



## **WOODWORKING INSPIRATIONS**

*The WoodCentral community is a phenomenon that could not have come about before the Internet. But, what exactly brings us all together on this wavelength? It occurred to me that everyone who frequents our web site (and other forum sites) has a couple surefire things in common: at some point we became interested in woodworking; and, along the way, we had experiences that influenced the nature and direction of our woodworking interests. So, this time around, I asked a two-part question: **What was it that first sparked your interest in working with wood and tools? And, what were the defining influences or meetings or inspirations that pushed you in your current woodworking direction?** The answers were many and varied...*

*"There's just something about wood. It's the smells, textures, and workability of a natural product. When I was learning how to be an FAA airframe and powerplant technician, we had to re-skin a small control surface with marine plywood. I loved every moment of it. To this day, I never miss an opportunity to walk through the lumber section at the big box stores. Did I mention the tools?"*

*"7th grade woodshop was where the bug buried into the camber for me. No woodworking from then until my first child was due, and I did not finish that cradle. Fast forward to my wife needing a fireplace surround. The slippery slope opened, and I've been running downhill ever since."*

*"Mosquitoes...those little sucking pests that plague my backyard in summer. My wife and I decided to build a screened-in deck, but first the wood from the old deck could not be thrown away, so I decided to build a garden shed. Purchased a planer and jointer, portable tablesaw and a good circular saw. Decided to add some open decking and cabinets and shelves to the garage. Home Depot saw me coming, now it's fun. The wood smells good, it's time consuming, challenging, and expensive, as a hobby should be. So I converted a room in the basement into a workshop. Needed a lathe and a bandsaw, then a drill press. This is when Home Depot's stock started spiking. Exotic*

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News and Views from

WoodCentral.com

by Ellis Valentine

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"My step father was a master carpenter. I got into construction carpentry as a part time job during high school, and the more I started reading and looking, the more I wanted to do furniture. The magazines are giving me inspiration, and my first handmade chairs also pushed me."

"My father and I had a 16-ft. plywood boat. The maintenance and repair of that boat familiarized me with the use of tools. Building model aircrafts from balsa required jigs, clamps and close tolerances. After I married and learned creative use of surplus/discarded packing crates, I built a fold-down, three-legged table for our eating area. It was the envy of the neighborhood wives. Building and repairing furniture became an important part of my life from then on."

"My wife came home with a set of dining chairs needing repair and asked if I could fix them. One thing led to many others, and this led to making furniture. Then she came home with a small mountain man carving and said, 'You could do this. Now I no longer make furniture, but spend all my time carving.'"

"I've always had office jobs and that need to create something. My inspiration was The New Yankee Workshop. Norm Abram made it look so easy. After watching awhile, I tackled Adirondack chairs and a blanket chest. I had finally created something useful, made something from nothing, and satisfied that need to create." "My father wanted me to have an office job instead of working in a shop. Making and fixing stuff was my rebellion. The defining moment was when my new S.O.[significant other] embraced woodworking as well. My garage shop now has no cars in it, and I find myself having to share my tools with my wife. That gets testy at times." "When I was 9 years old, we had no garbage pickup, so we had to dispose of our own. My brothers dug 6-ft. square holes in the sand to put garbage in. Soon we had a big pile of sand. I got Dad's coping saw and cut out scraps of wood to build a city, and it was the envy of all the kids in the neighborhood. This led to a carpenter apprenticeship, and I've been building things with wood for 60

years now." "My big influences were people that I got to spend an afternoon with: Dave Boykin in Denver, when I realized it was possible to make a living making fine furniture. Then a month-long class at the College of the Redwoods taught by Robert Lasso and the master craftsmen I apprenticed with through the Baulines Crafts Guild. Also, there is Gary Knox Bennett, a unique person who is totally opinionated but very supportive of people just starting out, and James Krenov, one of the best off-the-cuff lecturers and inspirational authors. From Dennis Young, I figured out not to compromise quality or beliefs when making furniture, and from Art Carpenter, I learned the most important thing in woodworking was myself, not fancy tools." "I married a woman who owned a house in dire need of repair. It took nearly a year to determine whether to hit it with a hammer or a bulldozer. Once hooked into carpentry, making furniture and cabinets were sure to follow. Inspiration came from magazines, TV, and more recently, the internet."

