

WHY WOODWORKING?—Part I

*In the rush of our everyday lives, most of us take a lot of things for granted. Rarely do we actually stop to consider the reasons or motives for our actions. Well, I've always wondered what motivates people to spend so much time in a contemplative craft like woodworking. I recently asked our web site visitors: **Why do you do woodworking?**, and I was rewarded with a ton of thought-provoking replies. Here are a first batch of the responses:*

"I would love to say 'it seemed like a good idea at the time' but it's not that simple. It actually started with an old house, and appropriate to an old house is old furniture. Once I started acquiring the skills, I saw woodworking as a creative outlet for a lifetime."

"Because I can make better quality than I can afford. I love wood, I love tools, and I love to make something special for someone I love."

"I have seven grandchildren, with a never ending list of things they want grandpa to make. It is priceless to me."

"Wood projects are patient; they sit on the bench for hours or days or weeks at a time without complaint. Plus, it's nice to think that something that I made with my own hands will be appreciated."

"I like to see my own designs and concepts come to reality. As an engineer, I design things that are a team effort and have compromises, but with woodworking, I do everything."

"My hobby work is a tremendous stress reliever and source of pride. To be better able to afford quality working stock, I invested in a kiln and now sell lumber, as well as furniture. I am amazed at the way my hobby has transformed into a quasi-business."

"The thing I find drives me to create new and more difficult pieces is the simple expression, 'you made that?' It's a nice feeling, although when you think about it, it could be an insult."

"There is something about building that specific table for my kids—it was a big accomplishment for me—that really gave me a sense of pride. It had real meaning to me."

"I get a tremendous sense of accomplishment from completing a project that I planned and designed. Tools have always fascinated me. Developing my skill with them presents a continuing challenge."

"Why do it? The answer is—Strictly business! If I couldn't make a living at it, I wouldn't want to do it. It is darned hard work, second only to bricklayers and coal miners. You sweat until you stink and go home aching."

"Making a living as a furnituremaker is very different from making the occasional item for personal use. Only one-third of my time is spent cutting wood. The other two-thirds are equally divided between client communication and finishing. It took a decade to figure out how to make the equation work, and very little of it has to do with woodworking skills."

"After years teaching his trade in third world countries, my father retired and came to work in my furniture business. He was proud of my accomplishments, but when asked why he hadn't opened his own business, he said that he'd followed his own father's advice: 'When you've mastered the full extent of a trade, there is nothing more noble than to pass the knowledge along to others.'"

"For the fun and for the satisfaction of building something that suits my needs. I also want to teach my children that you can do things by and for yourself, and give them manual skills. While working on a project, they won't be on the streets, in front of TV, or playing video games."

"Design has always led the way in my interest. That is to say, design over an interest in tools. I acquire tools to accomplish a task. For me, there is an ever present need to make things."

"I am often driven by project deadlines. A creative outlet is only the by-product. Fourteen years ago, I built a workbench literally from the garbage, scavenging 2x4s, metal shelves, and odd pieces to make the butt ugliest bench, but I was thrilled. I threw it out years ago and have since made some furniture pieces of which I am proud. But if you wired me up with an *Accomplishment Meter*, that ugly bench would have pegged the meter."

"Why? Right now, I'm wondering. I did something stupid and destroyed close to \$650 worth of lighting gear. For the photographers out there, do not set your blinking studio flash units where you wouldn't stand. I usually do woodworking because I enjoy creating something useful and attractive. Maybe now, because it keeps me humble."

"It's one of the few skills my Dad never taught me, and he was fairly skilled at carpentry and cabinet work. I dabbled for a while on and off, then found a funky little internet forum. Huge mistake. The rest is history."

"I started woodworking at a young age, from liking tools, watching Dad, reading *Mechanics Illustrated* and *Popular Science*. If I'd a' kept that '66 Super Sport... When you see one like it go at the Scottsdale Auctions for \$200K, it kinda' makes a guy wonder."

"The pride of building something with your own hands is one aspect that I like. Serenity in the shop is another that keeps me going. It's nice being able to break up the work into an hour here and there, working it into family time."

"Because of a court ordered 'thing,' I'd rather not talk about."

