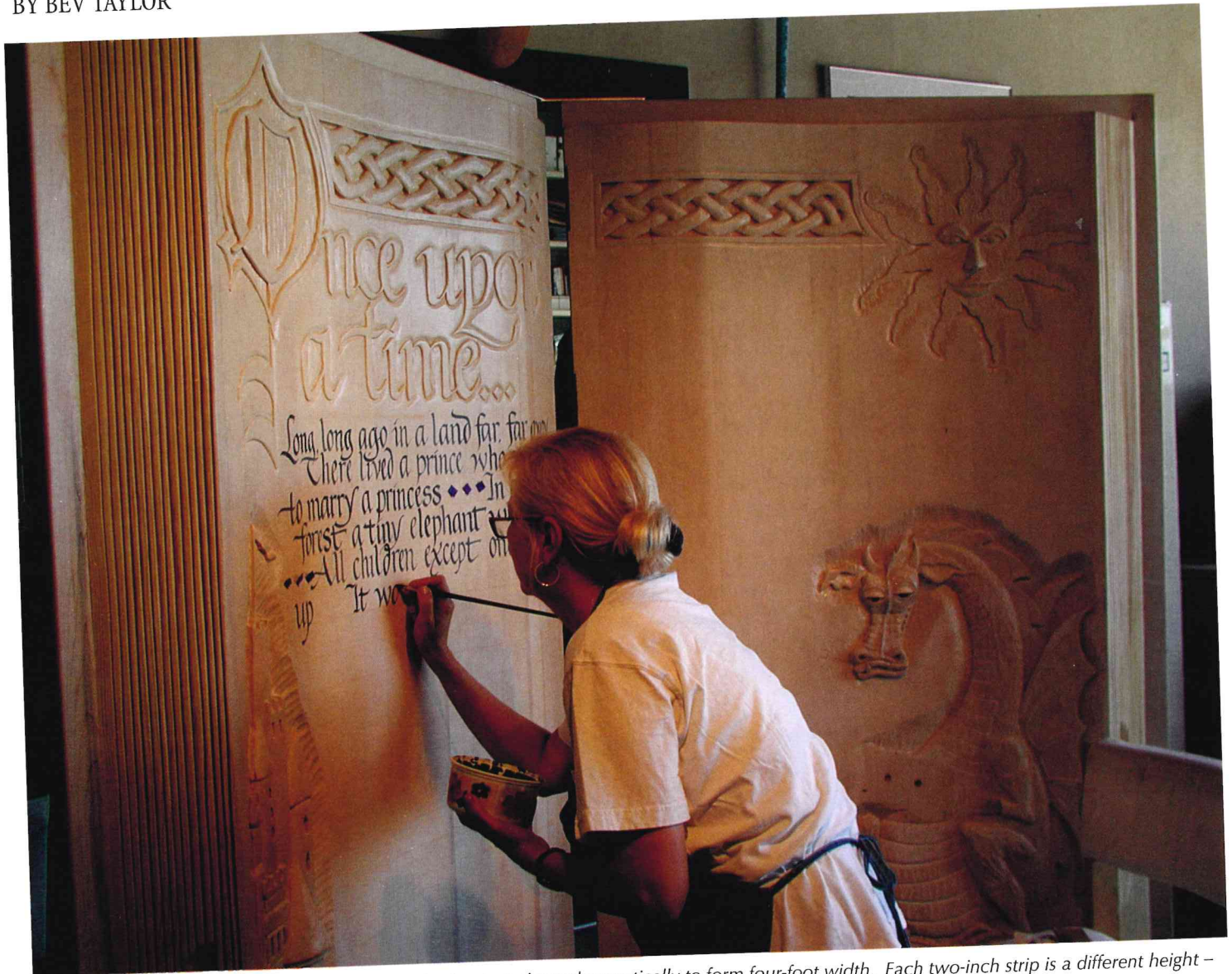


STORYTIME DOORS

BY BEV TAYLOR



The doors are made of two-inch strips of clear pine laminated together vertically to form four-foot width. Each two-inch strip is a different height – ranging from two inches to five and a half inches – to replicate the curve of open book pages.

The Children's Storytime Doors began as a dream commission. I live in Farmington, New Mexico, the most populous city of the Four Corners region. As Farmington was in the process of building a new ten million dollar public library, I was asked by the building committee to design a door for the children's storytime room in the library. There were no requirements or design restrictions on the project because the committee apparently "trusted my judgment."

