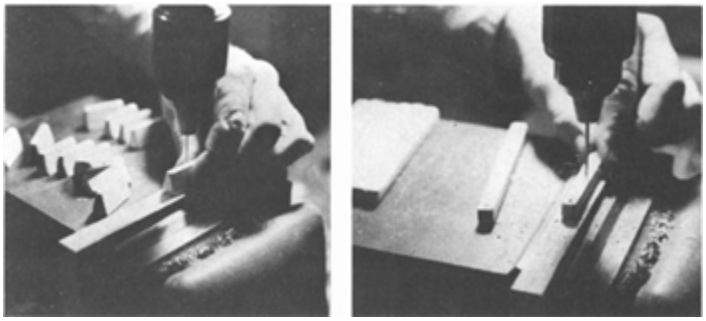


ILLUSTRATION 8 Holes are drilled through the center of each piston, and two holes are drilled 1¼″ apart through the handles to attach the pistons to.

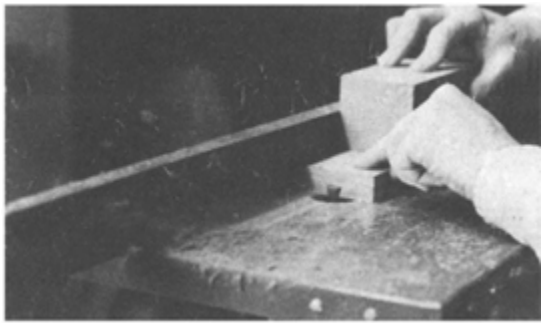


ILLUSTRATION 9 A $^{3}/_{8}$″ dovetail router is used to cut two channels into each 3″ square block.

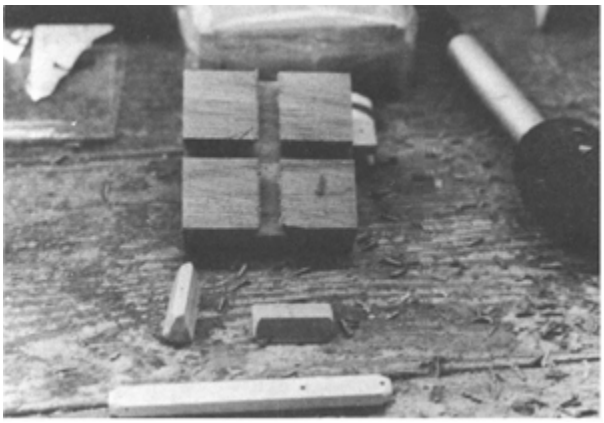


ILLUSTRATION 10 The toy ready for assembly.

ILLUSTRATION 11 Dave puts wax on the pistons to reduce friction and keep them from binding, then he screws a bead into the handle for ease in turning. Last, he sets the two pistons into the channels cut in the block and attaches the handle. The screws are left loose so the pistons and arm turn freely (left), ILLUSTRATION 12 As the handle is turned, the pistons slide back and forth in their respective channels (right).

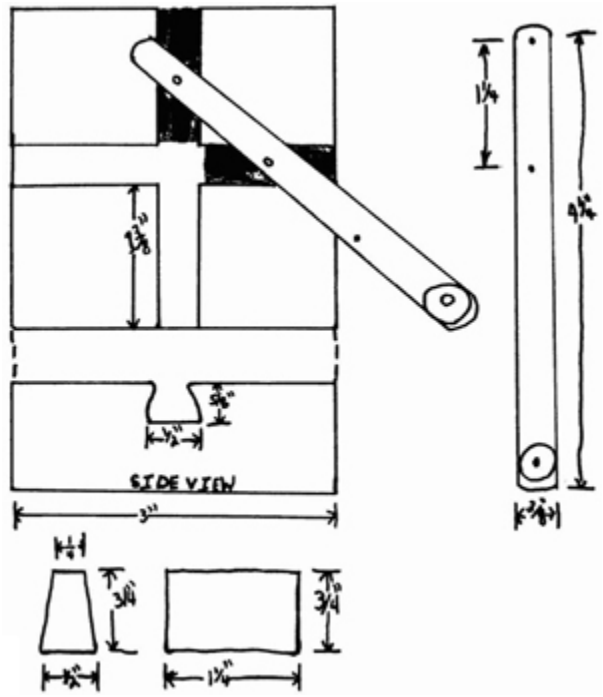


ILLUSTRATION 13

ILLUSTRATION 14 Florence threads a piece of thread 36″ long through two holes of a button and ties the ends together to form a loop.

Button on a String

FLORENCE BROOKS: We used to make these when we were little girls. We'd play spin the button. You move your thumbs in and out to make it whiz. We used to get them tangled in each other's hair and have fights doing that. We did it just to be mean. We played with them until we wore out the string, then we'd go make us another one or tie the one we had back together. The first person I ever saw make one was my mother.

HATTIE KENNY: You broke you a string as long as you wanted it and you put it in the eyes [of the button] crossways and then you tied the ends together to make the string form a loop with the button in the center. Then you put your thumbs in there and start turning it round and round and round till it was wound up. Then start and it would just "zip" until it broke the string in two. Makes the funniest noise!

ILLUSTRATION 15 As she increases and then releases the tension in the string, the button spins, making a whistling noise.

Churning Woman

On a recent visit to the Bakersville, North Carolina, area, Harvey Miller showed us a sixty-year-old handmade toy he owns. As a wooden crank on the side of the box is turned, the woman's right arm moves up and down, as does the churn dasher attached to the woman's hand.

ILLUSTRATION 16 The woman is mounted on a chestnut box. Her body is carved out of wood. The end of the crank that operates the toy is visible (arrow).

ILLUSTRATION 17 The wooden crank, carved with a pocket knife.

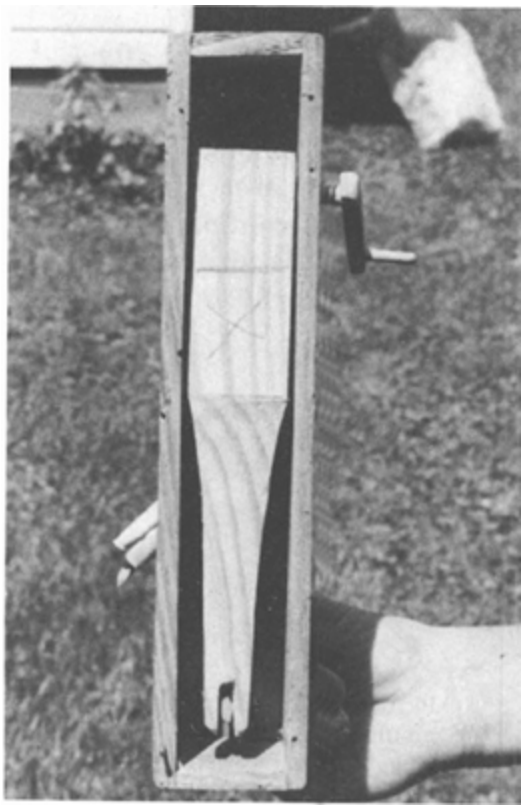


ILLUSTRATION 18 We removed the bottom panel in order to see how the toy operated.

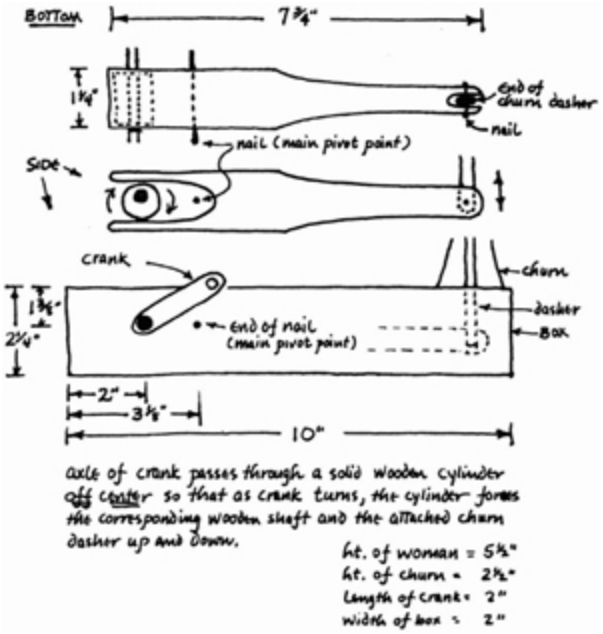


ILLUSTRATION 19

Climbing Bear

DAVE PICKETT: The climbing bear is a derivative of a Swiss toy. Sometime in the early eighteenth century, a Swiss toy maker made a little man, and it climbed up a string and worked on the same principle. And he was called a climbing Swiss. And when the Swiss people immigrated to this country, there were no similar mountains in this country to climb. So they made what *did* climb. They made a bear. Some of the Swiss have immigrated to some of the islands, and I've seen monkeys made the same way, squirrels—just about anything that climbed you could adapt to this principle.

The way it works is one side holds while the other side catches the higher hold. It climbs one side while the other side alternately holds.

I usually make them this size. The thing about a bear any bigger than the one I make is that you take a kid two or three years old, and he's standing under it, and he makes that bear climb and he turns it loose, and it's heavy enough that if it fell and hit him in the head, it would hurt him. And that's the reason I keep the bear small. If it did fall, it wouldn't hurt him.

There was a guy came here a couple years ago. One of the representatives of the Stanley Tool Company. He wanted to know if he couldn't have a pattern of this climbing bear to make some. So I said, "Fine." I gave him the pattern, and I saw him three weeks later.

He said, “You know, I made about fifty of those bears and not a one would climb.”

And I said, “What did you do? Drill the holes straight through?”

And he said, “Yeah.”

I said, “No wonder it wouldn’t climb.” Then I explained how the holes in the arms have to be drilled [see ILLUSTRATION 21].

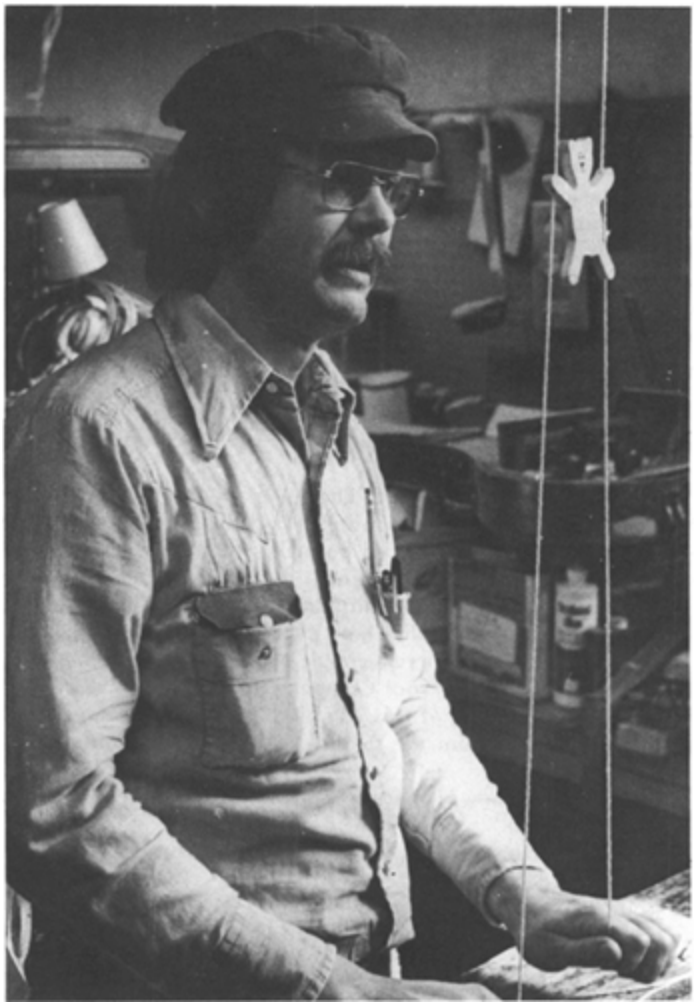


ILLUSTRATION 20 Dave makes the bear climb by alternately pulling on one, then the other string.

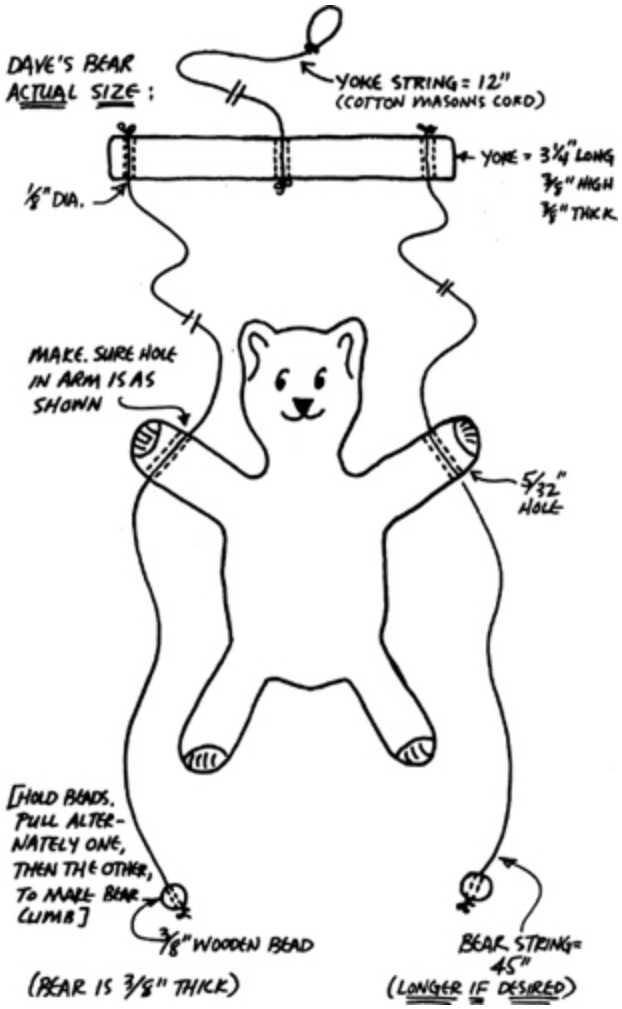


ILLUSTRATION 21

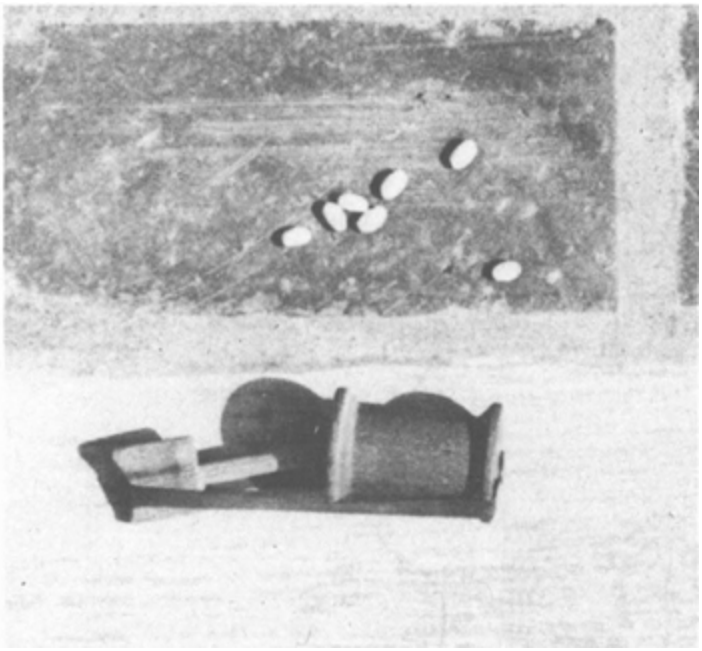


ILLUSTRATION 22 Buck Carver's corn gun.

Corn Guns

BUCK CARVER: We had another toy we made with big spools. It had a big opening that would hold a grain of corn or a pea or a bean. Well, we'd take a little carpet tack and tack this rubber band around. We had a plunger in back and this rubber band came around it. We had a little slot in the plunger so the band would hold in the slot. Then we'd put a pea or a grain of corn in there and flip it with that plunger and it'd send it a pretty good ways. We had a kind of corn with little old slick, hard kernels, and that stuff would whack pretty good in those little old corn guns.

