

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES 1

Whether we're happy about it or not, most of us learn life's lessons the hard way: by doing things wrong the first time. Sometimes the results are comical; sometimes not funny at all. But, we usually end up learning something useful from them. So, in the spirit of helping others avoid some of the classic bonehead moves, I asked our visitors: **What was your dumbest woodworking mistake?** Here is Part 1 of the responses:

"Easy....thinking power tools and liquor mix well. They don't."

"Other than mounting various blades of various tools on backwards at various times, the best was while cleaning up the shop, the 6" jointer on wheels got away and rolled down the driveway into the back of my Explorer!"

"Buying el-cheapo chisels, then stubbornly continuing to use them for ages before paying a little bit more for chisels that are a substantial improvement."

"Plunge cut on a dado blade. Ouch."

"Buying my first lathe. Now, I don't do any flat work."

"I was gluing up a large case piece with several components, but I didn't have my clamps close at hand, with jaws open and ready to go. It got ugly. I raced the clock and lost."

"Laid out eight pieces of an octagonal base flat on my assembly table for gluing. I applied glue to all the mitered edges, or thought I had. When I carefully and precariously stood them up to clamp them, I realized the two end edges making up the final joint did not get any glue. Trying to hold eight pieces 7" wide and 28" tall while applying glue to an edge was lots of fun."

"I was setting up a big trammel to trim a radius with a big straight bit. Didn't unplug the router as I rotated the bit to get the measurement to center dialed in. Almost made my thumb and index finger shorter when I bumped the power switch. Soft start saved me, and the cuts are almost healed."

"My dumbest mistake? I don't know; I haven't made it yet. Every project I've worked on has one somewhere."

"Starting a complicated glue up without a dry run and presetting clamps always spells trouble. Also, never do a glue up with the phone turned on."

"Gluing on a face frame upside down. The cute little bathroom cabinet with raised panel doors and a lower shelf for doodads, now has the doodad shelf on top. I swore so loud my wife raced down to the shop expecting to find I had cut off a finger."

"Recently, I went to glue up a rolling cabinet for the shop and assembled the top on the back, and the back on the top. Come to find out, the new Titebond III secures a little faster than I was hoping."

"I once measured all the piano benches at a church before making one for my daughter -- without measuring her piano. The seat was taller than the edge of the keyboard. I lost the carefully tapered feet when I had to trim it down."

"While building my shop, I was sketching up the walls while my son and his boy were assembling the studs. He said, 'You want the window header here?' Yup. We lifted the wall and discovered it was assembled upside down on the floor so the header was on the bottom of the window opening. We removed the upper cripples and put a header on top, but you could set a tank on that window sill."

"I had built a large CD storage cabinet, only to find out that CD cases are not square. I'd made the drawers using the long side measurement of the CD case, which is not where the title is!"

"I built an 8 ft. tall by 6-ft. wide by 2-ft. deep display case in a 8-ft.-3-in. shop. There was no way to tip the case to get it out the door. Had to disassemble the 7" crown molding. The client decided she wanted it upstairs, and after wrestling this beast up the stairs we found the room had no space for the crown molding we had built. Had to cut the doors down and remake moldings for the top."

"I decided to make a production run of a simple wall cupboard to give as Christmas presents. I planned a dozen of them and the sides were a mirror image of each other. I thoughtlessly made 24 left sides, so the little production run got doubled, taking me through Easter to complete."

"I was 16 years old and helping Dad finish our basement. The tools we had were an old drill and a circular saw with 1" teeth. I decided to use the saw to rip a stud in half lengthwise. After about two feet, a tooth broke off, the saw jumped up and hit my leg just above the knee cap. Fifty two stitches later, I was home getting sympathy from my girlfriend, now my wife."

"How about holding a piece of 'channel rustic' plywood with one hand and trying to rabbet the edge a little deeper with a sharp chisel. Yep, the chisel slipped and caught me in the wrist. I missed the tendon by a whisker."

"Martian dovetails: all I can say is, thank god for #8 wood screws."

