

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR. IRA CUDE

Ira Cude (D1) is a man of few words. Tall, taciturn, walking carefully as a result of a fall a few years ago, you would never guess that underneath all that is a sensitive artist. His wood



sculptures, which he handcarves and then paints, are so realistic that you might mistake them for fine porcelain.

Born and raised in the Washington Avenue/ Patterson area (then called the West End) he was educated in the Houston public schools and became a construction worker by trade. In 2012 the local Ironworkers Union honored him for his 75 years of membership.

After a stint in the military during World War II Ira worked at the Houston Chronicle for 34 years, keeping everything in shipshape working order. On his retirement in 1985 several of the executives were quoted as saying they were sure the Chronicle would survive but wondered what their wives would do without help from Mr. Fixit, who had been so kind about responding to an SOS from home.

Upon retirement Ira and his wife moved to a home on Lake Houston near Huffman. His days continued to be

filled with activities as he maintained his long-time affiliation with the Lions Club, did volunteer work at a nearby camp for handicapped children among other places, and carved his remarkable figures. A number of plaques, trophies and blue and red ribbons attest to his years of service and achievement.

After his wife's death he and his two sons felt that he needed to be where he could get care if needed, and he moved to Treemont in 2012

Because his woodcarvings are so outstanding I want to keep the words to a minimum and show pictures of some of his work calling attention to its scope and diversity. His sense of humor



comes through loud and clear in his whimsical pieces like the gaucho figure shown here, or the little girl scarecrow Sally with her dog Bevo at her feet and



her bird Ann perched on her arm.

One of his favorites is a bas relief character study of Ila Fox Loescher, better known as “The Turtle Lady of South Padre Island.” Mrs. Loescher was an Iowa woman who was a charter member of *The Ninety-Nines*, a group of pioneer female aviators led by Amelia Earhardt. She moved to South Padre Island after her husband’s death and soon developed a passion for saving the Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle, at that time threatened with extinction. Her mission to protect both the turtles and their eggs became known around the world, and Ira’s woodcarving of her cuddling one of the large creatures is a remarkable image.

Another piece of particular beauty is an “underwater “ view is of two colorful fish swimming around some driftwood and greenery. Even the pebbles at the base are carved and painted wood. The effect is like fine porcelain.



One of Ira’s sons is a career military man, a flight instructor in Lubbock, Texas. The other one is an executive with Halliburton Company here in Houston.

We’re glad you’re here, Ira.