Cornstalk Animals

ERNEST FRANKLIN: There's nothing to them. Take one piece of a cornstalk for the body, then take another stalk and split strips off the outside for the legs and the neck. Then make the head and tail from other pieces. Kids would play with those lots.

MRS. RAE SHOOK: We used to make horses and sheep out of cornstalks. They'd have long legs and necks. The head would be made from the hard outside of the cornstalk. The body, ears, and face would be made out of the stalk, too. Everything was made from the stalk.

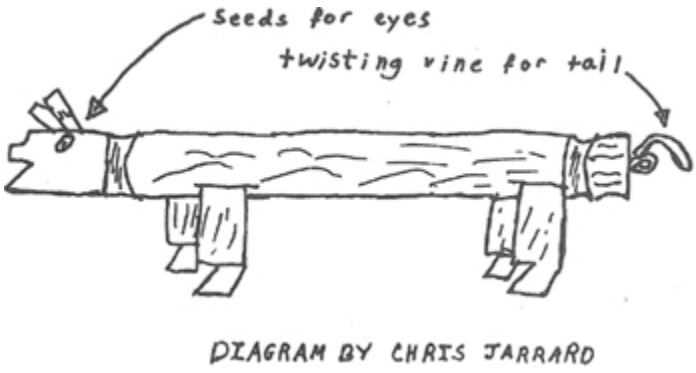


ILLUSTRATION 23

Cornstalk Fiddle

MRS. TOM MACDOWELL: We'd take a cornstalk outside and strip and split it and then fix the bow and we'd just squeak and play.

EDD HODGINS: Yeah, I've made a thousand of 'em. Just cut off two joints out of a cornstalk and use one for the bow and one for the fiddle. Sometimes when they go to gettin' dry, you can spit on them and make 'em squeal real big.

HARLEY THOMAS: There's nothing to it. You just make your little strings and make your little bridge and there's your fiddle. We used a resined stick for our fiddle bows, but you can use a real fiddle bow or a cornstalk one, too. My mother used to make two cornstalk fiddles and use one for the fiddle and one for the bow.

ILLUSTRATION 24 Harley first decides which part of the stalk he will use.

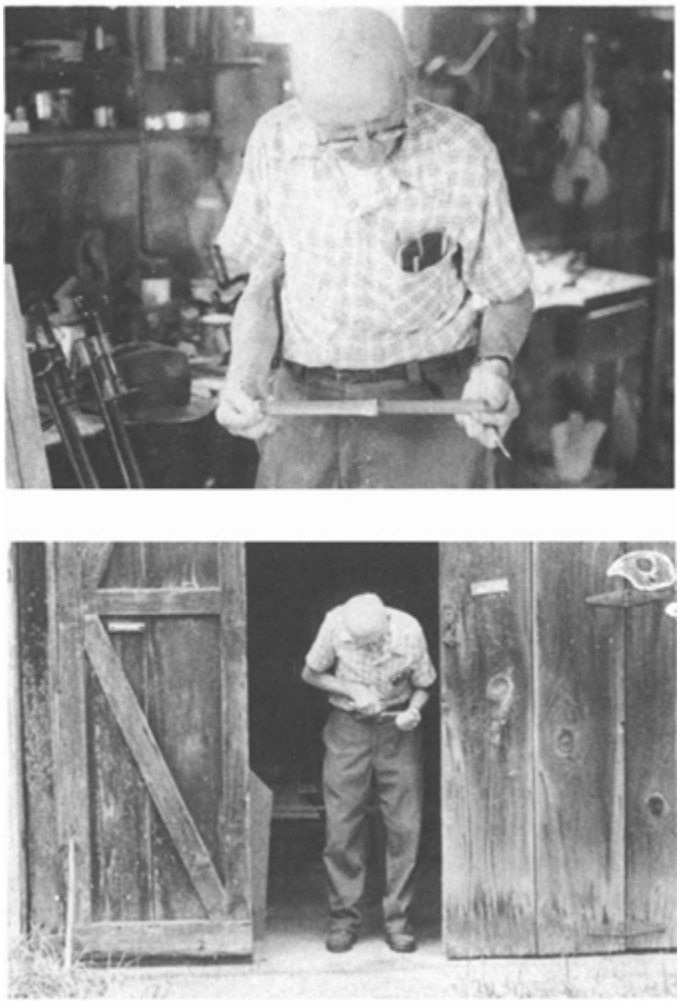


ILLUSTRATION 25 He selects a two-joint section of the stalk and trims off any ends of leaves, or pieces of foreign matter.

ILLUSTRATION 26 Next he decides which section to use for the “stringed” portion, and, with a pencil, outlines the areas to be cut away.

ILLUSTRATION 27 Then he begins to cut, first slicing away the excess stalk that lies underneath what will become the “strings.”

ILLUSTRATION 28 After cutting out the excess stalk between the “strings,” he fashions a tiny bridge out of scrap wood.

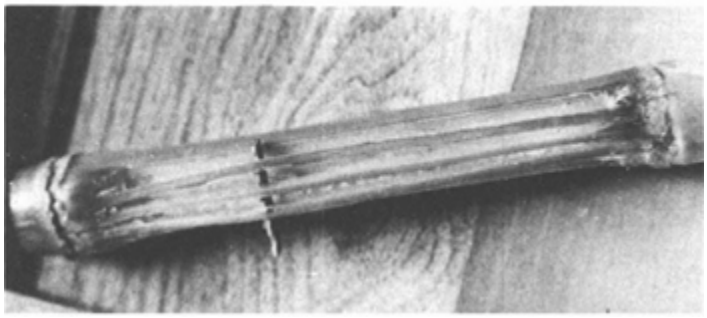


ILLUSTRATION 29 The finished fiddle.

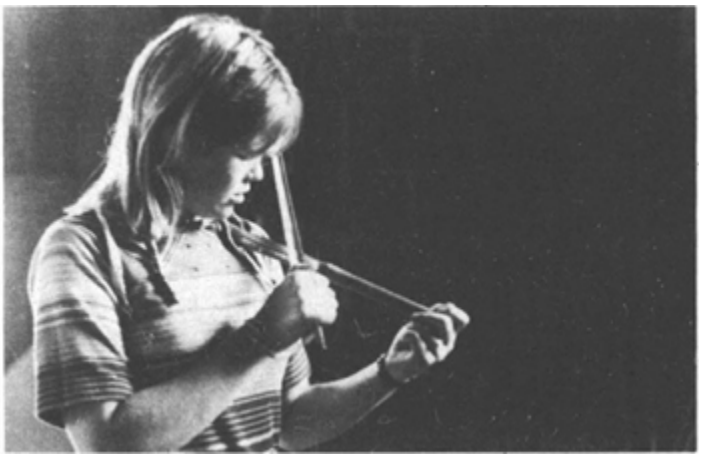


ILLUSTRATION 30 Richard Henslee tries playing the fiddle using one of Harley's fiddle bows …

ILLUSTRATION 31 … and so does Harley.

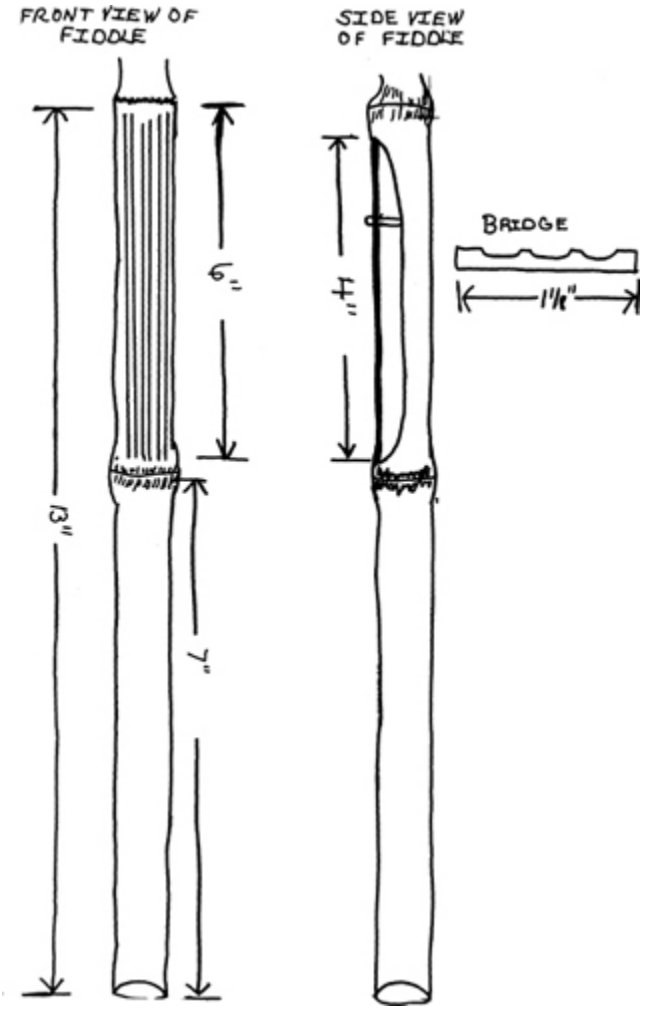


ILLUSTRATION 32

Crossbow

LAWTON BROOKS: I used to make an old wooden crossbow. I'd get a plank and saw it out like the stock of a gun, make a bow like for a plain bow, and mount the bow crosswise to the gun stock at the front. Then I'd string the bow and make a trigger in the gun stock to hold the string back, set my arrow in the bow, and pull the string back ready to shoot the arrow. The trigger'd hold the string ready to shoot till I pulled it, and then it'd shoot the arrow.

STANLEY HICKS: We'd make crossbows. Hickory is the best wood for the bow, but white oak will work, too. We'd hew the arrows out round and just leave the ends flat if we were going to practice. If we were hunting, we'd take a .22-cartridge hull and drive a sharpened nail through its end from the inside and then mount that hull on the end of our arrow. That made a good one.

Apple-head Dolls

LOLA CANNON: [Some girls may have had apple-head dolls] but I didn't know about them when I was growing up. But I know how to make them. You peel an apple, and while the apple is fresh you shape features on it with a teaspoon. And then the best part is to string them up with a string through the center. In a dry, airy place hang them up and let them shrivel. When they shrivel, the features you have made are still there. You put in tiny sequins or something for the eyes and little pearl beads for the teeth. The texture of the dried apple looks like a real old person's skin. They're really interesting. I expect they'd last a long time. If you got one wet, I imagine it'd lose its shape. You see a lot of them in the craft shops and such places.

MRS. MARGARET OWENS: [Mrs. Owens began making apple-head dolls to sell through area craft shops nearly ten years ago. She modified several old patterns and came up with her own designs, but the methods she uses are typical.]

I know very little of the history of apple-head dolls. I read in a book when I first started making them that they originated in colonial times. The mothers would peel apples and pinch a nose and poke at the eyes every day or so until they finally had a face and the apple was dry. When I first started, I tried it that way, but it just didn't look like a face, so I began to carve them. It took a long time for me to get one right on the first try.

ILLUSTRATION 33 Margaret first peels the apple with a thin, sharp knife, leaving only the skin around the stem. She shapes the face with the knife by cutting indentations for eyes and cutting into cheeks, thus forming the nose. She uses Golden Delicious apples, and she dips the whole apple in lemon juice to keep it from turning brown. As the apple dries, it shrinks and takes on an aged appearance and individuality. After the apple is completely dry she decides whether it will be a man or a woman. Then she shapes the face by pinching and poking and perhaps snipping off the nose a little.

It takes about four hours to make a whole doll. The men don't take as long to make as the women because the women have on pantaloons,

bonnets, and aprons. The hair is fake fur that I buy at a fabric shop. Some people have used cotton but it doesn't look quite as real. The face will stay that way for at least four years. Until the apple dries, I never know whether it is going to be a man or a woman. I've had to throw away lots of heads. They look perfect when I carve them, but they dry crooked. You can't make young people out of the apples because their faces wrinkle as they dry.

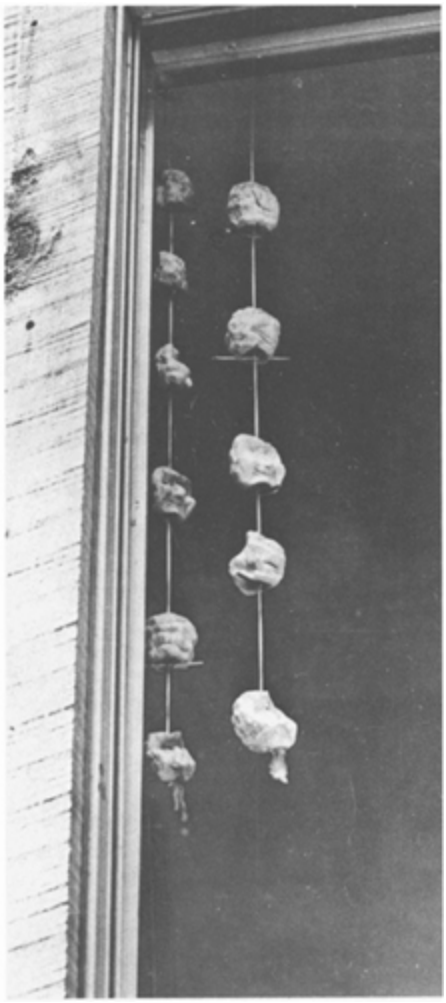


ILLUSTRATION 34 Margaret strings several apples on a thick thread with a carpet needle, separating them by twisting a small stick under each one. During extremely damp weather, she may first dry them in her gas oven for about twenty-four hours. She turns the heat on a low setting for about ten minutes, then turns it off, the only heat being from the oven's pilot light. She sometimes turns the oven on low again for about ten minutes about twelve hours later, but during this time, the door is not opened. Even though the apples may be dried in the oven first, they are still hung up until Margaret is ready to use them.

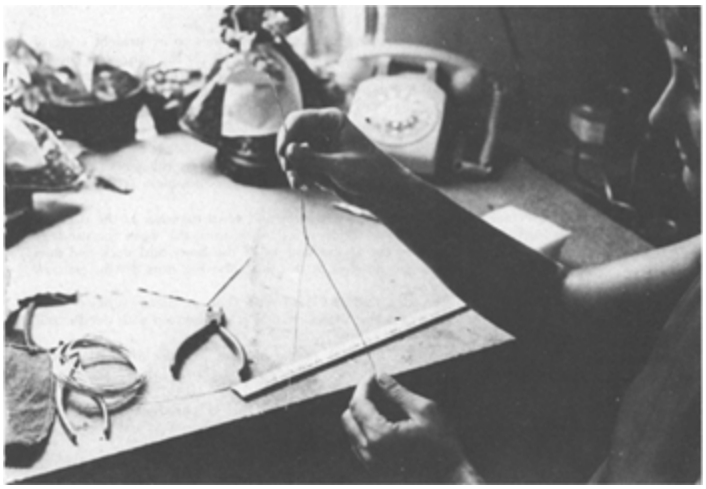


ILLUSTRATION 35 To make the body, Margaret uses 20-gauge wire. She cuts the wire 24″ long, then doubles it. The wire is twisted together from the top for 6″. To make the arms, a 10″ length of wire is inserted where Margaret's right thumb is (about 3″ from the top) and is twisted around the body wire several times to hold it securely.