"Building bookcases for a client's library comes to mind. As usual, there wasn't enough space in my shop, so I had stacked the cases 2 and 3 high. I was feeling good until I accidentally punched the garage door opener while going on break. The rising door picked off one stack of cases after another and the cascading crashes sent a crescendo of feelings through my body and a corresponding spewing forth of words I thought I'd forgotten."

"Trying to glue up with #20 biscuits instead of the #10s the biscuit joiner had been set for. It was a complicated glue up that should have had a dry run with the biscuits. We're still amazed the parrot did not pick up on the profanity used."

"I was building a cabinet and selected the perfect, most beautiful boards to glue up the top. I used biscuits every 6 inches. After cutting the top to size, I decided it was too wide, so I cut 4" off one end...right through the biscuits."

"...thinking it would be good to give my spouse a tour of the shop and a primer on each of the larger tools. Instead of piquing her interest in my hobby, all I got was a blank stare followed by, 'exactly how much did all of this cost?' I hope you can fill in the details. I'd rather not recount the rest of that train wreck."

"My first hand-cut dovetails made for a real piece of furniture somehow ended up with pins on the sides and tails on the front. The drawer has an applied front which hides the tails, so I tell everyone those are hand-cut box joints."

"Exactness. I am a master of cutting my last piece of stock precisely an inch too short."

"Each of my recent bed leg posts is made of three 1" pieces laminated to make a 3x3 corner post. Grain and color matching is critical, so I spent considerable time laying out the pieces and began cutting. 'That's odd' I said to myself, finding 12 workpieces and a series of midsize offcuts when I expected almost no waste. Argh! I'd cut 12 short footboard pieces and no long headboard pieces. Now I get to practice laminating staggered half laps to make headboard legs."

"After getting my first chop saw I started going too fast. A piece jumped back and broke a bone at the end of my thumb. I did not go to the doctor but saved the offending workpiece and screwed it to the chop saw stand to serve as a reminder."

**Participate in future discussions
at www.woodcentral.com**

News and Views from

WoodCentral.com

by Ellis Valentine

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES 1

Whether we're happy about it or not, most of us learn life's lessons the hard way: by doing things wrong the first time. Sometimes the results are comical; sometimes not funny at all. But, we usually end up learning something useful from them. So, in the spirit of helping others avoid some of the classic bonehead moves, I asked our visitors: What was your dumbest woodworking mistake? Here is Part I of the responses:

"Easy...thinking power tools and liquor mix well. They don't."

"Other than mounting various blades of various tools on backwards at various times, the best was while cleaning up the shop, the 6" Jointer on wheels got away and rolled down the driveway into the back of my Explorer!"

"Buying el-cheapo chisels, then stubbornly continuing to use them for ages before paying a little bit more for chisels that are a substantial improvement."

"Plunge cut on a dado blade. Ouch."

"Buying my first lathe. Now, I don't do any flat work."

"I was gluing up a large case piece with several components, but I didn't have my clamps close at hand, with jaws open and ready to go. It got ugly. I raced the clock and lost."

"Laid out eight pieces of an octagonal base flat on my assembly table for gluing. I applied glue to all the mitered edges, or thought I had. When I carefully and precariously stood them up to clamp them, I realized the two end edges making up the final joint did not get any glue. Trying to hold eight pieces 7" wide and 28" tall while applying glue to an edge was lots of fun."

"I was setting up a big trammel to trim a radius with a big straight bit. Didn't unplug the router as I rotated the bit to get the measurement to center dialed in. Almost made my thumb and index finger shorter when I bumped the power switch. Soft start saved me, and the cuts are almost healed."

"My dumbest mistake? I don't know; I haven't made it yet. Every project I've worked on has one somewhere."

"Starting a complicated glue up without a dry run and presetting clamps always spells trouble. Also, never do a glue up with the phone turned on."

"Gluing on a face frame upside down. The cute little bathroom cabinet with raised panel doors and a lower shelf for doodads, now has the doodad shelf on top. I swore so loud my wife raced down to the shop expecting to find I had cut off a finger."

