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# Why the Pelican

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## Why the Pelican

J.C.G.

**Interviewer:** Okay, last question. Why the pelican?

**Interviewee:** I've been carving for so many years. Making archways, bookcases, puzzle boxes, and tables. This is my joy, but these objects are so common, I knew better than to think I'd catch much attention when I first started. So, about ten years ago, I chose to claim a symbol that would draw attention in a different way. I chose something small and forgettable and made it large and imposing. I chose a bottle cap.

(shakes head)

Not just any bottle cap, but the bottle cap that led me through almost every important decision I've made throughout my life. This was the bottle cap that I found the one and only time I went to the beach as a kid. I stepped on it and cut open my big toe, jamming it under the skin.

(laughs)

After my babysitter scolded me the entire time I was in the hospital, I asked if I could keep it. I remember the nurse looking at me strangely, and right as my babysitter was telling her to "throw that piece of junk away!" my father came in and in his usual calm demeanor, grabbed the bottle cap and inspected it. He looked me in the eye while quirked his eyebrow. I could feel his voice vibrating behind my ear: "This thing?"

(looks down and smiles)

My dad doesn't talk too much in front of other people, so after we got home I followed him into his office and placed the bottle cap in the center of his desk. He watched me as I settled into the

overstuffed chair and turned down my hearing aid—he has a loud voice. That night we went over how to pronounce *bottle cap*, *pelican*, *brewing company*, and *born at the beach*. We went over how that discarded piece of metal was meant to be informative, and symbolic. How companies advertise using logos, in this case the pelican. I remember thinking to myself, *I can do that*, and I could probably come up with something better than a pelican.

**Interviewer:** But, you kept it?

**Interviewee:** (holds up a finger)

The original plan was advertisement and marketing. It wasn't until high school that I started to realize I wanted nothing to do with that, and it wasn't just a loss of interest. You see, my school requirements changed and didn't allow a performing art to cover credit for a visual art. Not that I was a spectacular pianist, but... bummer. I started my first art class in a bit of a haze. I thought art was drawing, but this guy had us melting plastic and molding clay for our first semester. By then I was convinced that art was the worst craft for me, and stopped pretending to pay attention.

(quirks his eyebrow)

You know those morons in the back of every classroom who spend their time making airplanes and playing catch? That was me. When I got really bored I would pull out that old bottle cap—somehow I still had it—and use it on my pencil like some fancy carving utensil. Yes, I still used wooden Ticonderoga pencils. One day, after carving a tree stump out of my poor abused pencil, I managed to lose the thing.

(pauses)

The pencil, not the bottle cap. It wouldn't have been a problem except that about a week later the art teacher dropped it, along

with our newest art assignment, smack dab in the middle of my desk. Somehow he had figured out that I had been turning off my hearing aid, because he signed at me for the first time. *You'll be interested in this.* Looked like my art teacher had found some ammunition to use against me. I lifted my hands to respond, *What joy!* Can you feel the sarcasm? Well, I feel like the irony of this story is my current occupation. When it came to starting a business as a woodcarver, I wanted something that would define me and humor me. So, for lack of better words, I used it as a stencil for a larger wooden version of itself, pelican and all.

**Interviewer:** Well, thank you for letting me interview you.

**Interviewee:** Thanks for showing interest in The Feathered Carver!



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