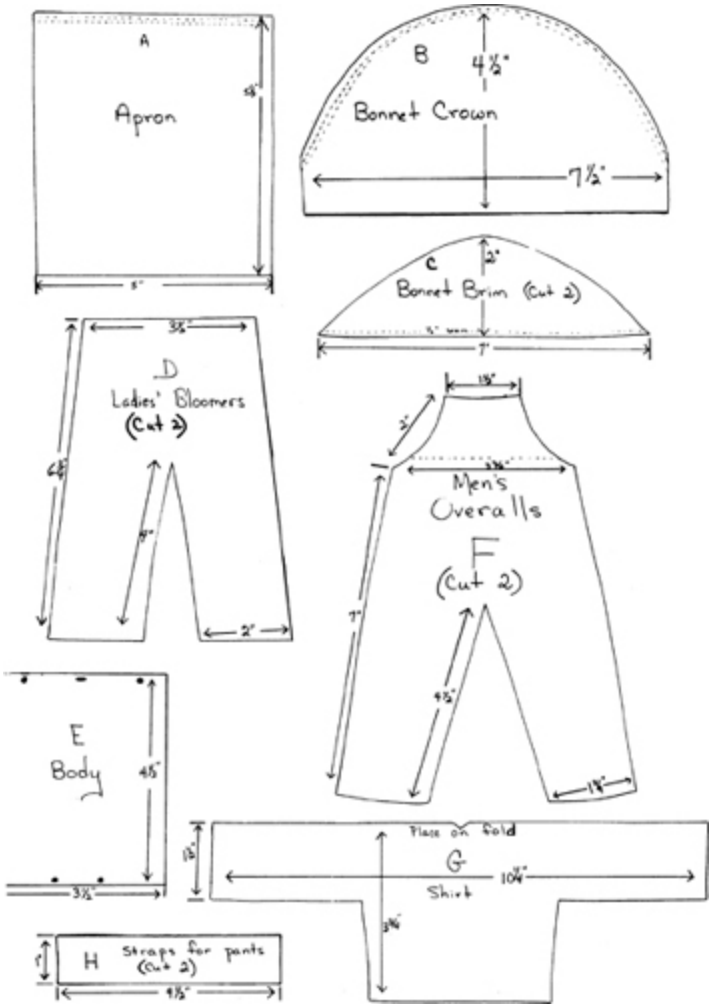


ILLUSTRATION 36

Bonnet Crown: Gather ½″ from edge along dotted lines to fit straight edge of bonnet brim. Sew to bonnet brim at ½″ seam. Make a tie for the bonnet by cutting a strip 1″ wide by 17″ long. Fold together lengthwise and turn under edges. Make a casing for the tie to go through by turning under the straight edge of the bonnet crown about $^{3}/_{4}$″ from the edge.

Bonnet Brim: Cut two. Sew right sides together along curved edges and turn. Sew to bonnet crown along gathered edge.

Lady's Bloomers: The pattern allows for ¼″ seams to sew the pieces together and for a ½″ hem at bottom of legs and at waist. The bloomers are stitched to the stuffed "body" at the waist.

Body: Use one piece of material folded over and sewn together at the top and bottom with ¼″ seams. The 4½″ side is left open until the wires for the legs are inserted through notches cut at the bottom of the body and neck and arm wires are pushed through the notches at the top. The big dots on the pattern indicate places to cut the notches.

After wires are all inserted, a wad of foam rubber, cotton, or any other type of stuffing is pushed into the case and the open side is stitched up with needle and thread.

Men's Overalls: Cut two. For the back of the overalls, cut the material on the dotted line and put in a ½″ hem there. The pattern allows for ¼″ seams and ½″ hems on the pants legs.

Men's Shirt: The pattern allows for ¼″ seams and ½″ hems for the sleeves. Only the tiny notch is needed for the neck opening. The pattern is cut on the fold of the material, so there is no seam across the shoulders.

Straps for Pants: Cut two. Fold each one in half lengthwise and turn under the edges and hem. Then tack the straps on with needle and thread in front and back just like overall galluses.

Lady's Dress: The pattern allows for ¼″ seams down the sides and ½″ hems at sleeves and lower skirt. The dotted line indicates waist, and an apron or belt is placed here and gathers adjusted. No other gathering is necessary. The pattern is cut on the fold of the material, so there is no seam across the shoulders.

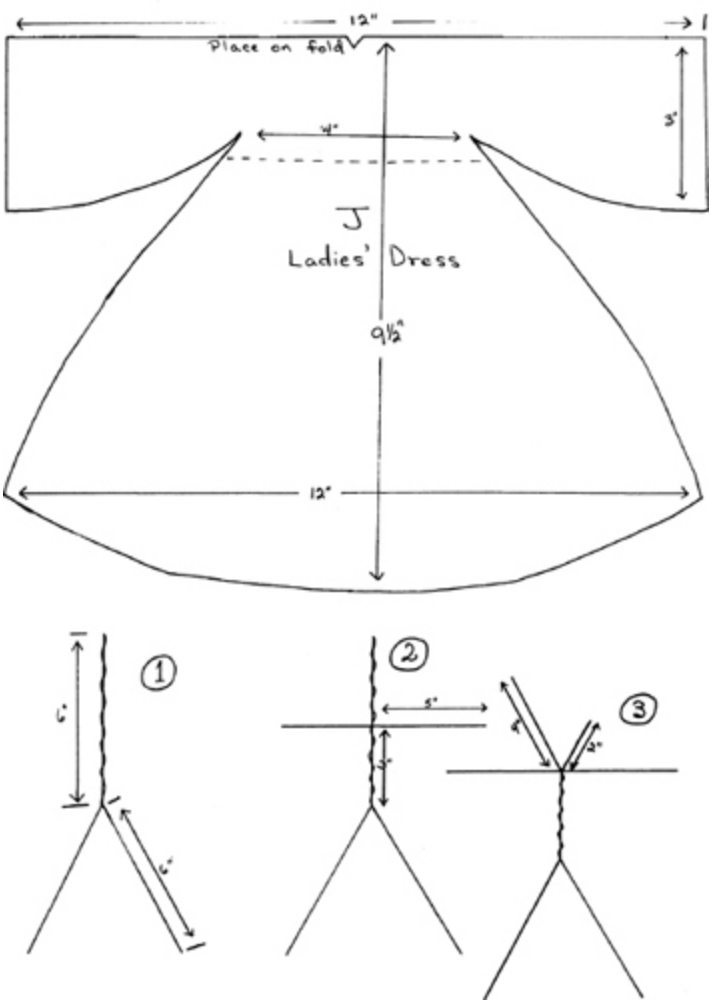


ILLUSTRATION 37 *Apron:* Gather waist along dotted lines to about 3½″. Turn under a ½″ hem on both sides and at the bottom.

Make a sash for the apron by cutting a strip of material 1½″ wide and 17″ long. Fold in half lengthwise and turn the ends and edges under with ¼″ seams. Sew the sash to the apron, matching the center of the gathered apron to the center of the sash and leaving about 7″ on each end to be tied.

The apron will be tied around the waist of the dress, indicated by a dotted line on pattern piece J.

For the wire forming the body:

1. A 24″ length of wire is doubled and twisted for about 6″, then spread to make the two legs.

2. A 10″ length of wire is inserted about 3″ from the top for the arms.

3. The 3″ loop of wire above the arms is cut so that it can be separated into a 2″ and a 4″ length to attach the head.

ILLUSTRATION 38 Margaret cuts five tiny slits in a pillowcase “sort of thing” for the legs, arms, and neck. It measures 4½″ by ½″ doubled. She slips the wire through the holes, then stuffs the body with foam rubber or other material. She sews up the open side with a needle and thread.

ILLUSTRATION 39 Mrs. Owens makes the dolls’ clothes on a sewing machine. She turns the clothes right side out just before dressing the doll, and at that time cuts out a tiny notch for the neck wire to slide through (see pattern pieces).

ILLUSTRATION 40 She then pulls the shirt down over the top part of the body and runs the arm wires out through the sleeves. Then she pulls the overalls up over the body and sews the galluses (or straps) into place. The papier-mâché hands and feet are then pushed onto the arm and leg wires and glued on with Elmer’s glue. The doll is left to sit for five to ten

minutes so that the glue will dry completely.

To make papier-mâché hands and feet, use one-half cup of water to one table-spoon of flour. Use about four sections of toilet paper for the hands and five for the feet. Before wetting the paper in the flour mixture, fold and refold until the shape of a hand (or foot) is made. Cut and shape the hand or foot and then wet thoroughly. Keep shaping while in the flour mixture and then squeeze the water out. Lay on cookie sheet and dry overnight in an oven heated by the pilot light or out in the open for about two days.

ILLUSTRATION 41 The loop of wire that will hold the head is then cut so that one end is 4″ long and the other end 2″ long. The 4″ piece is run up through the core of the applehead and folded down the back of the head. The 2″ piece is brought up behind the head and twisted with the longer piece to hold the head securely in place. This method also allows for the head to be replaced if it is damaged by insects or rodents. To prevent insects from getting into the applehead, Margaret inserts an insect repellent into the core. She does not know of anything that will prevent rodents from eating the dried apples.

ILLUSTRATION 42 Matching cucumber seeds are glued in for eyes and black dots painted on the seeds with poster paint. Eyebrows are made by gluing small pieces of fake fur over the eyes, and a small piece of fake fur is cut out and glued on for hair.

ILLUSTRATION 43 The hair is brushed and cut to the right length. To hold the hair in place, Mrs. Owens uses spray starch or hair spray. She cuts out a small neckerchief and ties it around the man’s neck as a finishing touch. Here is a rear view of the doll when the haircut is finished.

ILLUSTRATION 44 After the doll is completed, Mrs. Owens decides on an arrangement and wires the doll to a log or stool or something else on the stand that will hold it securely in whatever position it looks natural. Mr. Owens made the fiddle; the spinning wheel was purchased from a shop; the dough bowl is half a walnut shell; and the biscuit dough is real

dough sprayed with insect repellent.

Cucumber Dolls

ILLUSTRATION 45 Any cucumber will do, but Florence prefers to use a long one, 10″ or more. The greener it is, the better. Cut about 1″ off the bottom end of the cucumber, and, using a knife, scrape out the seeds and pulp to the point where you plan to cut the mouth. Then cut a notch where you want the mouth, making sure you cut through to where it is hollowed out. Using the point of the knife, cut out the eyes and nose, and stick small pebbles in the eyeholes to make them stand out more.

FLORENCE BROOKS: I'll make you a cucumber doll like me an' my sister, Beulah, used t' play with. You need a knife, a cucumber, scissors, some cloth, a needle, and a safety pin. We'd pin a diaper on them, and make a "dress" out of a square of cloth, fold a hem, gather it [with a needle and thread], and tie it around its neck. We used t' have a lotta fun playing with those things. We used t' make 'em t' feed 'em. [The doll is hollowed out, so the "food" goes right through.] We made clay mud with water, poured it in 'em, and then the diaper was in a mess. We'd take it off and change it. We never fed it anything else. Milk would have gone down it, but we was in the Depression and we didn't have enough of that. We'd get mountain moss off a log, make

’em a bed, put ’em in the bed. We didn’t put hair on it, but you know if we’d thought of it, we could a’got corn silks and made ’em some hair. The doll wouldn’t last more than a day or two, because drunkards [fruit flies] would get after it.

ILLUSTRATION 46 To make the diaper, take a piece of cloth about 6″ square and fold in half diagonally and pin it on as you would any diaper.

ILLUSTRATION 47 To fashion the dress (really a skirt), use a piece of material about 10″ square. Fold down the waistband, and gather it with a needle and thread.

ILLUSTRATION 48 Tie the dress around the "neck" of the doll using the ends of the thread you gathered the waistband with. The doll is now finished.

I don't know of anybody ever doing that but me and my sister, Beulah. She was four years older than me but she had to play with me or else.

Other Dolls

HARRIET ECHOLS: We had Raggedy Ann dolls, and my older sister made dolls; my father wouldn't buy dolls. Back then people had to work for a living and Dad didn't believe in foolishness, and so we didn't have any toys. My older sister made my first doll and I guess I was eight or ten years old. We made rag dolls and cornshuck dolls, and then we learned to do potato heads. You take potatoes and make a doll. You got one big potato and get sticks and make its legs. Then you get a smaller potato and make its head, and find sticks for his arms. A potato will last a long time.

ETHEL CORN: Mama used to make dolls and then you could also get rag dolls in the stores. Then they went to making dolls with just their heads filled, and then sleepy dolls. I was a pretty good-sized young'un before I ever saw any sleepy dolls. There weren't many toys back when I was growing up.

I can remember my first doll. They had just come out with what they called the "Dutch Doll." The body would be stuffed with straw, but the arms and legs and faces would be delft. My sister and I had sleepy dolls, and mine wouldn't go to sleep. Mel [my brother] was always doing something, and he told me to take my doll and hit it over the plow handle and it would

go to sleep. I did, and it broke that doll's head all to pieces. It was made out of the same thing that cups and saucers were made of.

We'd cut [doll clothes] like we'd cut dresses for a baby, and after I got older, that was the way I learned to cut and sew.

BERTHA DOCKINS: At Christmas usually Mother would make rag dolls for us. We used to have these old black stockings and made rag dolls from them. We'd take a needle and some white thread, and make their eyes and nose and mouth. We stuffed them with bran or something like that.

MRS. E. H. BROWN: The only toy I ever owned in my life was an old doll. I played with that thing, y'know, and I'd worn out several dresses, and it had to have more dresses made. You had to make [the body], and fit it to that little head. That's all there was. Now that was Pard—that was her name. That was my partner, y'know, and I called her Pard.

LOLA CANNON: Most times [when we made rag dolls] we took a little knob of cotton and packed it tightly in a cloth, and wound it around for its neck. Then we rolled another roll and fastened it to that for arms. Sometimes we made legs the same way. But most times we just made heads and arms and let them have a long dress.

I had one doll that was big enough to wear my baby clothes. It was too big for me really, but they wanted me to have it. I didn't have china dolls. Some of the neighbors' children did. They were more expensive. Later on I had bought dolls—with papier-mâché heads and legs and everything—but there weren't the commercial toys available in those days that there are today.

NANNIE ANN SANDERS: We had cornshuck dolls [see *Foxfire 3*, p. 453], apple-head dolls, and just regular old rag dolls. The heads for the apple-head dolls were made from apples that we would shrink and make them look like an old person. Our rag dolls were made out of regular cloth and stuffed with bran left over from where you sifted corn meal. For the face we would just mark 'em with a pencil.

MRS. RAE SHOOK: I guess rag dolls were about the first toys. They were made out of wool and old stockings. Their faces were made from buttons and black markings. We'd make the clothes for them.

BLANCHE HARKINS: We made our rag dolls out of white flour sacks stuffed with rags. Arms and legs were made out of rags and were straight. Then we would take fire coals and make the eyes, eyebrows, mouth, ears, and hair.

VELER MARCUS: All I had to play with was rag dolls that Mama made for us. Way back then we enjoyed that. We hung onto that one doll because Mama just made us one a year. The best I can remember, Mama would cut the cloth out and stuff the arms and legs with old cloth rags, then sew it. I can't remember exactly how she fixed it to get the leg shaped up. She embroidered the eyebrows a little—the best she could. The eyes, nose, mouth were made of thread. I don't believe it had any ears.

HATTIE KENNY: I was fifteen years old before I ever had a doll bought out of a store. We made our dolls out of wool cloth, unless we spun some cotton cloth and made them. We made the faces from wool thread—eyes, nose, hair, mouth. And we made dresses for them.

HELEN JUSTICE: We would use just white material to make our dolls with. We would take a pencil to draw the face. Sometimes we would even make a cap for them.

MRS. TOM MACDOWELL: Our dolls were just big, long rocks. We'd get a long rock and we'd say, "Oh I'm just so tired of carrying my baby," just like we'd heard women say.

ILLUSTRATION 49 Stanley demonstrating how a dumb bell would be used if the hide and string were in place.

Dumb Bell

STANLEY HICKS: Take a section of a hollow log and tack a piece of hide over one end. Then punch a small hole in the center of the hide. Then take a long string and tie a knot in one end and feed the string through the hole in the hide so that the knot catches against the outside of the hole and the string comes through the log and out the other end. Then wax the end of the string with beeswax. When you pull against the waxed part of the string it makes a

sound just like a bull a'bellering. There ain't as many haint stories in the mountains as there used to be. That's because there ain't as many dumb bells being made!

Dumb Bull or Bull Roarer or Buzzer

ETHEL CORN: Bill Lamb, my uncle, was bad to make things. He'd make what they called the "dumb bull." It was made in a way that when you whizzed it around, it would make an awful racket. He'd take a plank and whittle it down thin [about ten inches long by three inches wide] and sharpen the edges in some way, and bore a hole in one end. You'd attach a string to it [about five feet long], and whirl it around, and it'd make the awfulest racket you ever heard.

EDD HODGINS: We just called it a buzzer. I've made a lot of them. Take a flat piece of this wood and tie a string to it and tie that to a stick and [swing it around and] it'll buzz. I reckon that string a'twistin'll make it roar. It don't take but three minutes to make one. I've made them and about scared the dogs to death!

BUCK CARVER: John Dillard taught me how to make a dumb bull. Back in those days when I was a boy nearly anybody could make them, because we learned lots more from each other then than they do this day and time. If one person learned something, he was always tickled and glad to show it to somebody else.