"Recently, I went to glue up a rolling cabinet for the shop and assembled the top on the back, and the back on the top. Come to find out, the new Titebond III secures a little faster than I was hoping."

"I once measured all the piano benches at a church before making one for my daughter without measuring her piano. The seat was taller than the edge of the keyboard. I lost the carefully tapered feet when I had to trim it down."

"While building my shop, I was sketching up the walls while my son and his boy were assembling the studs. He said, 'You want the window header here? Yup. We lifted the wall and discovered it was assembled upside down on the floor so the header was on the bottom of the window opening. We removed the upper cripples and put a header on top, but you could set a tank on that window sill.'"

September-October, 2004

"I had built a large CD storage cabinet, only to find out that CD cases are not square. I'd made the drawers using the

long side measurement of the CD case, which is not where the title is!"

"I built an 8 ft. tall by 6-ft. wide by 2-ft. deep display case in a 8-ft.- 3-in. shop. There was no way to tip the case to get it out the door. Had to disassemble the 7" crown molding. The client decided she wanted it upstairs, and after wrestling this beast up the stairs we found the room had no space for the crown molding we had built. Had to cut the doors down and remake moldings for the top."

"I decided to make a production run of a simple wall cupboard to give as Christmas presents. I planned a dozen of them and the sides were a mirror image of each other. I thoughtlessly made 24 left sides, so the little production run got doubled, taking me through Easter to complete."

"I was 16 years old and helping Dad finish our basement. The tools we had were an old drill and a circular saw with 1" teeth. I decided to use the saw to rip a stud in half lengthwise. After about two feet, a tooth broke off, the saw jumped up and hit my leg just above the knee cap. Fifty two stitches later, I was home getting sympathy from my girlfriend, now my wife."

"How about holding a piece of 'channel rustic' plywood with one hand and trying to rabbet the edge a little deeper with a sharp chisel. Yep, the chisel slipped and caught me in the wrist. I missed the tendon by a whisker."

"Martian dovetails: all I can say is, thank god for #8 wood screws." "Building bookcases for a client's library comes to mind. As usual, there wasn't enough space in my shop, so I had stacked the cases 2 and 3 high. I was feeling good until I accidentally punched the garage door opener while going on break. The rising door picked off one stack of cases after another and the cascading crashes sent a crescendo of feelings through my body and a corresponding spewing forth of words I thought I'd forgotten."

"Trying to glue up with #20 biscuits instead of the #10s the biscuit joiner had been set for. It was a complicated glue up that should have had a dry run with the biscuits. We're still amazed the parrot did not pick up on the profanity used."

"I was building a cabinet and selected the perfect, most beautiful boards to glue up the top. I used biscuits every 6 inches. After cutting the top to size, I decided it was too wide, so I cut 4" off one end...right through the biscuits."

*...thinking it would be good to give my spouse a tour of the shop and a primer on each of the larger tools. Instead of piquing her interest in my hobby, all I got was a blank stare followed by, exactly how much did all of this cost? I hope you can fill in the details. I'd rather not recount the rest of that train wreck."

"My first hand-cut dovetails made for a real piece of furniture somehow ended up with pins on the sides and tails on the front. The drawer has an applied front which hides the tails, so I tell everyone those are hand-cut box joints."

"Exactness. I am a master of cutting my last piece of stock precisely an inch too short."

"Each of my recent bed leg posts is made of three 1" pieces laminated to make a 3x3 corner post. Grain and color matching is critical, so I spent considerable time laying out the pieces and began cutting. That's odd' I said to myself, finding 12 workpieces and a series of midsize offcuts when I expected almost no waste. Argh! I'd cut 12 short footboard pieces and no long headboard pieces. Now I get to practice laminating staggered half laps to make headboard legs."

"After getting my first chop saw I started going too fast. A piece jumped back and broke a bone at the end of my thumb. I did not go to the doctor but saved the offending workpiece and screwed it to the chop saw stand to serve as a reminder."

Woodworker West

Participate in future discussions at www.woodcentral.com