My art has always revolved around my love for letters, books, and painting. I've been an artist all my life and have been doing calligraphy since the early 1980s. My husband, Tom, has always been a woodworker. He and I learned the art of wood carving from his parents, Miriam and

Merrill Taylor. Tom was a third generation owner of a lumber and hardware store begun by his grandfather in 1905. The wonderful old wooden building is now the home to my business, Artifacts Gallery, as well as fourteen art studios.

I told the committee that Tom, using his background in carpentry, would build the doors so that we could carve them together. In the end, the carved doors would have my calligraphy, allowing the piece to be relevant to both adults and children through the use of images and words. We made a request of the architect to widen the six-foot opening for the door to eight feet with a center column so the doors could be hung from the center and therefore open and close like a book. The change was easily made

in the plans and the long process of creating the two doors now began.

The actual construction of the doors took Tom about three weeks. The doors are made of 2"-thick strips of clear pine laminated together side-by-side to form the four-foot width. Each 2"-thick strip ranged in height from 2" to 5½" to allow us to replicate the curve of the pages of an open book. When the tedious gluing and clamping process was complete, a 2"-thick hard maple edge was added for strength. After hours of sanding with an electric belt sander to smooth the curve of the pages, the doors were ready for the hinges. We chose to use four ball bearing hinges that made the doors perfectly balanced when hung, eliminating the need for a closing



The text on the doors consists of opening lines from famous children's literature, such as "Dr. Doolittle loved animals so much," and "This is George, and George was a very good little monkey." If you look closely, you are sure to spot lines that you recognize.

latch. When the construction of the doors was finished, we hung them in the library openings to make sure that the later carving of the designs would not be interrupted by the addition of the hinges. We also did this so that at the completion of the project, all we had to do was simply hang the doors on the hinges without any further adjustments.

The doors were then ready for carving. From my initial small sketches, full-sized templates were then made. These included the two inside page designs as well as the front and back covers. A spine for the book was later added. The template designs were transferred using graphite paper.

The carving and subsequent sanding of the

wood was all done by hand. Sanding this type of detailed carving takes almost as long as the carving does. If the sanding is not done properly the wood will not accept stain or paint well, so this step was extremely important. The wood must be sanded to a perfectly smooth and polished finish. It is then ready to accept the finish paint. We used white latex underbody paint wiped on and off to create a whitewashed effect on the surface of the wood. Next was a coat of clear satin acrylic varnish. I then had a smooth surface on which to do the calligraphic text on the pages.

I drew the text guidelines using watercolor pencils. These guidelines could be wiped off upon completion of the lettering using a damp

paper towel. I did the lettering with a 1/4" flat brush and Golden acrylic paint. Because we had painted the surface of the doors with acrylic varnish, I could simply use a damp paper towel to rub off any misspellings or other mistakes. The text on the doors consists of opening lines from famous children's literature, lines most people can recognize. These included such lines as, "Dr. Doolittle loved animals so much," and "This is George, and George was a very good little monkey." If people aren't certain about the lines' origins, the librarians provide a guide sheet of the titles of the books used.

The wood was now ready for the final painting. We wanted the grain of the wood to show through the finish, so I used watered down



The carving and sanding were done by hand. If the sanding is not done properly, the wood will not accept stain or paint well. We used white latex underbody paint wiped on and off to create a whitewashed effect, followed by a coat of clear satin acrylic varnish.



Golden acrylic to paint the carved designs and details. The dragon has beautiful dichroic glass eyes. After all of the acrylic paint was dry and cured, we added three final coats of clear satin acrylic varnish to seal everything. Once dry, we moved the doors to the library, lifted them onto the hinges that were already in place, and voila, mission accomplished... seven months from start to finish.

The patrons of the library, young and old alike, love their new state-of-the-art library, and the Children's Storytime Doors have only made the space more enticing for learning, reading and community gatherings. The library is visited by 1,700 people daily and is truly a community library. I am happy to have my artwork as part of this new facility. 🐉



From my initial small sketches, full-sized templates were made. These included the two inside "page" designs as well as the front and back "covers." The template designs were transferred using graphite paper, and I drew guidelines for lettering the text using watercolor pencils. I did the lettering with a fourth-of-an-inch flat brush and Golden acrylic paint. Hinges were placed in the center of the doorway so the doors can open and close like a book.

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