Bill Lamb was a man I scared to death with a dumb bull. I lived right across the river from him in the old Bill Lamb House. I got to slinging that thing around and it was howling and making noise. Bill was going to a Woodmen of the World meeting. He had gotten up the river a ways and ran back to the house. There was an old rail fence coming down the ridge there. He sat down on that fence for a while. Then he got some rocks and ran up to the house and [his wife] opened the door for him, and after he got safe in the house, he threw his rocks back out in the yard!

The next time he heard the noise he and his wife and children were in the field plowing and weeding corn. Bill sent them to the house and came back out with his shotgun. His wife got to looking off the back porch and saw me and John Dillard down there and told Bill that every time she heard the noise John or my arm was swinging around. So he walked around back behind us and saw that it was a dumb bull. He had never heard one before.

The last one I made was in 1929 to scare someone with, but I slung it a few times and it burst. They burst real easy if you hit them on the ground or against a tree limb.

The way you swing the dumb bull is how to make it work. I find the easiest way to do it is make an X motion with your arm.

ILLUSTRATION 50 Buck with the finished propeller he whittled for the dumb bull.

ILLUSTRATION 51 Linda Ledford trying out the finished toy.

Fluttermill

One of Lawton Brooks' favorite childhood toys was the fluttermill. Tinker McCoy, Linda Ledford, and Richard Henslee spent a rainy day with him making one, and, because of the rain, they didn't get to set it up in the creek as they had hoped they would be able to do. Lawton was able to show

them how it worked with the use of an outside faucet, though, and he described the things he and his friends used to do with them.

LAWTON BROOKS: You get forked sticks and drive them in the ground. Then set your mill down to where the creek will pull it. Drive it down far enough so that the water is hitting the paddles. It will go just as fast as the water goes. If the creek's running it will just keep on going from now on.

Sometimes we'd make them and put them in the creek and we'd get great, great old big wide planks for paddles, and we'd get a sluice of water about as big as your arm and we'd put a pipe in the branch out here so it would hit the end of a paddle. Then we'd whittle us out some little round pulleys and cut a groove in them all the way around for the string to go in and put them on the side of the fluttermill. Then we'd put a string across the pulleys. Then we'd put up three or four fluttermills on down through there and have this first one up here pulling the others on down there where there wasn't any water. We'd make it look like a sawmill working. Sometimes we'd make it pull something else way down yonder. It worked like a belt. It wouldn't take but one pulley each to pull them.

We'd leave these in the creek and when it came a hard rain they would wash away, but we would make us some more.

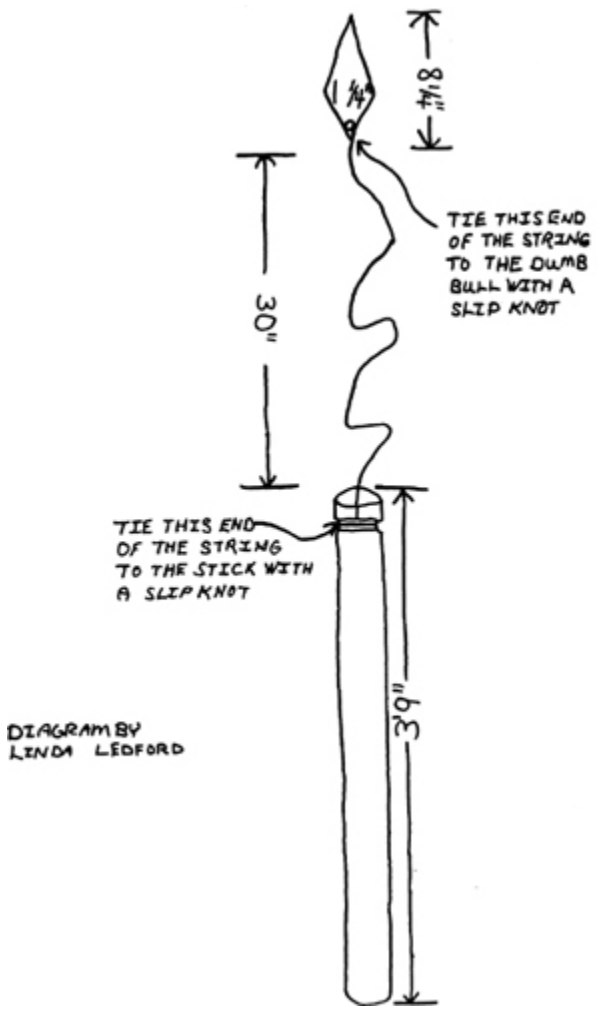


ILLUSTRATION 52

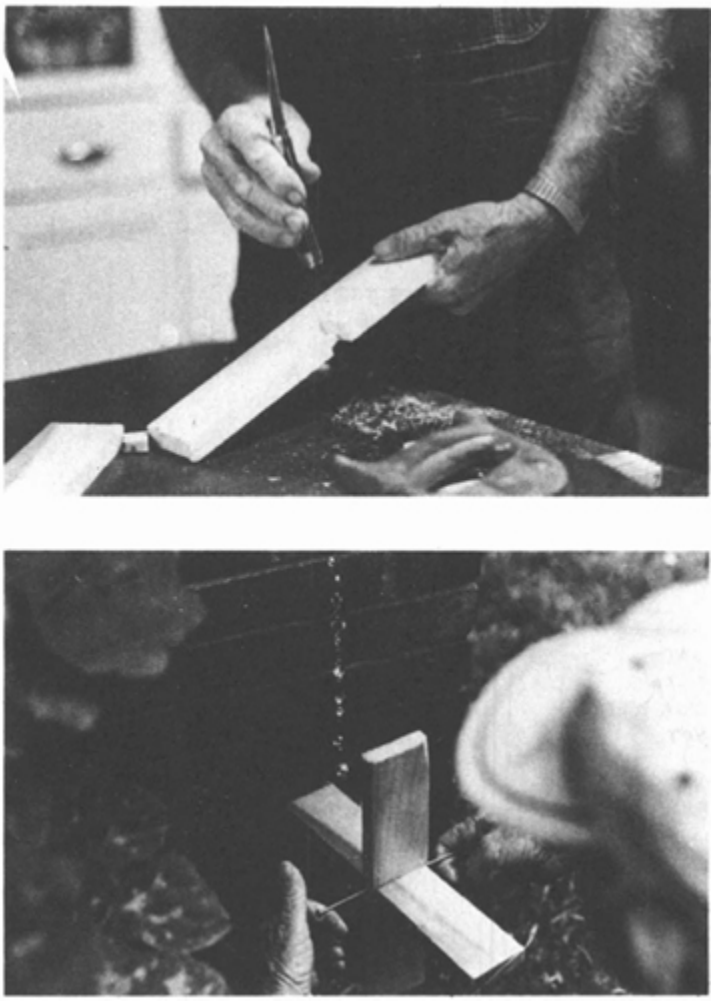


ILLUSTRATION 53 Lawton finds the centers of two 12″ boards and then cuts a notch into each board and fits them together (top). Then he puts a nail in either side to act as an axle, and, holding it under a stream of water, shows how it spins (bottom).

EDD HODGINS: Get you two boards and mortise them together sort of like a grist mill, and have nails for axles and set that in two forked sticks. Then let water pour on them blades and it'll turn. I made the Florida folks one over here and it was still turnin' when they came back the next year. Then what you want to do if you want to make a little racket is put you little pieces of tin on those blades and that water will make a racket on that tin when it his it.

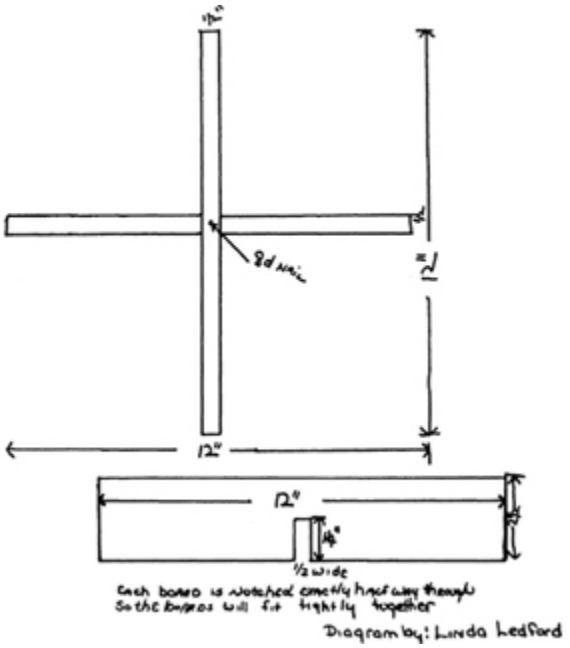


ILLUSTRATION 54

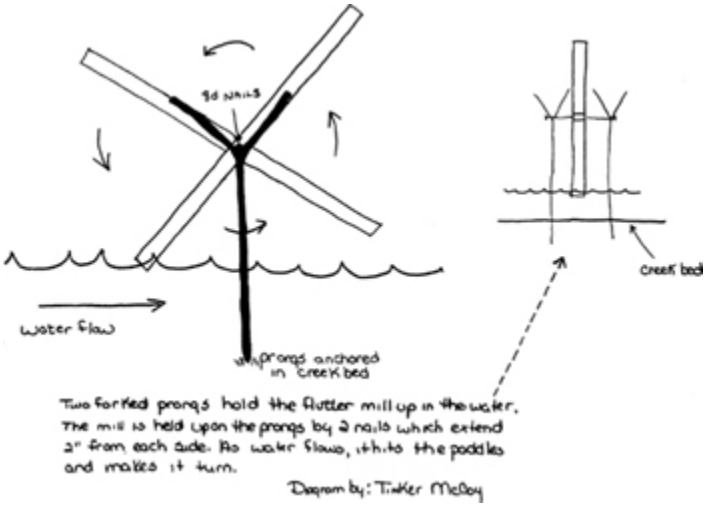


ILLUSTRATION 55

Fly Gun

In Watauga County, North Carolina, numerous craft shops, like the one Fred Potter runs in Sugar Grove, market a toy called a fly gun. A white-oak split propels a projectile out of the end of the toy. We could find no contacts who remembered seeing this toy as children, but we have included it here as it is marketed in the mountains as a mountain toy.

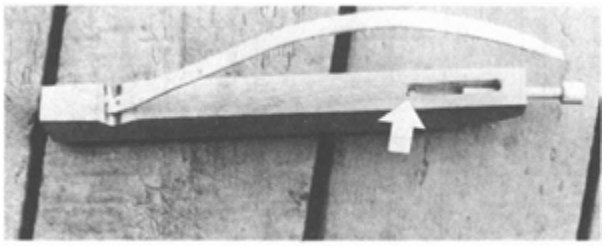


ILLUSTRATION 56 A wooden pin pushed through from the underside (arrow) holds the white oak split bent back, or cocked. When the pin is pulled down, the end of the split hits the projectile and sends it flying.

Flying Jenny or Merry-go-round

We first heard about the flying jenny from Oscar Cook, principal of the Dillard Elementary School. After talking with Mr. Cook, we decided to do a survey on the flying jenny, talking to several people we know. We found this was a very popular toy among children. Several people remembered playing on the flying jennies in the past, even tieing their tiny brothers and sisters on with belts so they wouldn't fall off. Flying jennies could be built right next to a creek where the riders could jump off and land in the creek, or right on the edge of the bluff so at one point one would be much higher off the ground. Although they were basically the same, there were often little variations. These are some of the ways they are made:

Ada Kelly remembers cutting small trees and leaving about a three-to-four-foot-high stump. They whittled one end down to a peg. They then bored a hole in the center of a pole and fitted it down over the peg. One person would get on each end, and each person would push with his foot. She doesn't remember anyone getting hurt or a flying jenny ever breaking.

Richard Norton called it a "merry-go-round." They cut a tree leaving a four-foot-high stump, and used a board about ten to twelve inches across and eight to ten feet long. They drilled a hole in both the board's center and the stump and screwed a nut and bolt down in the board and the tree trunk. One person would get on each side close to the tree trunk. Then one would get on each side close to the end and all would push until they had it going real fast.

ILLUSTRATION 57 Fred Potter outside his shop with a limberjack.

Oscar Martin remembers the log was shorter on one end than it was on the other. A person would be astride the long end and someone would push on the shorter end to make it go.

Mimi Dickerson remembers one person riding on each end and two people near the center pushing it. It was constructed the same way as the one Ada describes.

Mack Dickerson remembers a small oak stump about four feet high. They used a plank with a hole drilled in the center. The flying jenny would last longer when they used axle grease. He also said they were located all over the settlement, not just around creeks or gullies.

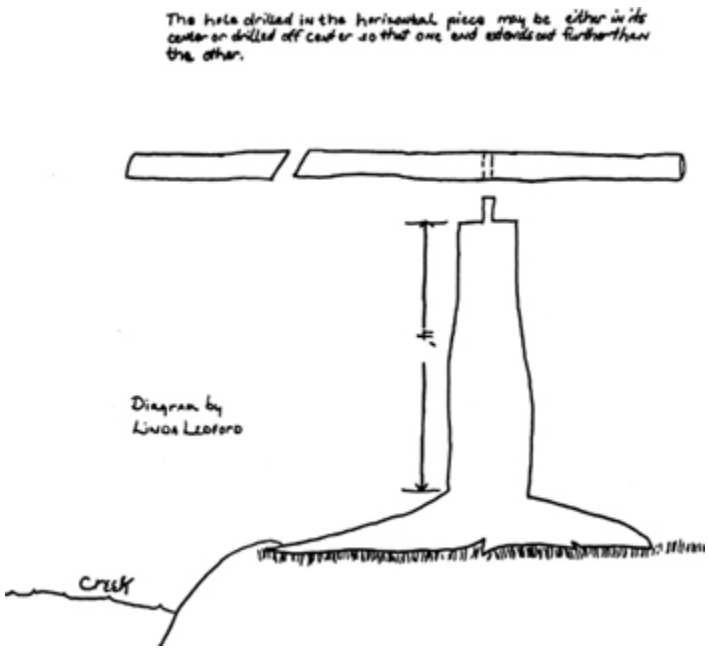


ILLUSTRATION 58

EDD HODGINS: You made it in the woods. Cut you off a white oak. They make the best ones. Cut you a mortise in a pole and set it [on a dowel] on top of that stump, and have your stump up as high as you want. Set the pole down right in the middle. I've rode 'em many a Sunday with four or five kids on each end. Somebody has to push, but he better keep his head down when he gets it started! That pole is just like a merry-go-round. That's pretty much fun. I like it because you can ride awhile, pull awhile, or you can sit off and watch another bunch. All kids liked that. Grown men made good pushers for little fellows. They were stout and they could make that thing run!

A new one might be a little hard to push, but when that gets wore slick, and maybe you put a little grease around it, you can just take your foot and kick it and it'll go four or five rounds by itself.

VELER MARCUS: We would spend the weekend with our neighbors and play. Their daddy always kept them up a flying jenny and it would be out [in the woods]. We always hoped it would be a pretty, moonlit night, 'cause we could see how to get out there good. They would fix up a post about three feet high and then get this great long pole and bore a hole in it and notch it out to fit down over this post.

They would stand here next to the post and make it go around. You can imagine how it come around. It wouldn't be a little bitty short pole, either. It would be a great long one. There would be two that would have to get in

next to this post and push. There would be one person that got on the far end of the pole and one over here on the back end. After the pole got worn and got slick, it would move fast. Those in the middle would be running and it would make those ends go around real fast. Law, it would make your head swim!

Up at this place where we were playing one night, it was my time and they started before I got my balance good, and it went ’round and ’round. Some of ’em would sit up on it, but I would always lie down on it. Law! They got that thing just a’flying! I kept telling them, “Stop! Stop! Stop!” I was getting ready to turn loose and boy! They slung me off that log out to an apple tree that was there. I looked like a lizard lying out there. You can imagine! I’ve always been long and slender and they just slung me up in that apple tree. They had to work with me awhile. They didn’t dare let [their parents] know I got hurt, or their daddy would of taken it down so we couldn’t play on it no more. I said if I lived through this I would be the most worked-over young girl there ever was in this world!

