

# The SCULPTOR

BY SIOBHAN FITZPATRICK AUSTIN

When Thomas Jefferson was asked why he started gardening in his 80th year, his response was "but tho' an old man, I am but a young gardener." Ed Uttridge understands that attitude very well. A nuclear physicist turned businessman, Uttridge did not begin his career as an artist until he was 47. At that time, in 1992, his daughter Darlene had just finished college and asked him to join her in taking a watercolor class at a local studio near their home in Maryland. "I didn't even know how to spell 'art'," says Uttridge with a chuckle. But the timing was right.

Having just sold his real estate company and after working on nuclear submarines for years, he had plenty of free time. So he began a new career in the arts, and flourished. Uttridge went from water colors to oils to his current work, magnificent kinetic wood sculptures in collaboration with Darlene.

Uttridge started making sculptures just a few years ago, but today at 70, he finds the artistic focus perfectly appropriate. "The character of a young person is having potential in jobs, relationships, to raise a family. As you get older, most people only see all those things behind them," he says. "But that's not how I see life. Today, I see I have the potential to live in Italy now, and to work on my backhand on the tennis court."

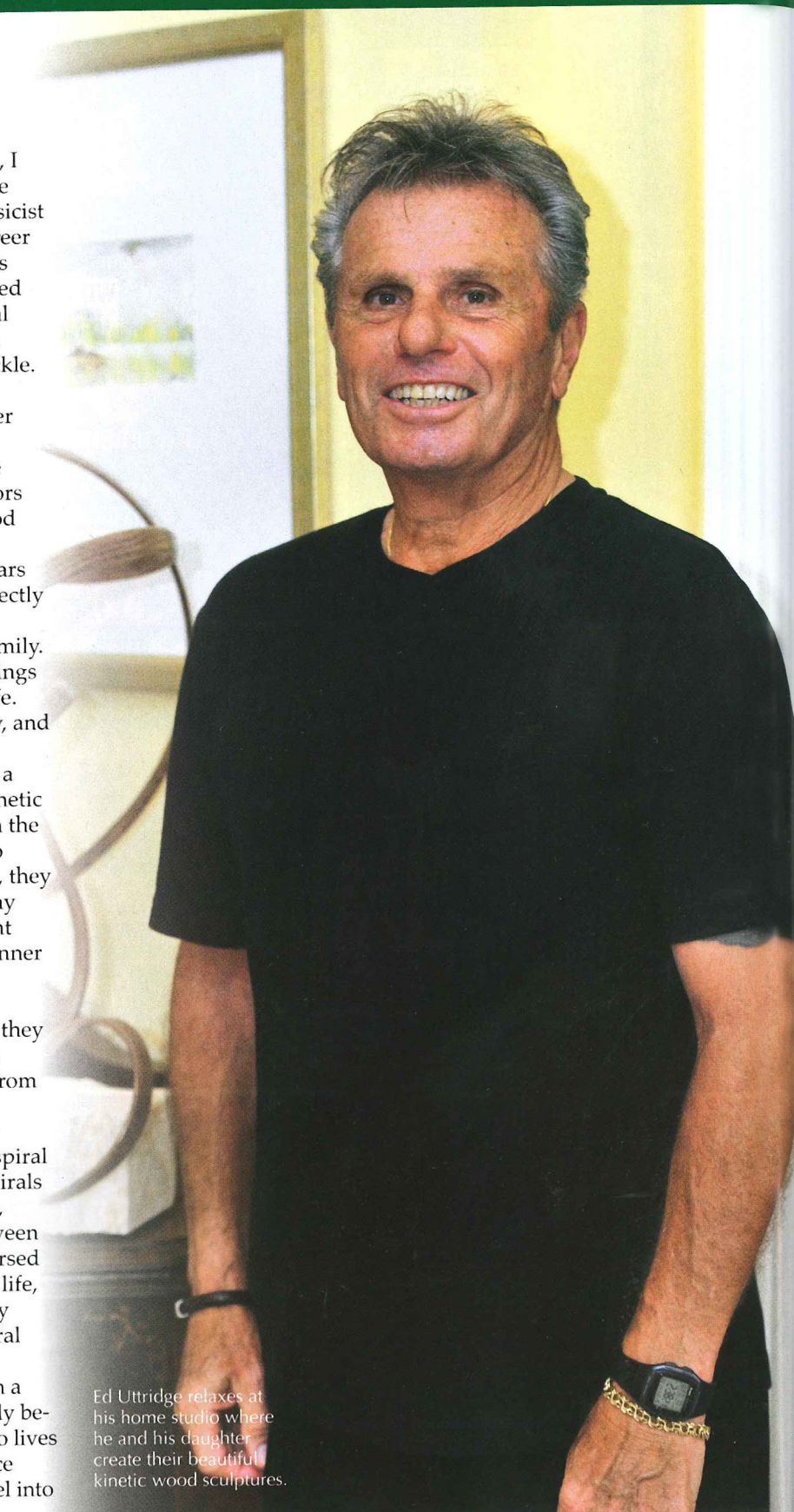
As with water colors, Darlene, who had become a fan of chrome, stainless steel and other kinds of kinetic metal sculptures, encouraged her father to work in the medium. But both she and her father wanted to do something different. Instead of using shiny metals, they wanted something that would spiral in a non-flashy way; they chose wood. "We tried to achieve elegant simplicity that we find in nature and soothe our sinner soul by quiet contemplation," says Uttridge, who moved to Vero Beach with his family in 2002.