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

News and Views from

WoodCentral.com

by Ellis Walentine

WHY WOODWORKING?—Part I

In the rush of our everyday lives, most of us take a lot of things for granted. Rarely do we actually stop to consider the reasons or motives for our actions. Well, I've always wondered what motivates people to spend so much time in a contemplative craft like woodworking. I recently asked our web site visitors: Why do you do woodworking?, and I was rewarded with a ton of thought-provoking replies. Here are a first batch of the responses: "I would love to say 'it seemed like a good idea at the time' but it's not that simple. It actually started with an old house, and appropriate to an old house is old furniture. Once I started acquiring the skills, I saw woodworking as a creative outlet for a lifetime."

"Because I can make better quality than I can afford. I love wood, I love tools, and I love to make something special for someone I love."

"I have seven grandchildren, with a never ending list of things they want grandpa to make. It is priceless to me."

"Wood projects are patient; they sit on the bench for hours or days or weeks at a time without complaint. Plus, it's nice to think that something that I made with my own hands will be appreciated."

"I like to see my own designs and concepts come to reality. As an engineer, I design things that are a team effort and have compromises, but with woodworking, I do everything."

"My hobby work is a tremendous stress reliever and source of pride. To be better able to afford quality working stock, I invested in a kiln and now sell lumber, as well as furniture. I am amazed at the way my hobby has transformed into a quasi-business."

"The thing I find drives me to create new and more difficult pieces is the simple expression, 'you made that?' It's a nice feeling, although when you think about it, it could be an insult."

"There is something about building that specific table for my kids-it was a big accomplishment for me-that really gave me a sense of pride. had real meaning to me."

It

"I get a tremendous sense of accomplishment from completing a project that I planned and designed. Tools have always fascinated me. Developing my skill with them presents a continuing challenge." "Why do it? The answer is-Strictly business! If I couldn't make a living at it, I wouldn't want to do it. It is darned hard work, second only to bricklayers and coal miners. You sweat until you stink and go home aching."

May-June, 2005

"Making a living as a furniture maker is very different from making the occasional item for personal use. Only one-third of my time is spent cutting wood. The other two-thirds are equally divided between client communication and finishing. It took a decade to figure out how to make the equation work, and very little of it has to do with woodworking skills."

"After years teaching his trade in third world countries, my father retired and came to work in my furniture business. He was proud of my accomplishments, but when asked why he hadn't opened his own business, he said that he'd followed his own father's advice: "When you've mastered the full extent of a trade, there is nothing more noble than to pass the knowledge along to others."

"For the fun and for the satisfaction of building something that suits my needs. I also want to teach my children that you can do things by and for yourself, and give them manual skills. While working on a project, they won't be on the streets, in front of TV, or playing video games." "Design has always led the way in my interest. That is to say, design over an interest in tools. I acquire tools to accomplish a task. For me, there is an ever present need to make things."

"I am often driven by project deadlines. A creative outlet is only the by-product. Fourteen years ago, I built a workbench literally from the garbage, scavenging 2x4s, metal shelves, and odd pieces to make the butt ugliest bench, but I was thrilled. I threw it out years ago and have since made some furniture pieces of which I am proud. But if you wired me up with an Accomplishment Meter, that ugly bench would have pegged the meter."

"Why? Right now, I'm wondering. I did something stupid and destroyed close to \$650 worth of lighting gear. For the photographers out there, do not set your blinking studio flash units where you wouldn't stand. I usually do woodworking because I enjoy creating something useful and attractive. Maybe now, because it keeps me humble."

"It's one of the few skills my Dad never taught me, and he was fairly skilled at carpentry and cabinet work. I dabbled for a while on and off, then found a funky little internet forum. Huge mistake. The rest is history."

"I started woodworking at a young age, from liking tools, watching Dad, reading Mechanics Illustrated and Popular Science. If I'd a' kept that '66 Super Sport... When you see one like it go at the Scottsdale Auctions for \$200K, it kinda' makes a guy wonder."

"The pride of building something with your own hands is one aspect that I like. Serenity in the shop is another that keeps me going. It's nice being able to break up the work into an hour here and there, working it into family time."

"Because of a court ordered 'thing,' I'd rather not talk about."

Woodworker West

Participate in future discussions at www.woodcentral.com

Page 9