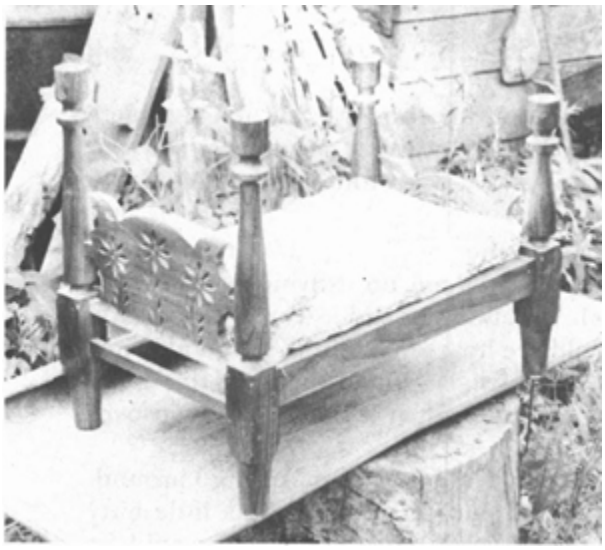
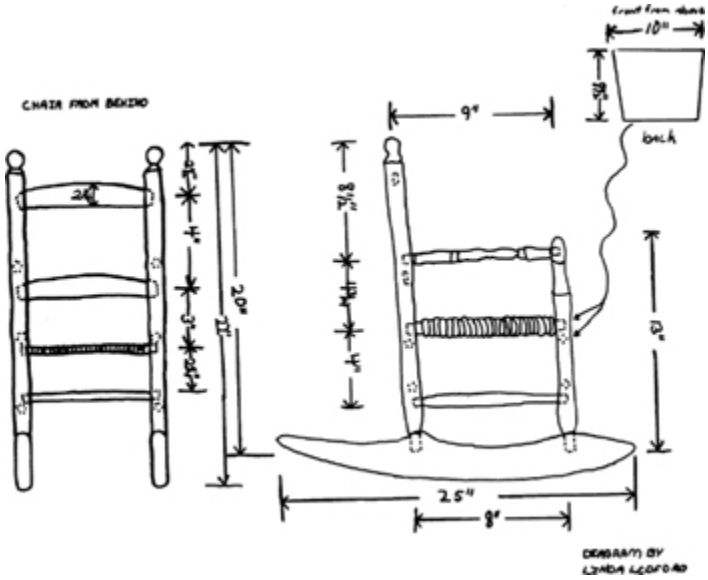


ILLUSTRATION 59 A walnut doll’s bed made by Willard Watson.

ILLUSTRATION 60 This child's rocking chair has a corn-shuck bottom put in by Harry Brown, Sr. [*Foxfire 4*, pp. 461-65].



Furniture

In many houses, miniature pieces of furniture gave away the presence of a girl whose doll had a bed of its own, or a child who had his own rocking chair to pull close to the fire. Stanley Hicks told us that he had often made crude beds for his sister's dolls, and Willard Watson still makes beautifully carved ones today. The photographs in this section illustrate several such pieces.

Hoops

CLYDE RUNION: We rolled rims, you know. I don't know if anybody knows how to roll rims now or not. Old Model T's had spoked wheels, you know, and that rim came off it. You'd get a little old piece of wood and get it under that rim and just see how fast you could run with that thing. It's a lot of fun. I'd sometimes leave over here rolling that rim and I'd roll that thing all the way to school and never let up on it till I got to the schoolhouse.

LAWTON BROOKS: We'd get small steel bands like those that go around a wheel, and we'd get two sticks and put them together in the shape of a *T.* You go along and guide the band. We got a lot of kick out of running them things. Just had old dirt roads to run them in. There weren't any cars to run you out of the road, so then you had the whole road.

LELIA GIBSON: We'd get a hoop off a wooden barrel; a wooden hoop. Then we'd get a stick with a bend in it. We'd start off and roll the hoop with the bent stick. Just run and roll till we gave out. The stick had to have a little bend in it; you couldn't stabilize the hoop just standing still. The crook in the stick would stabilize it.

Jumping Jack

FRED POTTER: We used to have these when I was a child in Harlan County, Kentucky. The ones I saw when I was little were homemade out of cardboard.

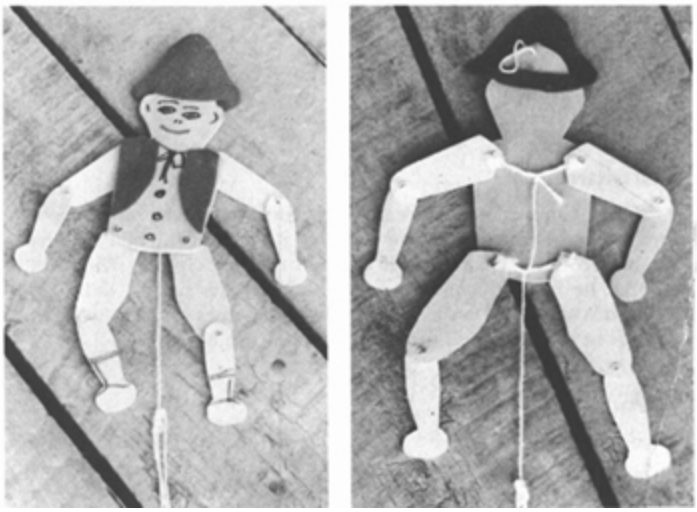


ILLUSTRATION 62 The toy is hung by a string loop through the top of its head (left). ILLUSTRATION 63 Seen from behind: When the hanging string is pulled, the arms and legs flex and jerk upward. (right)

Kicking Mule

ILLUSTRATION 64 Willard Watson with his kicking mule.

Another toy Willard Watson makes using an old pattern he has in his shop is similar to his bouncing pig but is called a kicking mule. As the crank is turned, the man's legs "walk." As each leg approaches the mule, a rod connecting the man's foot and the corresponding mule's rear hoof makes it "kick."

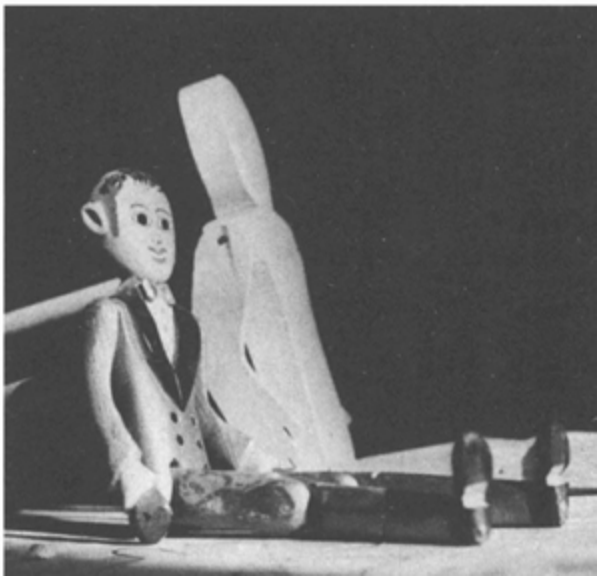


ILLUSTRATION 65 Dancing dolls can be as fancy or as simple as the maker wants. This carved, hand-painted doll, complete with bow tie, was made by one of Dave's friends.

Limberjack or Dancing Doll

DAVE PICKETT: One story behind the dancing doll goes that sometime in the seventeenth century, a Bohemian puppeteer broke the string to one of his puppets and he didn't have a replacement string for it. So in order for him to perform, he put a stick in the puppet's back and found a limber board for him to dance on. And it was so funny and hilarious that he decided to incorporate this into his act. What makes it so funny is that there really is no control on the motions that the doll goes through.

So it evolved from a stringed puppet. Actually the dancing doll, which is a jointed toy, has been around for about five thousand years. Jointed dolls as such have been found in tombs in Egypt.

It probably got into the mountains like the majority of the toys. People immigrated to this country and they brought it with them. I'd say ninety-nine per cent of the folk toys we have in this country originated in Europe. The people just brought their ideas with them. The various sizes of dolls were up to the individual. Just whatever size he happened to cut out that day with his knife was what he made. It was something that was relatively easy to make. It could be made completely by hand. People didn't have the places to go and buy toys for their children, so what they did was make their own toys.

When I first started making dancing dolls, I made them out of pine, or anything I could find—pine crating material, for example. But then I started

making them out of poplar. It's a little harder wood, and the wearing ability of it is better. I make these dolls to dance, and poplar is much easier to work with because it is a little harder than pine and doesn't splinter as badly. The body, the legs, and the thigh pieces are primarily poplar, and the arms I normally make from scraps left over from the rockers off my rocking horses, which are made of beech or maple or any kind of close-grained hardwood.

For the paddle, I've gone to using Luan plywood. The reason for that is that I found this makes as good a paddle as you can use. I've made them out of solid poplar, and that makes a good paddle, but I found you get more spring out of a Luan than you do a solid paddle. Luan is a type of soft mahogany. Taiwan's a big producer. I don't like the imported woods, but sometimes we have to resort to them.

The kind of wood you use doesn't make as much difference in the action as it does the sound of it. With poplar, you get a real good sound. Pine is soft and you don't get the real good crisp sound when the doll is dancing on the paddle that you do with poplar legs.

All you need to work it is a little practice.

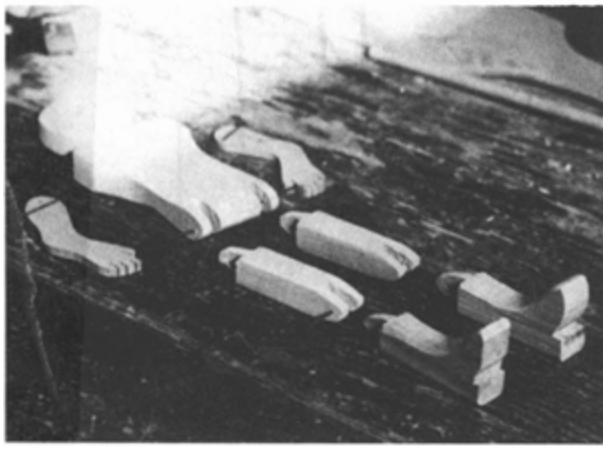


ILLUSTRATION 66 The disassembled doll.

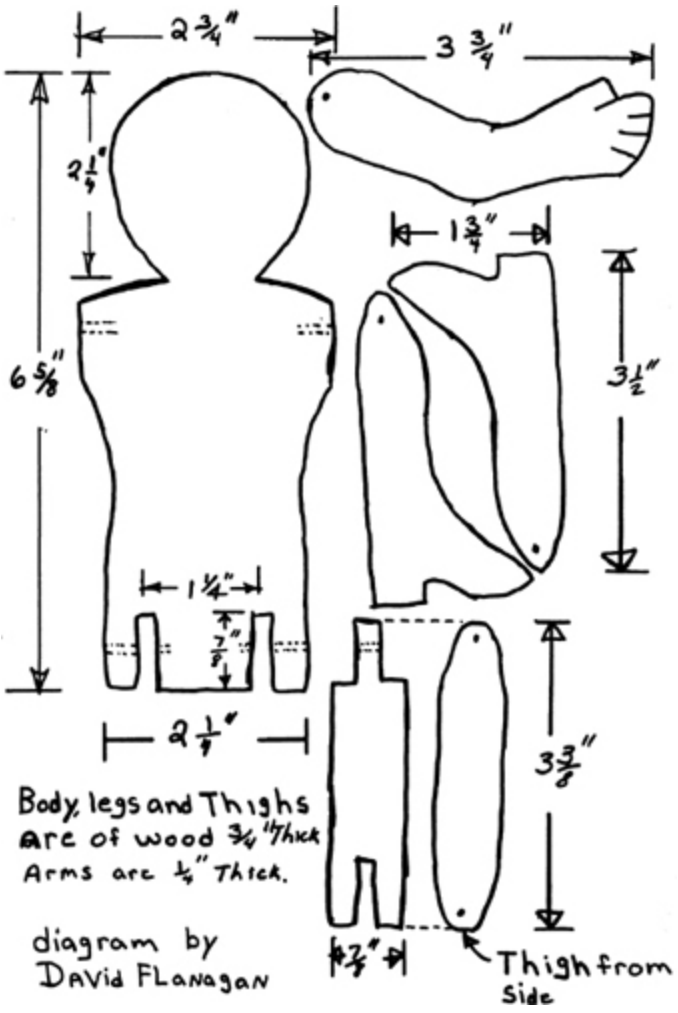


ILLUSTRATION 67

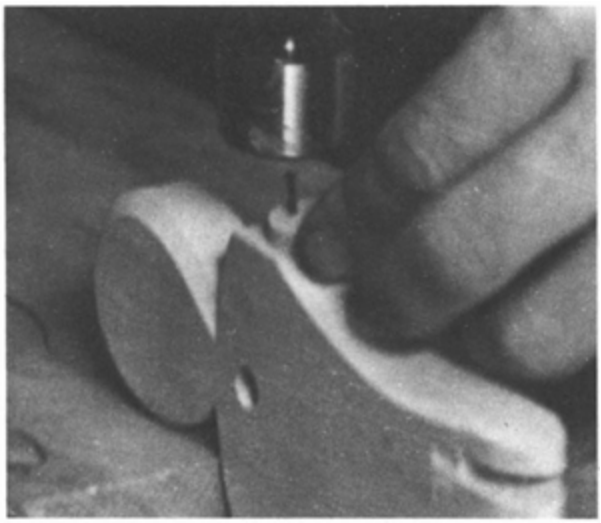


ILLUSTRATION 68 After cutting out the body, Dave nails the arms on but leaves the nails protruding about $^{1}/_{32}$″ instead of driving them in tight so that the arms will swing free. The small heads on the nails keep the arms from swinging off.

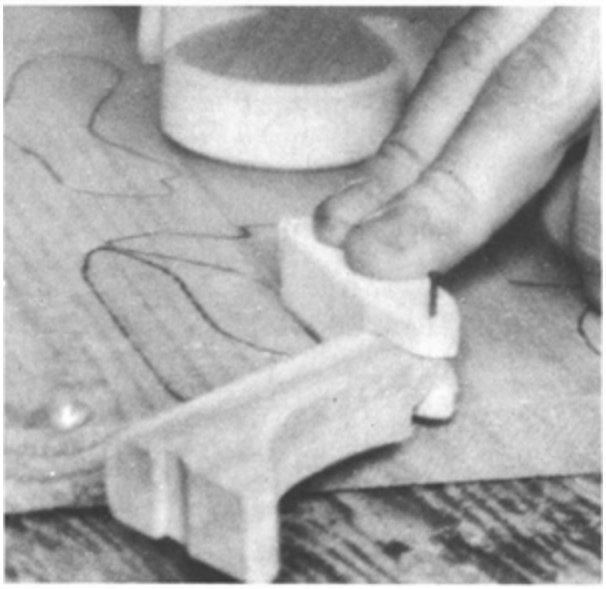


ILLUSTRATION 69 Dave continues assembly by attaching the legs to the thighs. Before driving any nails, he drills tiny guide holes to keep the wood from splitting. Then, using serrated nails (he found that after a while the slick wire brads he used work loose and work out), he joins the pieces.

ILLUSTRATION 70 He clips off the points of the nails that go through (arrow) and sands the area down to remove any rough edges. “I’ve seen people use wire nails and just drive the nail through and bend it over, and I don’t like this at all. I don’t like anything projecting like that.”

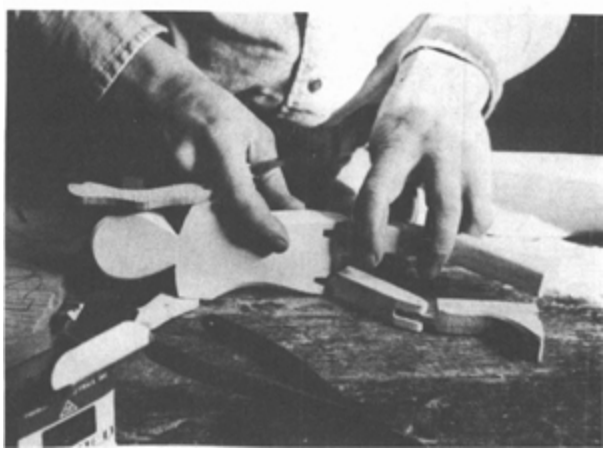


ILLUSTRATION 71 Dave checks to make sure the thigh fits and will swing freely.

