

## Robin, Charles R Jr.



### Shrimper and Miniature Boat Maker

Commercial fisherman Charles Robin of Ycloskey, St. Bernard Parish was born in 1930 and raised in the Bayou LaLoutre area. He says proudly that he is a fourth generation fisherman, hunter, and trapper, but "shrimping is the only thing I do now." He learned to fish oysters and shrimp from his father, who started taking him along on the boats when he was nine years old. His father was also a boat builder and handed his craft down to his son. He says, "I build my model boats like I did my fishing boats." Sometimes he passes the time when his crew is trawling for shrimp by carving, but most of his work is done in a basement workshop at home in Ycloskey where he creates intricately detailed miniature boats in his spare time.

Mr. Robin hand carves the boats from tupelo gum, old cypress planks, and pine. He often salvages wood from old window frames and other "old lumber that smells good." Frequently, he works on several different boats at once. He cuts out all of his pieces by hand. His replicas of shrimp boats, oyster luggers, skiffs, sailboats, pirogues, and other watercraft are so detailed that they include miniature life preservers, steering wheels, anchors, and piles of culled oysters on the deck of a lugger. He paints the boats with three coats of paint that he mixes himself.

He says that the miniature boats are "a tribute to the old people-our ancestors." Mr. Robin especially enjoys building models of boats used at the turn of the century in Louisiana. Some of his miniatures are replicas of boats he or his friends have owned. One is of a shrimp boat he owned at the age of 19 and another is of a boat owned by his late father. He is passing on his knowledge to his grandson, Charles Robin IV, who practices making his own miniatures in Mr. Robin's workshop.

Mr. Robin is a member of Los Isleños Heritage and Culture Society and performs volunteer work for the club. With his wife, Cecile, he demonstrates his skill in model boat building at local schools, boat shows, museums, and festivals like the Madisonville Boat Festival and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. His work has won numerous awards in local competitions, including Best of Show at the Louisiana Carvers and Collectors Guild each year from 1992 through 1995; the People's Choice Award in 1995; and Best of Show at the Cajun Heritage show in 1995. His boats can be seen on display at the Isleños Museum, the Biloxi Museum, and the Jefferson Maritime Museum.