



This "toothpick farmstead" is Reuben's favorite project. Even the elevator and auger are made of toothpicks.

"PICKY" HOBBY KEEPS RETIRED FARMER BUSY

He Turns Toothpicks Into Works Of Art

By Dianne L. Beetler

Reuben Calcutt, retired farmer from Kewanee, Ill., uses toothpicks to build miniature bridges, windmills, and a variety of buildings.

Reuben became a toothpick "construction contractor" three years ago after he spotted a magazine article telling how to build models of a windmill and the Eiffel Tower from toothpicks. "I needed something to do, so I sent for the patterns," he recalls.

After completing those first two projects, he began working without patterns on projects of his own design. Since then, he has built six covered bridges, four windmills and four sizes of Ferris wheels (including a double wheel), two airplanes, a sailboat, and several buildings.

One of his drawbridges raises and lowers, and another bridge was patterned after the Golden Gate in San Francisco. The Ferris wheels all turn.

Reuben prefers to use flat rather than round toothpicks. Working at a card table in his family room, he "saws" his miniature logs with fingernail clippers: "I've worn out three pairs of clippers."

He estimates that he has used 40,000 toothpicks and three bottles of all-purpose glue since starting his "picky" hobby three years ago. "I don't build to scale, which makes it more difficult to keep the perspective correct. Covered bridges are the easiest to build," Reuben points out.

Recently, he completed a toothpick model of the historic Ryan's Round Barn, located in Johnson Sauk Trail State Park near Kewanee, Ill. He soaked the toothpicks and bent them before they dried, just as contractors built the original barn years ago.

He recently started working on a toothpick-built replica of the country church that he attended for 30 years. "I'm working from pictures and from memory," he points out.



Armed with a bottle of glue, Reuben begins his work. He prefers flat rather than round toothpicks.

He nominates a miniature farm scene as his favorite completed project. Built on a large piece of plywood, it includes a grain elevator, barn, silo, auger, feed bunks, hog houses, sheds, a house (modeled after the home he lives in), rail fence, and even a tiny mailbox — all made of toothpicks. Reuben added several non-toothpick items for the scene, including toy International Harvester equipment, plastic livestock, and round bales which he made of dowels covered with green felt.

"I get a lot of enjoyment out of my hobby," he says.

"Working with toothpicks picks me up just when I need it."



Most Curlys are still in the wild. Strickland got her stallion from the Adopt-A-Wild-Horse program.

OUTSTANDING INTELLIGENCE AND TEMPERAMENT

Curly Coated Wild Horse A Hit With Horse Lovers

If you've been looking for a horse that's good with kids and an intelligent working animal, look no more. The American Bashkir Curly — once an outcast because of its curly coat — is catching on like gangbusters with horse lovers and breeders throughout the country.

"They love people and really want attention. They're always the first to greet me in the morning," says Linda Strickland, Metamora, Ind., who owns several Curlys and is breeding more. "They're extremely intelligent and easy to train so that when brought in from the wild through the government's adopt-a-horse program, they're easily broken and quickly under saddle."

American Bashkir Curlys were first recognized as a breed in 1971 when 20 Curly horses were located and registered. Today there are more than 430 domesticated Curlys in the U.S. and the number is growing rapidly.

No one knows where the Curlys came from but horses with curly coats are found in Russia and speculation has it that they may have come across the Bering Straits and down through Alaska. They were once thought of as defective because of their 3 to 6-in. long curly hair but breeders now recognize that the hair — which is shed in the summer along with their mane and part of the tail — is the mark of a breed with brains and a desire to be with people.

Curly's are average in height — Strickland's stallion stands 16.1

hands high — and require neither shoes nor any special care. One unusual fact about the breed is that most people who are normally allergic to horse hair find that they're not allergic to Curlys. The animals have black hooves that are almost round in shape. Their coat is often sorrel colored but, due to cross-breeding, may sport almost any coloring.

Strickland got her stallion, the Red Baron, from the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Wild-Horse program because most Curlys are still in the wild. She says he was easily broken to pleasure riding in just two days. "He's smart and almost seems to have ESP. When I'm trying to herd my other horses, it's almost like he can sense what I'm thinking and helps me without asking," she says.

Strickland says there's about a 50% chance that Curly offspring will have curly hair, although the breed also recognizes non-curly animals. Despite the limited number of Curlys, the animals have appeared in the Rose Bowl the past two years and have begun to win trophies and awards in horse shows throughout the country.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Linda Strickland, Rt. 1, Box 150, Metamora, Ind. 47030 (ph 317 647-3633).

You may also contact the breed registry. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Bashkir Curly, Box 453, Ely, Nevada 89301 (ph 702 289-4228).