MRS. BLACK — Mrs. Black posed for Dr. Blai's students and Black carved the above sculpture.

Capt. Black: Artist and Surgeon

by Ens. B. E. McGann

Naval Air Station, Meridian, Miss., Mar. 15 ... "Everyman's choice of life depends upon his own discovering and naming its rhythms, shapes and themes ... creating ... never leaving untouched any one of his gifts."

Nine years old and he had a pocket knife and like most boys his age, he tried his hand at whittling. By the time Capt. Paul Black was ten he made his first full size boat in addition to the scale model that brought ribbons and prize winning recognition.

High School days - bring back memories of soap carving - a successful task for Capt. Black as were future undertakings of chipped geometric carving and the creation of a chest.

In 1950, while engaged in private practice at Mount Desert Island Hospital in Bar Harbor, Capt. Black closely observed Wendell Gilley of Southwest Harbor working diligently on a bird carving. When Capt. Black confidently remarked "Oh I can do that," Gilley tossed him a knife. The result was "Cooper's Hawk" and the future result was many other beautiful bird carvings.

Wendell Gilley has since written a book on bird carving and joined the ranks of the experts. He carved the "Canadian Goose" for Harry S. Truman for the sum of $400.

The year 1965 meant the exploration of a new aspect of Capt. Black's creativity. He began a tour of duty at Lakehurst and at the same time enrolled in two courses at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art. Capt. Black was a little restless since the course offered him little challenge until one day one of his instructors remarked "Why don't you take lessons from Doctor Blai?" - and that's exactly what Capt. Black did.

Dean Boris Blai was the student of Auguste Roden during World War I and the Dean and Founder of the Temple School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Capt. Black progressed as a sculptor under the direction of Dr. Boris Blai - until the completion of "Sharon" caused Dr. Blai to express the opinion that Capt. Black was now a professional, and he didn't need any more lessons - but Capt. Black felt he still had a long way to go - and so he continued.

In 1966, Mrs. Black posed for Dr. Blai's art students, and Capt. Black created a beautiful piece of clay sculpture (but here, we must admit, he had an advantage over the other students).

In 1967 Vice Admiral Charles Rosendahl became the focal point of Capt. Black's talent. Admiral Rosendahl is well known in Navy circles and on his 75th birthday was honored with the naming of the Rosendahl Room in the Lakehurst Officers' Club. A Naval Academy man, he was designated a Naval aviator in 1924. An early pioneer of lighter - than - air ships, Admiral Rosendahl was the navigator and one of the few survivors of the Shenandoah.

From a clay carving of plasticene, a special clay imported from Italy, Capt. Black converted the sculptured head of the Admiral into a mold and then finally into plaster and "even his wife said it looked like him."

Fascinated by the family tradition signified by the "Totum Pole" and in his own back yard here at NAS Meridian, Capt. Black carved meaning into a native pine. After approximately fifty hours of creative labor the Totum Pole is almost ready to be painted in its traditional, flat earth colors. Upon completion, and crowned with the Thunderbird, the Totum Pole will be placed and unveiled in the yard of Ham Sanders. Since Sanders is involved in the lumber industry, the Beaver carved on the Totum Pole symbolizes the wood of his profession.

The talents of Capt. Black extend to numerous other areas. Japanese Brush Painting, Sumi-e, is one example of many pursuits that give testimony to the fact that the creative man chooses life by "discovering and naming its rhythms, shapes and themes ... never leaving untouched any one of his gifts."

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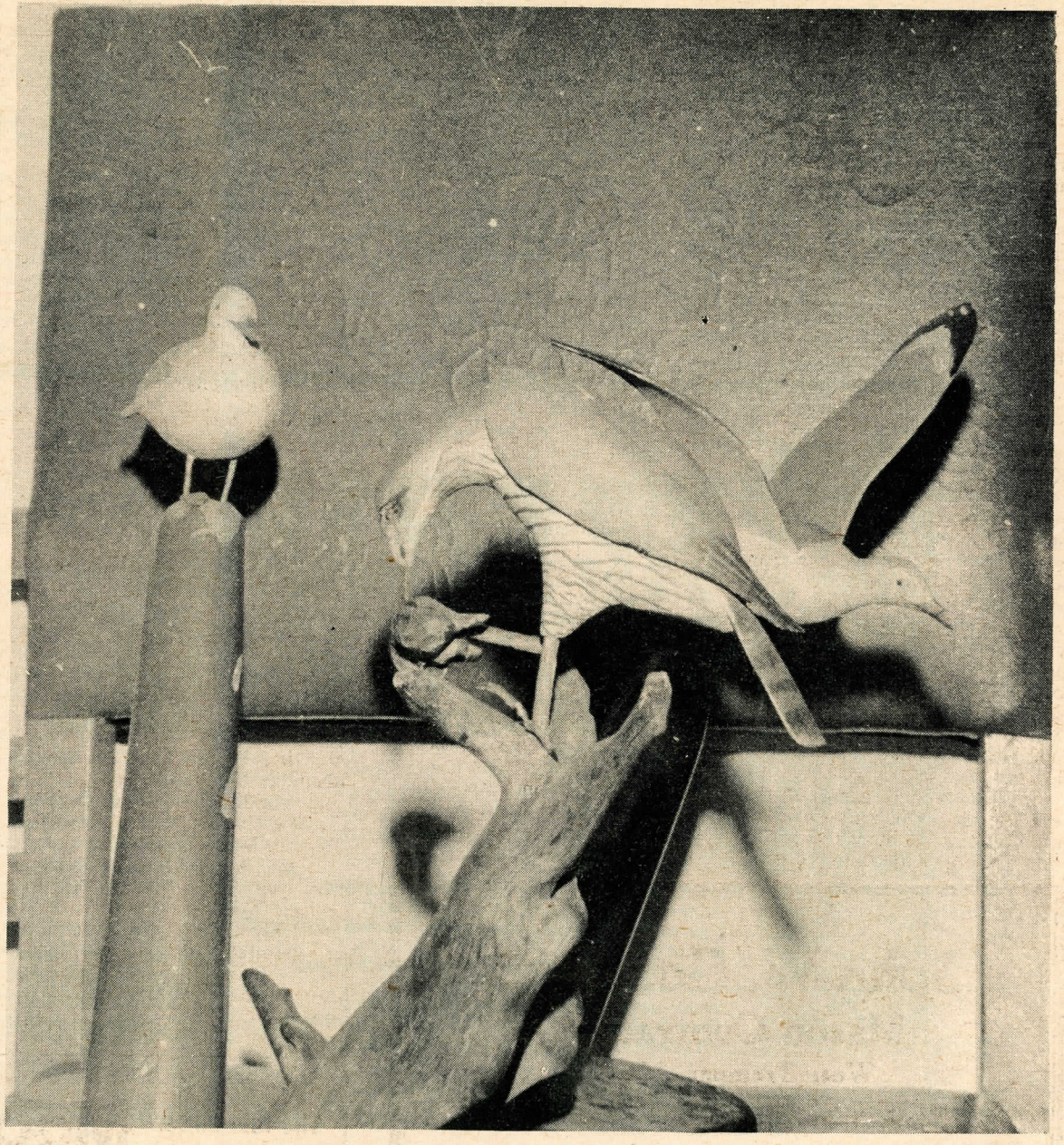

COOPER'S HAWK - Whittling soon progressed to bird carving and Cooper's Hawk in 1951.