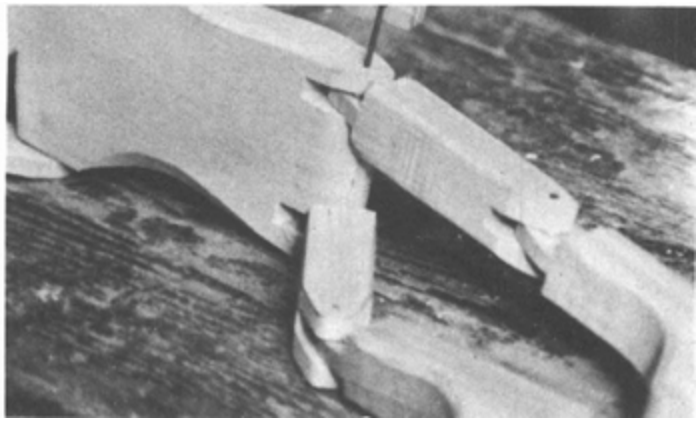


ILLUSTRATION 72 After drilling guide holes, he nails on the legs, being careful not to get a leg on backward.

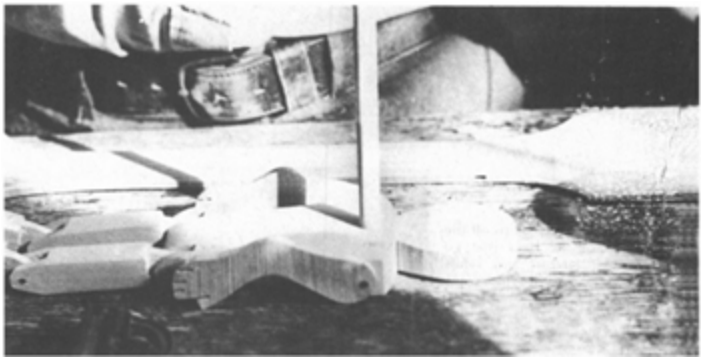


ILLUSTRATION 73 Then he makes and sands the paddle (29″ long by 4 $^{3}/_{4}$″ wide at the ends), and inserts the dowel in the doll's back. He does not glue the dowel in so that it can be easily removed.

ILLUSTRATION 74 David Flanagan using the doll. As the end of the paddle bounces beneath the doll's feet, the legs dance and the arms swing.

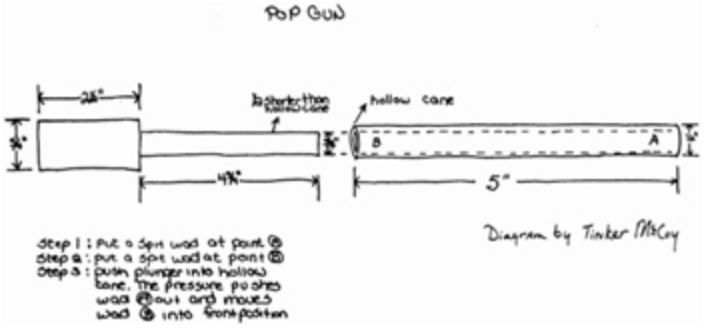
Pop Guns

ILLUSTRATION 75 Mitch Whitmire and John Bowen watch as Edd Hodgins demonstrates one use of a pop gun with a rolled-up newspaper.

BUCK CARVER: We had our pop guns; we'd get an elder—that's pithy. First thing, it had to be good and straight. We'd hew us out a stick to punch that pith out with. Sometimes that pith would pack up in that and maybe jump out three, four feet when it did pop out. You get all that pith out, and then you loaded them with spitballs. They'd make a pretty, cracking racket. We always had one load in front; then pack another one in the other side with a ramrod. 'Course that's compressed air in there. Lots of time we'd blow in the barrel, but that didn't help any, I don't think. When you pushed the back spitball up [with the ramrod], it threw the front ball out. Some of them shoot pretty doggone hard—I've nearly had blisters on one from those things.

HATTIE KENNY: You went out and cut your elder and between the joint they's about a foot. You couldn't have a joint too thick 'cause the paper wads wouldn't go through. You cut it behind the joints and then you got you some wood and made you a ramrod. Then you got some paper and went to chunking it in. You had to have two balls. One stayed in and the other went out. One stayed at the end at all times. It would burn you like fire if it hit you, too.

ILLUSTRATION 76 Mr. Davis with the barrel in his left hand and the plunger in his right.



EDD HODGINS: You load them like loading a muzzle-loading gun. You put your first load in there and push it to the end. Ramrod it to the end. Blow a little air in there [from the back end] and chew up another wad of paper and stick it in the back end. [Then push that back wad with your ramrod] and it'll pop like a .22 rifle!

ARTHUR DAVIS: The first one I ever made was sixty-five years ago. I took them to school many times and got into trouble with them. We'd use a wad of newspaper and put it in there and make it shoot. I'd have to sit on a slat with my back to the crowd because I shot somebody with one. Our teacher would take every one away from us that she saw. We never got them back neither. We'd go home, make some more, take them back the next day.

The plunger is made out of pine. The other part is made out of cane. I get my wood from the woods.

You chew a little wad of paper, put it in one end of the cane. Then chew another, put it in the other end. You shove the plunger in the cane, and the air between them pushes one of them out and leaves the other one for the next time. It will pop you so hard that it will blister you.

Puzzles

Some of the most vivid memories Foxfire students have are of the times Kenny Runion visits our classes with a suitcase full of puzzles he has made —puzzles that keep us occupied and frustrated sometimes for hours. Kenny claims that homemade puzzles like the ones he makes have been around in the mountains to fascinate children on rainy days for as long as he can remember.

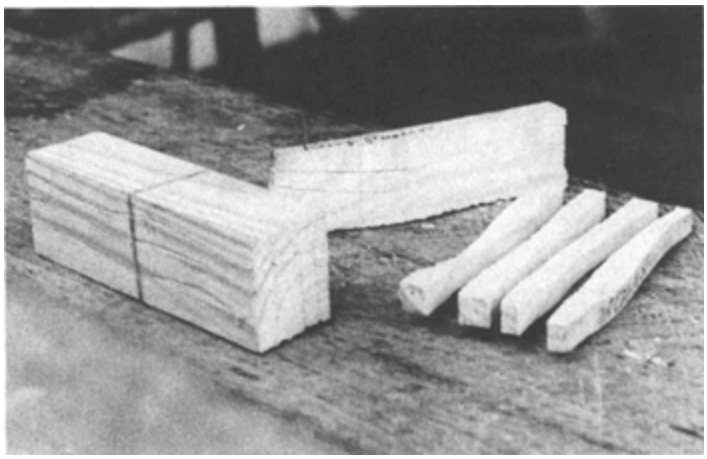


ILLUSTRATION 78 The six curved cuts made in this block of wood cause it to come apart into sixteen pieces (four rows of four pieces each). The object is to put the scrambled pieces back together.

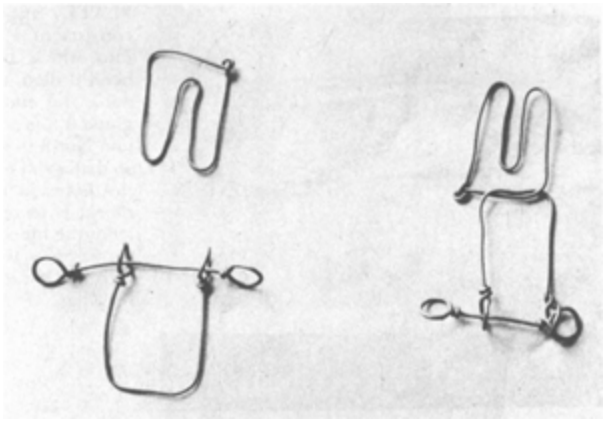


ILLUSTRATION 79 The object here is to remove the heart-shaped piece from the rest of the puzzle without bending or untwisting any of the wire.

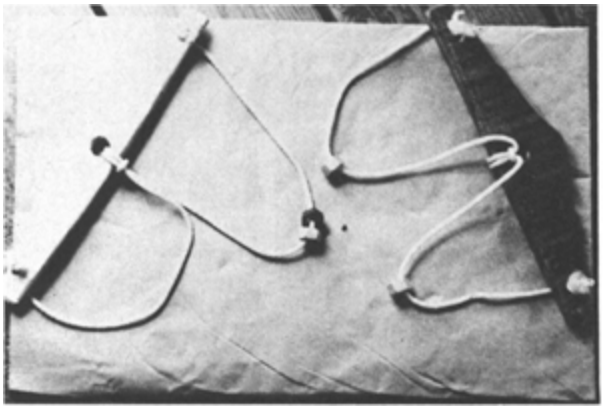


ILLUSTRATION 80 This ox-yoke puzzle has two loops of cord with one nut or washer on each loop. The object is to get both nuts onto one loop without untying the cord.

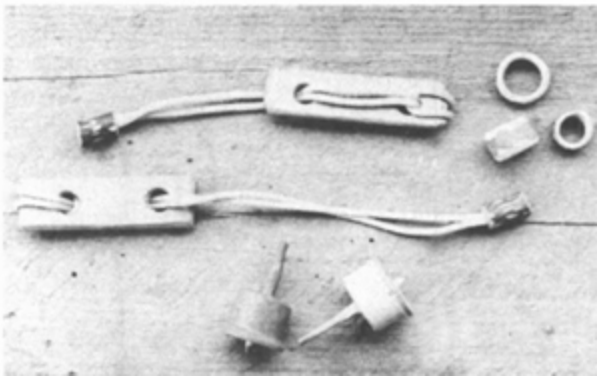


ILLUSTRATION 81 This puzzle consists of a block of wood into which two holes have been drilled, and a length of cord, the ends of which are glued into a section of mountain laurel that is big enough so that it will not pass through the holes in the block. The object is to remove the cord from the block of wood. Also shown are two of Kenny's tops and three mountain-laurel rings.

ILLUSTRATION 82 Kenny with one of his newest creations: a redheaded woodpecker door knocker. Pull the cord and the bird pecks.

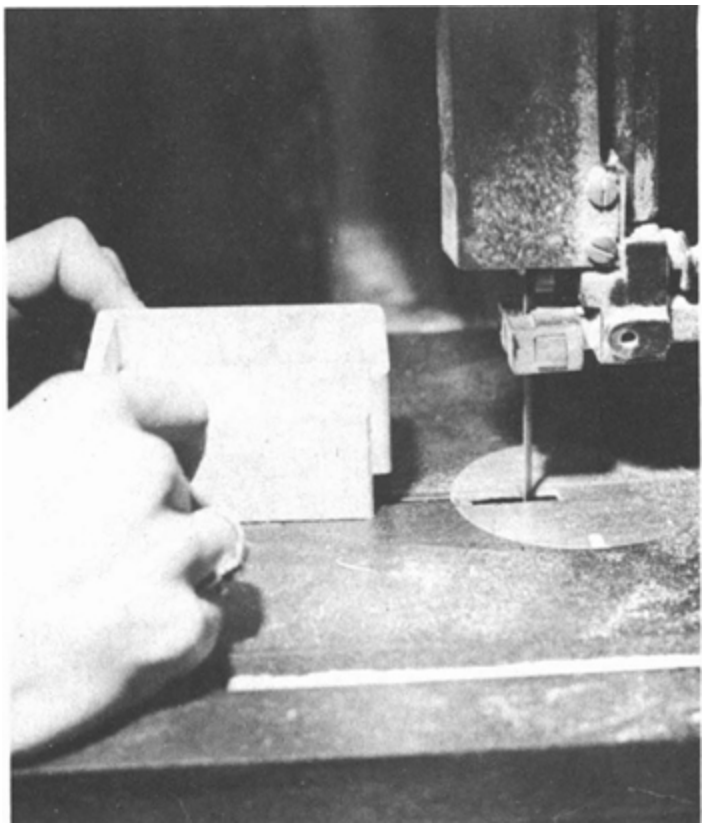


ILLUSTRATION 83 Dave Pickett makes his furniture puzzle by first cutting around three sides of the original block to make the large table.

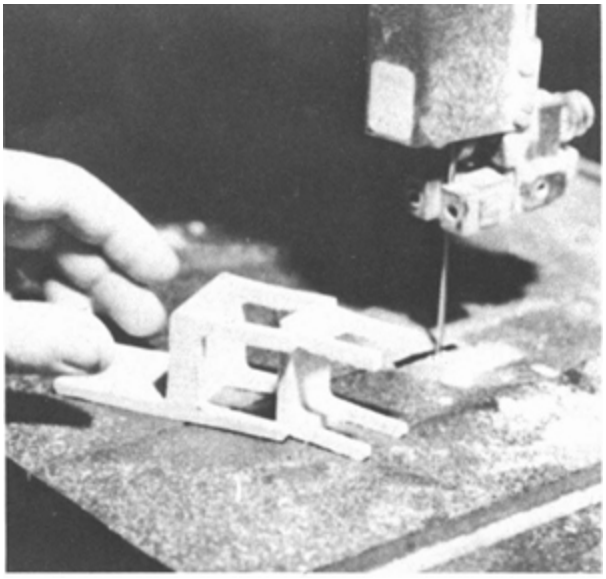


ILLUSTRATION 84 The sixth cut yields a small table from be tween the legs of one of the large chairs.

ILLUSTRATION 85 In less than a minute, all the necessary cuts are made. Here, John Helms looks at the disassembled puzzle, all pieces of which came from one block of wood.

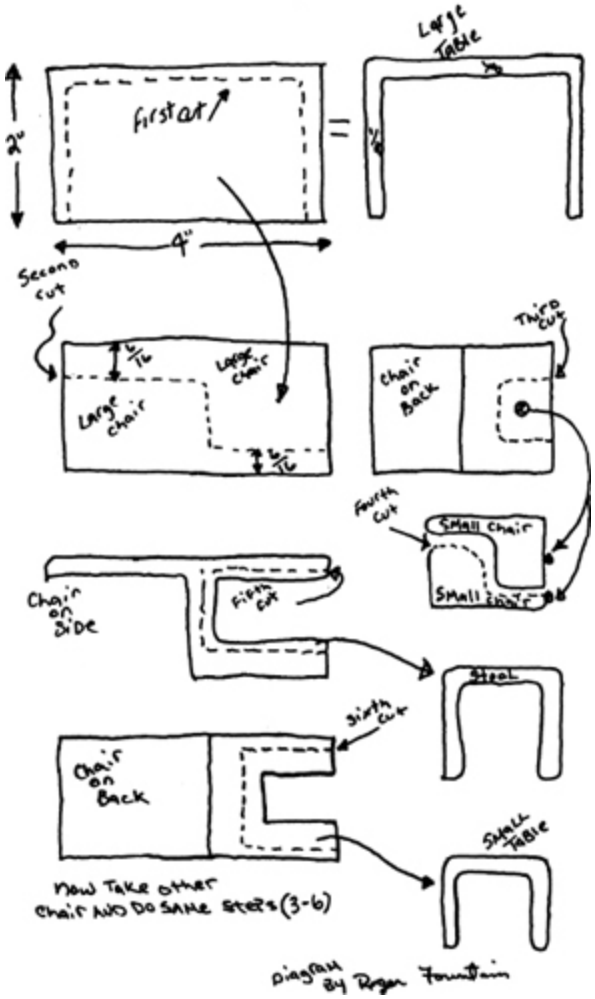


ILLUSTRATION 86

Rattletrap

Stanley Hicks remembers having these noisemakers as a youngster. A white-oak split snapping against a handcarved cog wheel as the box spins around the handle causes the racket.

