University of Maine at Orono Distinguished Achievement Award Citation



UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

WENDELL HOLMES GILLEY

May 14, 1983 DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT

The Distinguished Achievement Award is presented to individuals who have gained regional or national recognition for outstanding professional achievements.

Wendell Holmes Gilley, a graduate of the University of Maine at Orono, Class of '25, was 78 when he died on April 24, 1983 at his home in Southwest Harbor. Wendell Gilley left his own memorial; thousands of his wood carvings of birds are in the hands of collectors, museums, and admirers throughout the world --from Canada, to South America, to Paris, London, Yugoslavia and Belgium.

From his youth Wendell Gilley enjoyed wood carving as a hobby, but until 1954, owned a family plumbing business established by his grandfather and father. But by this time, his hobby had become an art, increasingly sought by collectors, and he made the decision to devote his full time to the art of bird carving.

His deep appreciation of bird life and his intensive study of birds in their natural habitat earned his carvings special recognition in America's cultural resources. More than six thousand birds emerged from his hands, many of them of small birds, particularly the chickadee. He is also well known for large carvings of eagles, ospreys, geese, owls and life size carvings of ducks, herons and wild turkey.

His original style transformed the traditional craft of wood carving into a fine art and in his book, "The Art of Bird Carving," he shares his technical secrets of bird life and his own special talent for carving.

Today the Wendell Gilley Museum stands in his home town of Southwest Harbor to honor his achievements and preserve his work.

In recognition of the accomplishments of Wendell H. Gilley, the University of Maine at Orono is honored to present this Distinguished Achievement Award.

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