**"I was remodeling a 75-year old house. One day, I thought about getting a new coffee table and decided to do it myself. I had a degree in art, a bunch of tools, and liked doing things with my hands. I guess it was inevitable. I don't feel that I'm as influenced by work of other woodworkers as I am by other areas, such as art and architecture. I try to design to the beat of my own drum and seek inspiration from my imagination or things I see around me."**

"Folks laugh at me, but it is true. During the first Gulf War, I was on the Iraqi border in the no-fly zone. Not much doing there and the only materials were lots of packing crates and skids. Though tools were limited to mechanics' and missile sets, I made do with what there was. Fellow soldiers cracked, 'Bet you can't make a Blackhawk helicopter.' You know GIs; no challenge is too great. Then I got back to the world and found that they make tools for these tasks! My, my. The learning curve is steep and the slope slippery."

"For me, it was my wife. She bought me a Jet tablesaw and a Wood-craft class as a birthday present. I was hooked. The next year, to pay her back, I bought a necklace from a local jewelry store. She didn't like the necklace, and they didn't have anything she really cared for, so we got a refund. On the way home, we stopped at a tool store and used the refund to buy a jointer, a planer, and a drill press. Not only did I get points for buying her jewelry, but I got more tools!" "When I was a kid, I was the kind who liked to take things apart. Later, I restored old cars and taught myself how to weld and paint. After I married, I bought an old house to restore, then needed to fill it with furniture. It has been a natural progression from taking apart toasters as a kid."

"Norm was the first to get me thinking about woodworking. Then, I found St. Roy Underhill and Jim Kingshott, and that got me interested in hand tools. California bungalows piqued my interest in Arts & Crafts furniture, which led to Shaker-inspired pieces. Elegant simplicity sums it up for me."

"Just to be able to make things, to be less dependent and fend for myself. In my mind, the fastest way to being just another mindless lemming is to be 100% dependent on the stores for everything we need in life. Fortunately I was never afraid of hard work."

"Mostly, I learned from my father the attitude that grownups can make things. My most vivid early memory is of being in my grand-father's shop crushing little pieces of wood in the metalworking vise. I noticed how wood crushed differently oriented cross grain than long grain. My uncle also, who taught me in my 30s that the most delightful thing in the world was a problem to solve."

"My dad did all kinds of building and carpentry in volunteer efforts for us, the neighbors, and the church. We built walls, pool decks, walkways, houses, and youth camps in the mountains. I was blessed to work with folks-young, old and in the middle-who knew what they were doing and did what they were asked with a smile and a story to tell when you sat still for a minute. It's all good."

"My father seemed to think some things woodworkers obsess over is a waste of time. He had no problem helping me cut wood for a science fair project, but I was never allowed to touch any of his tools. During my pediatrics residency, we spent time, while on-call, in the lounge watching TV. PBS had Norm and Roy back to back, so that's how I became familiar with techniques. We bought our first house two years ago, and I finally have a basement to set up shop in. My neighbor tells me the original owner had his workshop in that space almost 60 years ago."

"My interest in real woodworking came with a required 8th grade class in woodshop. My discovery was that I could do

better than anyone else in class. In fact, I could do better than the football coach, who was the instructor. My addiction to woodturning happened after meeting some woodturners over a fallen Magnolia tree in Tallahassee, FL, following a hurricane in 1985. With the acquisition of a new General lathe and some encouragement from my new friends, I became a woodturner."

"When I was a girl, I learned to embroider, knit, tole paint, etc. from Grandma. My brother grew up as a woodworker and inherited our Grandpa's shop of tools. I took a turning class at Woodcraft and knew I'd found what I was looking for. I use Grandma's patterns to burn designs on my wood bowls, thereby blending the past with the present."

"My father and grandfather built three houses. They also did cabinetry, floors, brickwork, and tile. I started turning while I was refinishing a table for my wife. She had come home from a craft show with a weed pot. 'Where did you get that and what did you pay for it?' I asked. The rest is history, as they say."

**"My father took up cabinetmaking with homemade tools to make extra money. I hated woodworking. I took shop classes in junior high**

school, where he rejected all projects with great criticism. In the 60s, he took to segmented turning and, later, spent several years working with Ray Allen. I finally got hooked five years ago and was able to work with him for a full year before his passing-the best year of my life. Sure wish I had paid more attention. However, creativity comes from within and cannot be taught."

Participate in future surveys at WoodCentral.com Send suggestions for survey topics to [webmaster@woodcentral.com](mailto:webmaster@woodcentral.com) Thanks to our Editorial Assistant Barb Siddiqui for her work on this column,

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