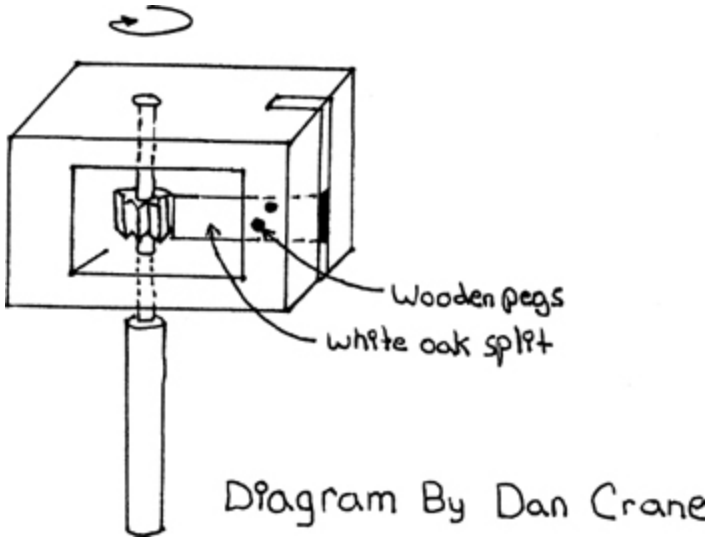


ILLUSTRATION 87

Rolling Clown

Fred Potter markets this toy in his craft shop in Sugar Grove, North Carolina. As the two handles are squeezed together, the thread loop that passes through the clown's hands twists and untwists, causing the clown to flip over.

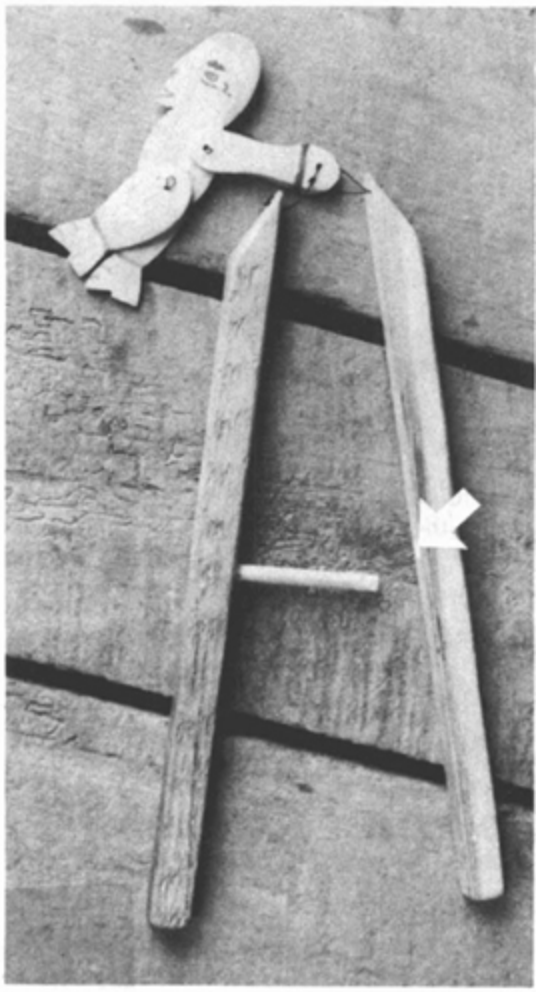


ILLUSTRATION 88 The rolling clown. One end of the horizontal peg fits loosely into a hole in one of the arms (arrow).

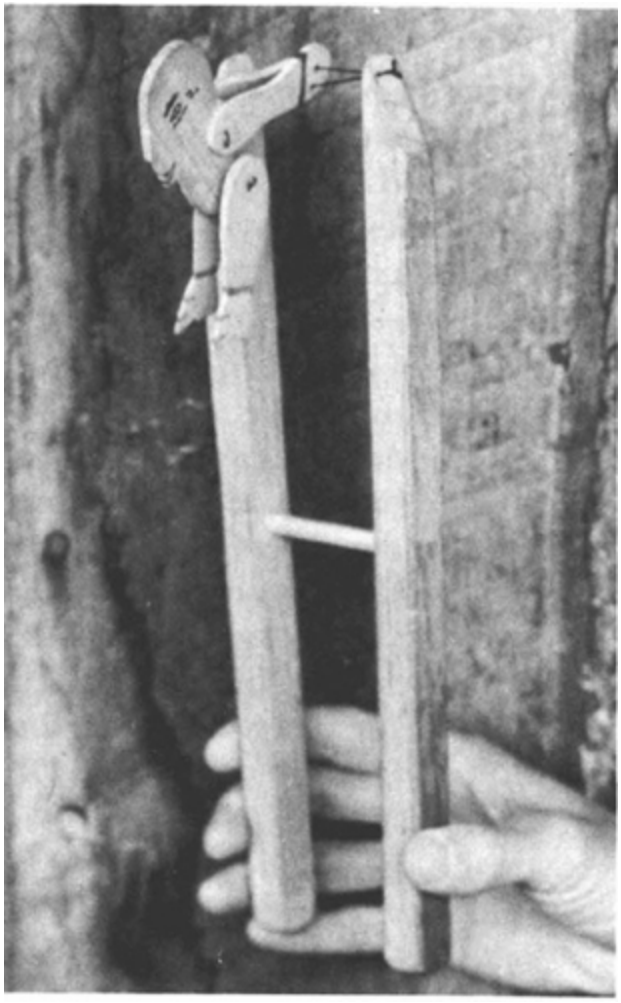


ILLUSTRATION 89 When the ends of the two arms are squeezed together, the loop of thread through the clown’s hands forces it to spin.

Slingshots

ILLUSTRATION 90 Lawton Brooks with his slingshot.

ARTHUR DAVIS: Mountain kids have played with slingshots for years. I used to kill birds with them, and I knocked the windows out of a schoolhouse one time, but not on purpose. I used shoe tongues to make the slings because they wouldn't break easily. I use leather now; it's the best. Canvas or tough cloth will make a pretty good one, too. You can throw a rock three times better with a slingshot than you can with your hand. You can also put a piece of lead in the slingshot and you can kill a bird with it. If you have a good round rock, it will go as straight as a bullet. I use old bicycle inner tubes now for the rubber strips.

LAWTON BROOKS: I've killed many rabbits with a slingshot. Marbles are the best things to kill them with. A rock won't go as straight. If I get close up to what I'm aiming at, I can hit it; but when it's a ways off, it goes to wobbling. Lead bullets is the best thing of all. I've shot the eyes out of a rabbit before.

I don't like bought rubber on my slingshots. I like raw rubber. I like raw rubber because it's got more power to it. It's got a kick to it. We used to use inner tubes. I got some of that raw rubber out of some old T Models. Some of that would be red.

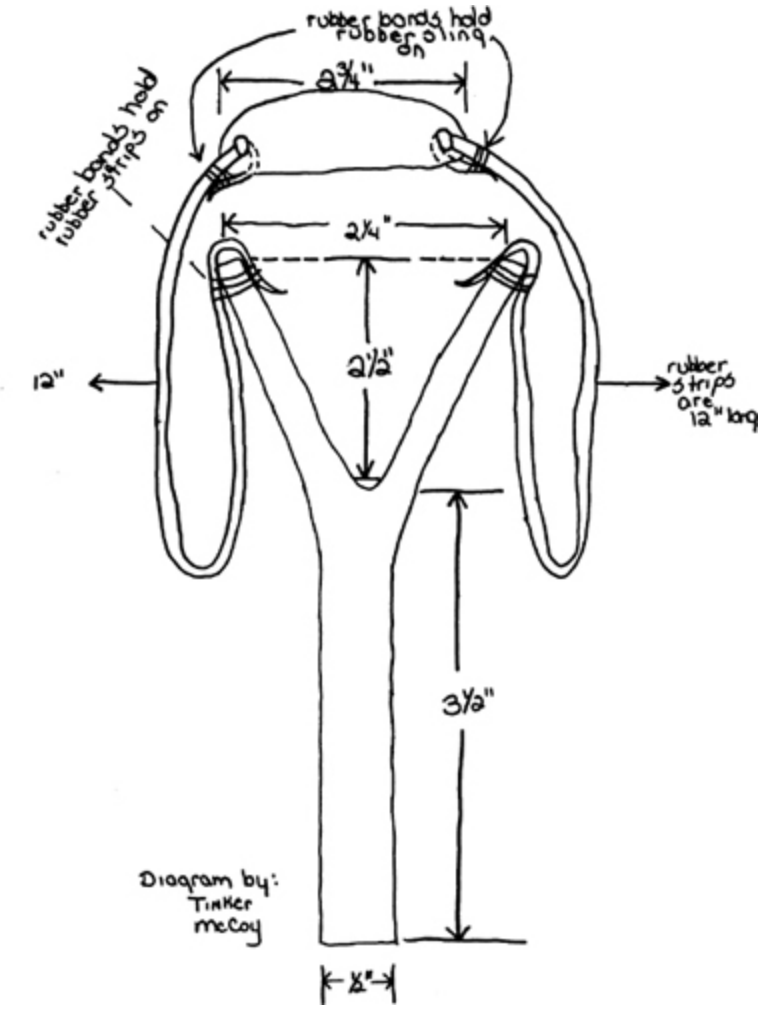


ILLUSTRATION 91

And then we'd carry these things with us to school. We'd get about to the school and they'd make us hide them. After school, we'd pick up little round rocks just laying in the road. Once we had a whole pile of rocks and we was standing there in front of the store just flipping them. And Edith said, "Lawton, let me shoot, let me shoot."

I said, "Here it is. Now don't flip yourself."

She said, "I ain't." She drawed back and it knocked her right between the eyes and, boy, did I laugh!

Smoke Grinders

Another locally made toy Fred Potter stocks in his shop is this smoke grinder. The point of the toy is set in a slight depression, and as the horizontal bar is pumped with two fingers, the influence of the string

twisting around the shaft and the weight of the wooden disk make the toy spin back and forth in the depression.

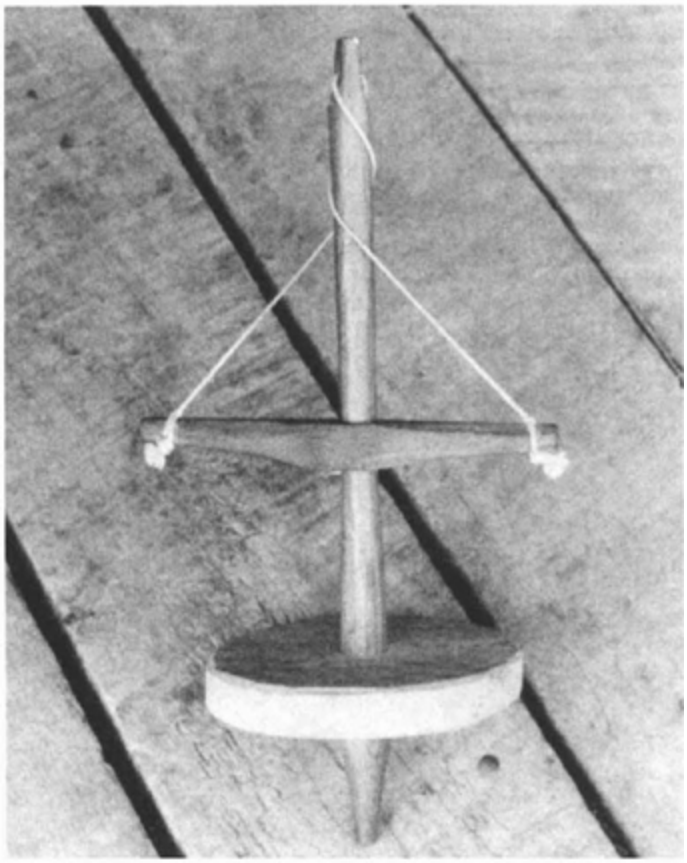


ILLUSTRATION 92 A smoke grinder. Pump up and down on the horizontal bar with two fingers, and the disc and shaft spin back and forth inside the bar.

Squirt Guns

STANLEY HICKS: We made them like those pop guns—a hollow piece and a plunger. Pull the plunger back and suck water up in there and then push the plunger to squirt it out. Sometimes kids would fill their squirt guns with hog mud and manure and squirt that mess all over us!

Stick Horses

LELIA GIBSON: In playing, we'd have stick horses—get a stick or a broomstick, tie a string on it [for a bridle], and straddle it, and lope! Now, that's the kind of playing we had.

ILLUSTRATION 93 To make a pair of stilts, Clyde Runion first cuts two rhododendron trunks, leaving forks as shown.

Stilts (Tom Walkers or J-walkers or Walking Crutches)

EDD HODGINS: We just called 'em walkin' crutches—that's all we called them. Get you some forked sticks over there in the woods and cut 'em off. Keep your feet in those forks and walk in them. I got to where I could get a way up there. When you're not up too high, it won't bother you much, but you get up pretty high and you better know what you're doing pretty good. [If you don't] it'll pitch you plumb across that pickup.

STANLEY HICKS: We'd wade the river on those. Then we'd see who could walk the furtherest without falling. We had a prize we'd give the one that walked the furtherest with 'em. It wasn't much—a toy or something we made. We'd make little old horses and little old dogs for prizes.

ILLUSTRATION 94 Then he saws the ends off evenly and removes any rough knobs or branch ends (left) and tries them out (right).

MRS. TOM MACDOWELL: We'd cut sticks with forks in them, and we'd get old socks and wrap them around right there to keep them from hurting our feet, and we'd walk with those stilts. We'd wade the creek with them—go right on down the banks of the creek and then get out on a big flat rock.

VELER MARCUS: My brother and me would walk in those things and just ruin the sides of our shoes. We started off about a foot high, then go on up. We would get over here by Fred Lovell's right along the creek. They was an old road there. That creek was about up to your knees, and we would carry them Tom Walkers down there—our high ones—and, boy, we had to get steady or we would fall. Once we got balanced we could go right on.

So we would get down there and if we heard a wagon coming round the bend, boy, we would get out of that water and get back up [on the bank] and hide so they wouldn't see us down there playing in the creek. We didn't want to be down there walking 'cause we might scare whatever they were driving [horses or oxen]. They would think, "Oh no, that's those rude young'uns down there." Of course, they were everybody's rude young'uns that got out and waded the branch and all that!

ILLUSTRATION 95 Benson Justus caught on quickly.

Grape-vine Swings

NANNIE ANN SANDERS: Go to the woods and find a wild grape vine growing up into a tree. Cut it in two at the bottom and then hold onto that free end and swing. I liked to have broke my neck on a grape-vine swing once. I fell into a creek —the best place you ever fell. It didn't break my neck but it sure shook me up!

HATTIE KENNY: Oh yeah, swing up in there and back. I remember one Sunday there was two men that fell off and broke their legs. They tried to swing at the same time and it pulled out with them. Both men broke their leg in the same place. One of 'em died with cancer and the other one got well and went right on.

Rope Swings

VELER MARCUS: Daddy would make us rope swings. Tie a rope in a loop on a limb in the yard where our shade trees were. Then he'd fix us a board for a seat.

Notch the board so it wouldn't turn us out. You had to be careful or it would turn you out and you would get hurt.

MRS. RAE SHOOK: We used to make swings. Somebody would climb way up on a tree and tie the ropes, and you'd get in it down here and somebody would swing you way out over yonder. You'd go a long ways. We'd have a piece of hickory bark across it for a seat.

Tops or Dancers

BUCK CARVER: [We had] homemade tops. They usually consisted of a spinner. You take a spool and whittle it to a sharp point. Then take out a round peg and plug it in the hole [of the spool] and slope it to a sharp point. Take that in your fingers and spin it on the floor.

ILLUSTRATION 96 Kenny Runion had a top similar to the one Buck describes.

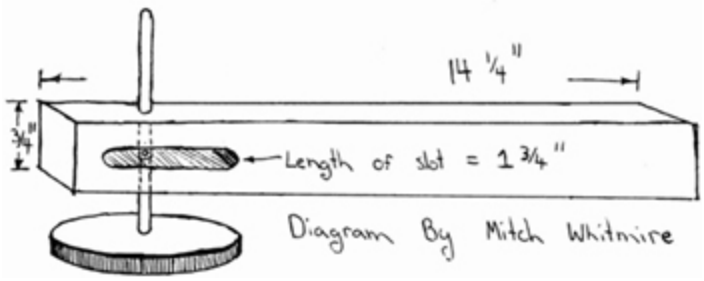


ILLUSTRATION 97 The launcher Stanley uses.

ILLUSTRATION 98 With the dancer set in its launcher as shown in the diagram, Ronnie Welch threads a string through the hole in the dancer's shaft (left), and then twists the dancer inside the launcher to wind the string around its shaft (right).

STANLEY HICKS: We made dancers out of round wooden discs [4″–6″ in diameter and¼″–½″ thick]. We'd drill a hole in the middle and drive a sharpened stick through there, and they'd spin on the point of that stick. We would get three or four spinning at the same time and see which one would spin the longest. I've made some that would dance over five minutes, but if you've got one that dances that long, you've got a pretty good one. Then we'd play a game where we'd get them spinning together in a marked-off area, and the one that kicked the other ones out of there was the winner.