But when the father-daughter team first set out, they were not certain of success. "We've searched up to two years and have not see this kinetic sculpture from wood," Uttridge says.

But an innovator at heart, he found a way. Their sculptures are all abstract except for one, and the spiral is used in all of them. That, he says, is the key. "Spirals have been used as an art motif since ancient times, before there was any form of communication between societies. But no matter how geographically dispersed people were, people saw spirals in nature. Like in life, wherever you happen to be, you don't have to stay there. You can get renewal, begin again, grow, spiral like our lives," says Uttridge.

The process itself is quite technical. He starts with a pencil line drawing, the basis of what will eventually become a three dimensional wire model. Darlene, who lives in Richmond, Va, includes her input via Skype. Once they've come to a decision, Ed bends the wire model into

Ed Uttridge relaxes at his home studio where he and his daughter create their beautiful kinetic wood sculptures.



Name: Ed Uttridge

Age: 70

Family: Wife, Jill, daughter, Darlene, and sons Mark and Michael.

Something people don't know about me: "I had a series of magic shops."

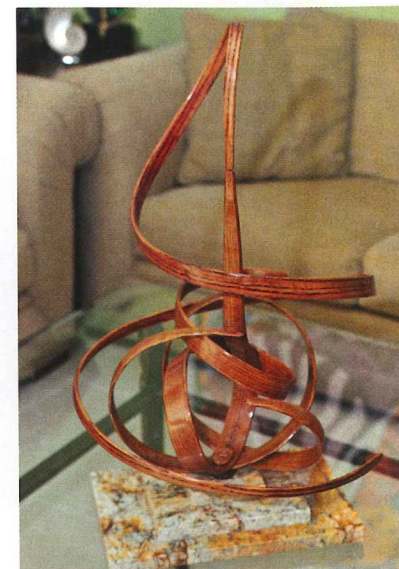
Hobbies: "Astronomy, tennis and travel. I spend about three or four months abroad."

What inspires him: "Darlene and I are motivated to work in a collaborative artistic effort to communicate a sense of balance, stability and renewal in our sculptures."

People OF INTEREST

shape, and bases the wood sculpture on that design.

Uttridge uses many kinds of wood — ash, honey locust, sycamore and red gum. He starts with a plank of wood 2 inches inch thick, 7 inches wide and 7 feet long, then cuts it into strips. The main challenge is starting with a wet piece of wood that's pliable enough that he can twist it into a specific shape and hold it in that form with clamps or Velcro. As it's held in the sculpture he continues to tweak it.



A key characteristic of every PateraKori sculpture is the spiral, evident in the example above.

At the same time, he works on the kinetic arm spiral which is balanced, by trial and error and experience, on a small, single stainless steel ball bearing. When the correct balance is realized and the overall sculpture has achieved his and Darlene's artistic vision, the piece is dried in drying boxes to reduce the moisture level in the wood to a level that you would expect in fine furniture, about 5-7 percent moisture. The rotation of the kinetic arm can be initiated by the observer with a manual twist or by air movement created by a fan.

The work can be seen at galleries throughout the United States, including the A.E. Backus Gallery in Fort Pierce. They were invited to showcase it there as part of the gallery's "Best of the Best" juried show that runs through November. In addition, they won a Merrit award for these works, each of which sells for \$4,800.

To view all of their work, visit Paterakoristudios.com, which they named in honor of their Greek heritage with Patera meaning father and Kori meaning daughter.

Their work will also be displayed at the prestigious Spectrum Miami, a contemporary art show, in December. In the meantime, Patera and Kori are busy creating new sculptures, drawing ever more, as Uttridge puts it, on the calm influence of nature and inner creativity. "We all have these creative seeds," he says. "It's a matter of asking: Which seeds are you going to nourish?"

## A.E. BACKUS MUSEUM Holiday Fine Art Extravaganza

— November 28 to January 9, 2015 —



Opening Reception & Sale  
Friday, December 5 – 5-8 p.m.  
FREE Admission – Public Invited

Open House Sale  
Saturday, December 6 – 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
FREE Admission, Public Invited

Dec. 5 & 6 ONLY, everything is 10% off.  
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with a purchase of \$30 or more.

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