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"This question is like a classic argument in music. A technique that causes a Bluegrass audience to boo and hiss can cause the Americana audience to holler encore. Shortcuts are in the eye of the beholder. A technique the furniture maker shuns, the puzzle maker grasps."

"If you are making a reproduction, modern shortcuts should never be used. If you are making a copy of something old, then you can use anything you want. You just can't call it a reproduction."

"One man's shortcuts are another man's time saving technique. If I tried to master all the skills necessary to do true reproductions, I'd never get anything done. However, I am sometimes surprised when I learn that the old ways are really quicker than the new ways. I try to find a happy medium so I can accomplish finished projects and enjoy making sawdust."

"I think my shortcuts are my planer, shaper, drill press, etc. I do try to stay away from nails and screws, though. When doing a project, this little voice always says, 'Cabinet makers join lumber with joints, and carpenters join lumber with nails.' But my free time for my hobby is limited, so I need to use my time wisely if I am going to get anything accomplished."

"There are times I'm such a purist (i.e. bonehead). I'll refuse to take work from clients prefaced with anything that smacks of, 'Just bang it together.' Other times, I'll pay attention to visible joinery and take shortcuts in places you have to bend over to see. Every once in a while, I'll go the plywood and nails route. These pieces usually make it into my living room."

"If Duncan Phyffe had Blum drawer slides, would he have messed with wooden drawer runners? He worked with what he had. I don't have time to do some of the purist things I'd like to do, but if it's seen or touched, I want it done properly. Shortcuts give me time for a hand rubbed finish or to polish off a piece better with the time I saved."

"A shortcut is acceptable if it's unseen or untouched, but one must consider long term cause and effect. Sometimes a shortcut will create more work later."

"Someone once said, 'It's not important what you do when people are looking. It's what you do when no one is looking that counts.' I don't take short cuts."

"I've seen quality work. I don't do quality work, but I usually know who does and farm it out."

"Contemporary 'reproduction' offers many opportunities for compromise. If an 18th century 'reproduction' must be a faithful emulation of the original, then it must be of lumber that was hand felled and milled with period sawmill equipment, followed by the craftsman's handwork using period tools, glues and finishes."

"Trying to define a 'correct' way to build furniture makes this question entirely subjective. Quality is defined in this order: durability, design for a specific location or function, and appearance. To shortcut that would be to ignore the very purpose of my labor."

"Where is the *Book of Standards* and who is to say what is a shortcut? Every piece of furniture ever made has a shortcut somewhere in its construction by someone's standards."

"As I have never had any training in woodworking, all of my projects are pure to me without any shortcuts. Actually, I would love to know some, as all my projects take me s-o-o-o-o much longer than I thought they would."

"It's rather romantic to aspire to build a piece of furniture in the old way, but they used methods, materials, and machinery they had then to manufacture the furniture they built. I think they would have used modern shortcuts, if it didn't effect the appearance or durability of the piece."

"When I make a quality piece, I don't worry about its 'purity.' I want it to function well, last forever, and be a thing of beauty. If a modern technique will give me a stronger joint without effecting its beauty, I'll go for it every time. New techniques such as beadlock or doweling jigs, pocket screws, etc. will increase functionality. If they are hidden, they don't affect appearance."

And, here's A.J.'s own take on the subject... "I have a tendency to use shortcuts to maximize my shop time in ways that just don't bother me if they don't show in the work. This allows me to spend more time on the visible aspects of the project, as well as more time for doing other projects in my shop. There are some shortcuts that I won't take—I won't take the easy route on anything at all that can be seen or touched—but when it's hidden, I usually go for it."

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## News and Views from

WoodCentral.com

by Ellis Valentine

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