ILLUSTRATION 99 With a sharp pull of the string, Stanley launches the dancer, letting it drop out of the launcher and spin freely.

ILLUSTRATION 100 Dan Melton, Ronnie Welch, Stanley, and Richard Jones watch as it spins.

ILLUSTRATION 101 Mr. Davis shows us how he rubs the stick across the grooves of the whimmy-diddle to make the propeller turn.

Whimmy Diddles or Jeep Sticks

ARTHUR DAVIS: First one I ever saw was about twenty-five years ago. My friend found one up in Mountain City. Then he finally gave it to me. First one I ever saw made, I made it myself.

When I first started making jeep sticks I told everybody I could tell their fortunes with them. The idea is to put your thumbnail right up against the stick and it will go one way. If you want it to go the other way, put your thumbnail under the stick. You can make one of these in thirty minutes, or forty at least.

The ridges are what makes it turn. You could take a pencil and do the same thing. They can be any length; they're usually about five inches long. Inside is just a piece of hard wood. You get the propeller as loose as you can get it. You can use any kind of wood. I usually use ivy because it usually has a crook in it. The crook makes it easier to hold.

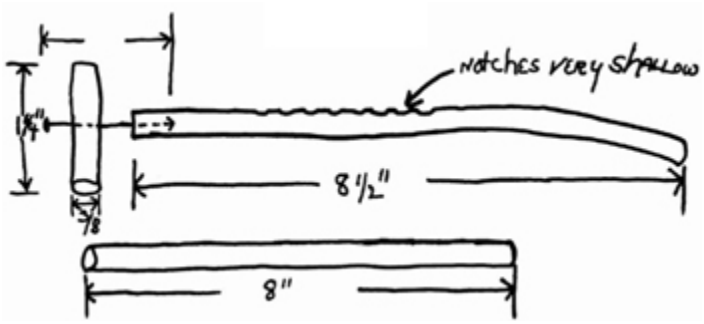


ILLUSTRATION 102

I've always called them "jeep sticks," that's all I ever call them. Some people call them "gee-haw whimmy diddles." [The "gee haw" part of the name that many people use comes from the fact that you can make the propeller go in either direction, just as the same commands make a mule or a steer turn to the right or the left.]

Hollow Whistles

HATTIE KENNY: We made hundreds of whistles out of willow along the creekbanks. We would get a slick, pretty one and cut it off as long as we wanted it. Then we would make a notch to blow through and put a piece of wood back in the end of it to plug the end. You had a whistle you could hear a mile. You can even learn to make little songs on 'em.

ILLUSTRATION 103 The piece of wood that goes in the end of the whistle is in Mr. Davis's right hand.

ILLUSTRATION 104 Trying the whistle out.

MRS. RAE. SHOOK: Used to, in the spring, we'd go up and get some small pieces of young sourwood. Cut a sprout and rub the bark of it loose with another sprout and pull that bark off. Cut a mouthpiece where you blow into it. Then fix you a piece to go back down in the end to plug it up.

ARTHUR DAVIS: I've made them ever since I was a kid. The whistle is the easiest toy I've ever made because it only takes fifteen minutes to make. I used to make whistles with little holes on top of them, but I haven't made one of them in a long time. Those make a different tune than the ones I make now.

I get my river cane out on Broad River. It's smaller than bamboo. It's better to cut them when they're green because they're easier to work with, but you can work them when they're dry.

You stop one end up with a piece of wood to keep the air from coming out. You can use any kind of wood for the plug. The plugs will get tighter as they dry out. Sometimes they dry out so good that you can't get them out again. But this doesn't change the tune of it.

You want them dried out when you blow them. The length makes the difference in the tune, but you can have them long or short. Cut a little air hole in one end to blow through so it will whistle.

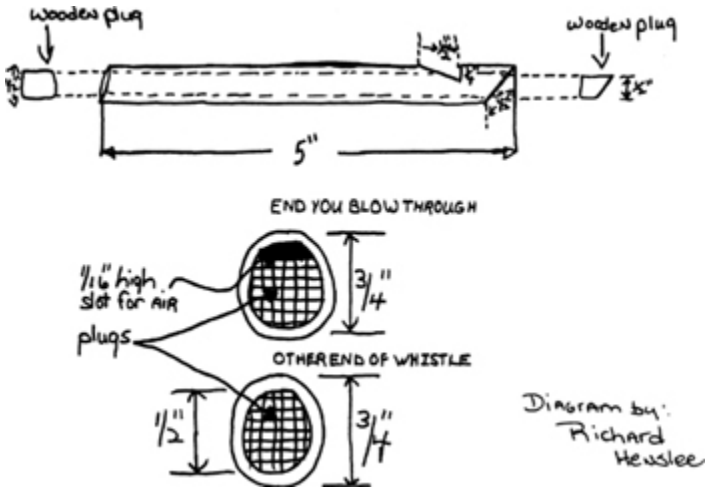


ILLUSTRATION 105

Split Whistles

ERNEST FRANKLIN: We made our whistles out of goose quills. You split the feather and blow against it.

EDD HODGINS: I could make you one in a few minutes if you want to see one. You just split an ivy stick and put you a leaf down in there and trim it off and then blow on that.

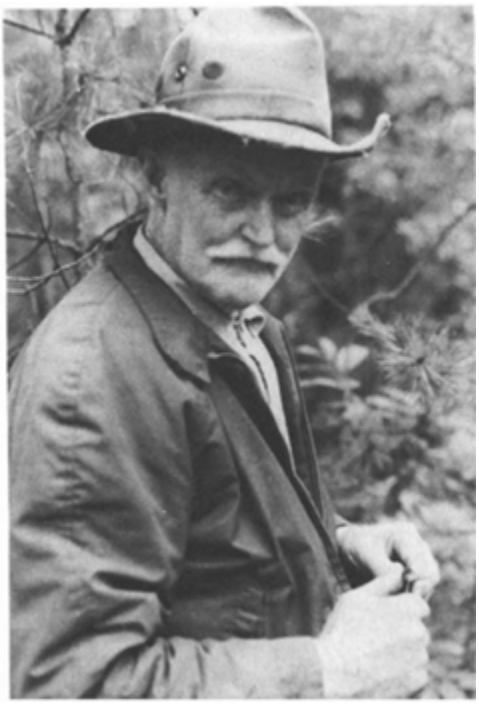


ILLUSTRATION 106 Edd Hodgins took us to the woods behind his house to show us how to make a whistle.

ILLUSTRATION 107 First he cuts a laurel branch and (top), shaves off two sides and splits it about halfway down the middle (bottom).

ILLUSTRATION 108 Then he inserts a laurel leaf into the split, trims off the excess with his knife, and (top), blows against one side to make the noise (bottom).

Whittled Animals

One tradition firmly associated with the Appalachians is that of whittling birds and animals, often for children to play with; more often, now, for sale to tourists and collectors through area crafts shops. One area whittler, Ben Bar, who lives in Clarkesville, Georgia, was selected for this chapter because of the appropriateness of many of his works for children's play.

BEN BAR: I've been carving about thirty or thirty-five years. I did a little when I was sixteen or seventeen years old. I like to whittle. When I started off, using a big knife, I'd shave off sticks letting the shavings fall down. But then an old man told me one time, says, "You've got a nice stick there, but you whittle it all away and it's gone. Make something out of that stick you can save instead of whittling it all away."

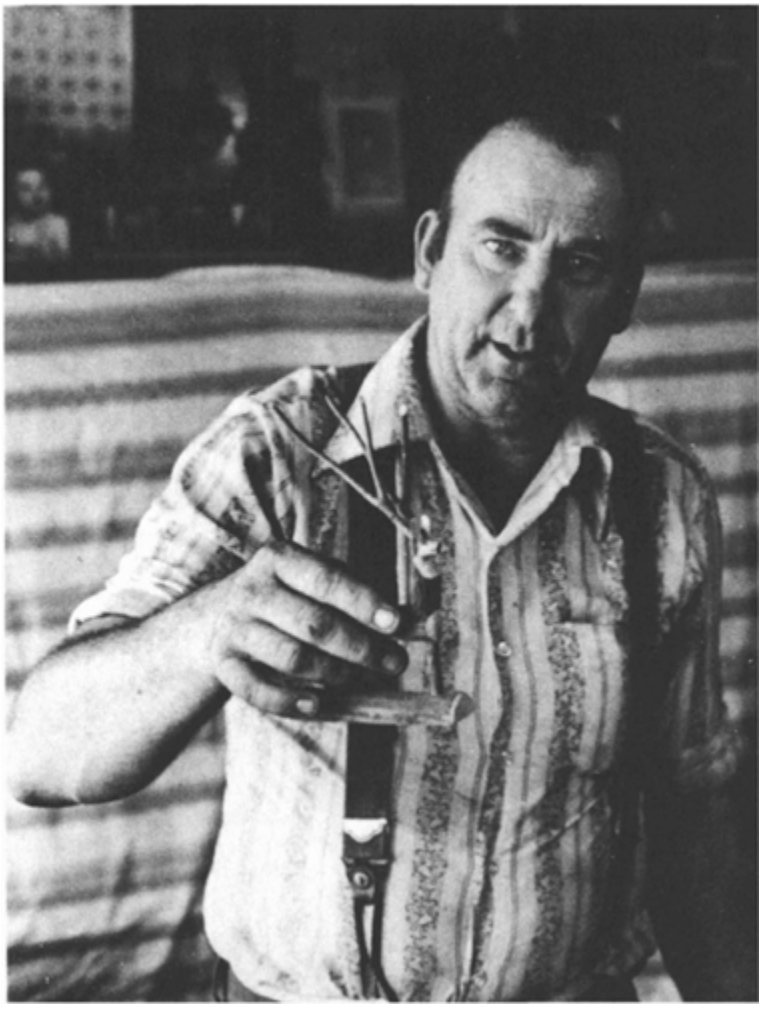


ILLUSTRATION 109 Ben Bar with one of his creations.

I drive a lumber truck for a local sawmill for a living, and I can get lots of my wood—slabs, knots, and such that they can't sell—from the mill. I also collect laurel wood to use in lots of my toys. I collect that in the woods during the winter when the sap is down so the bark won't peel off later and ruin the toy.

ILLUSTRATION 110 Ronnie Welch with two of Ben’s carvings—a bird, and a dog with a treed raccoon.

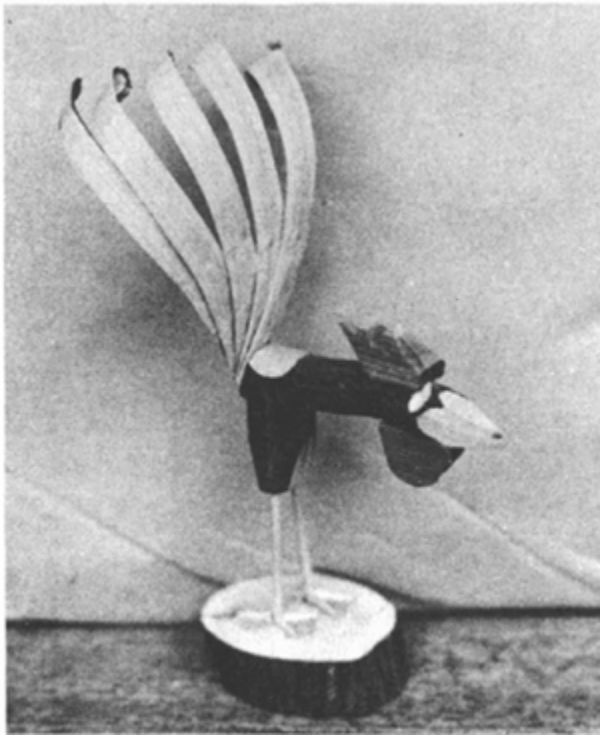


ILLUSTRATION 111 Ben's versions of a rooster …

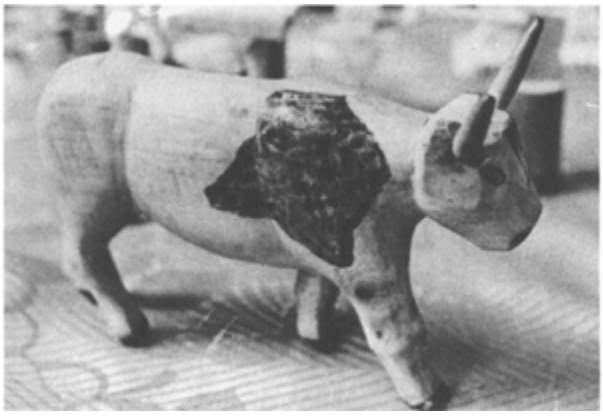


ILLUSTRATION 112 … a steer …

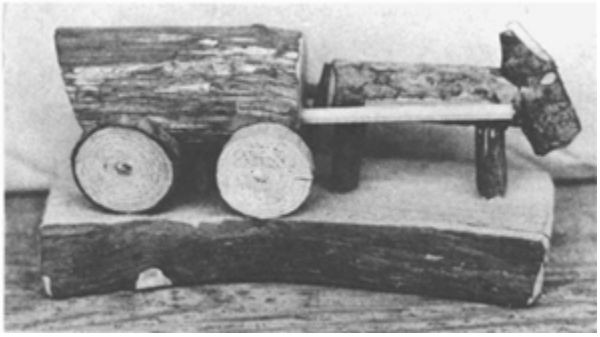


ILLUSTRATION 113 … a horse and wagon …

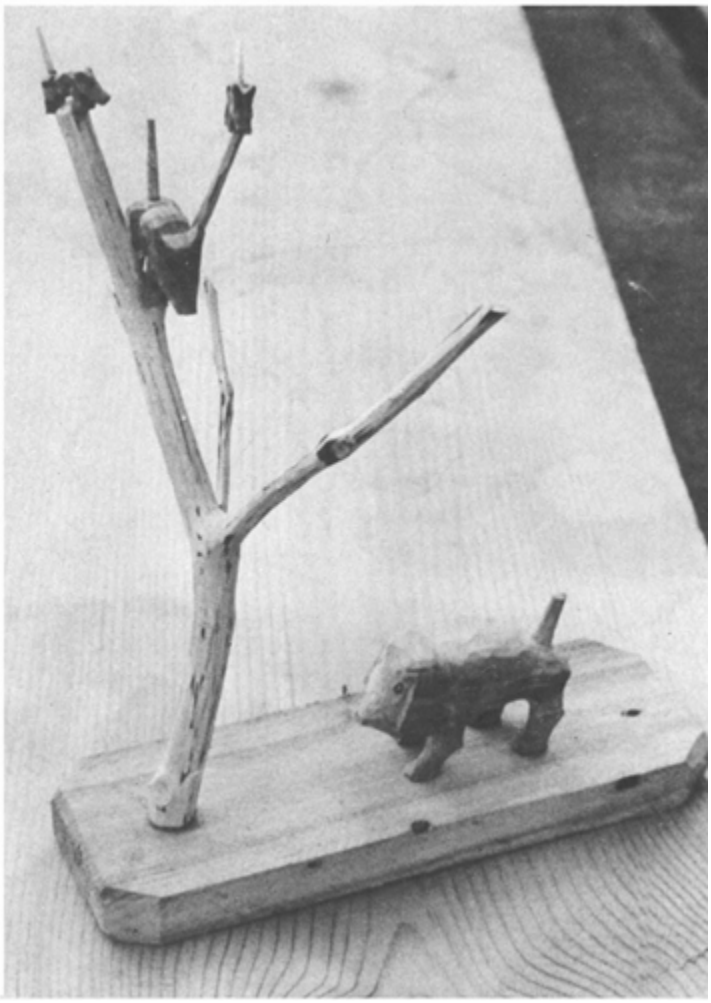


ILLUSTRATION 114 … and a dog with three treed possums.

Kids can play with all my toys. They like them because they're sturdy and there's nothing about one to hurt them in any way.

I've never been trained to do my carving. I just do a little more and a little more getting ideas here and there. And I buy Barlow knives by the box, taping the handles so they won't hurt my hand. I wear those knives out fast. This one here is about two and a half months old and it's about wore out already!

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