

Woodworking Reflections - Mike Mynhier, May 2020



Since I became a serious woodworker in the 1990s, I have made over 80 individual pieces ranging from candlesticks, decorative boxes, tables, desks, chairs, bookcases, cabinets, entertainment centers, shop accessories, outdoor furniture, and even an Ark! The appeal of woodworking for me is planning and creating from various species of rough raw wood, beautiful and useful pieces that I just love to touch. The process is peaceful and absorbing, and it focuses my attention fully and away from all other daily concerns and distractions.

My first exposure to woodworking was as a young boy watching my Dad use his basic power and hand tools in his small shop to make some of our home furnishings – simple stools, bookcases, and small tables. I helped Dad by fetching tools and pieces of wood for him. He continued to make things all his life.

After joining CH2M HILL, I wanted an outlet to make things that did not take years to plan, design, permit, fund, and construct. Ah, woodworking! Fortunately, I had a very good friend and co-worker, Dave Ellison, who was already an accomplished expert since first learning the craft in his school shop classes. Our families first met at a company picnic in 1975, and we have since been life-long friends. Dave helped me pick out initial tools best suited to a beginner. He then became my mentor as we spent almost every Saturday during the winter of 1991-92 (Ruth made us lunch) working side by side in his basement wood shop in Atlanta. He made a large dining table, and I made a craft cabinet for Marge. Both were made of beautiful and aromatic heart pine that had been resawed from large beams salvaged out of a 100-year-old bank building in Milledgeville, GA, that had recently been razed. The wood itself was close to 200 years old!



With friend, and mentor, Dave Ellison

I remodeled a portion of our unfinished basement into my shop, complete with dust control, and began adding and upgrading my power and hand tool collection as I made more and more items. While I enjoy making most anything from wood, I like to follow two criteria in selecting the specific features of a project I undertake – It will teach me a new skill, or it will require a new tool. Two out of two is a real winner! I really enjoy planning the piece, selecting the species of wood I want to use and picking it out, and then the actual woodworking. But, the sanding and finishing – not so much!

Like most woodworkers, I make projects for a variety of purposes. Some items become furniture for our house or accessories for my shop. Many items are gifts; some are 'commissioned pieces' for others – I am reimbursed for the materials and ask that they make a donation to a charity of their choice for the piece's "value" to them. Some are donations to churches or charitable organizations; and some become "silent auction" items for fund-raising causes. I also have enjoyed working with our grandkids and other young people to help them make items for school projects or for simply the fun of just making something!

Besides woodworking, I also enjoy homebrewing (pale ales and IPA's, but stout is becoming my "specialty"); international and adventure travel; mission and disaster relief work (though my effective work zone, now – "above my knees and below my head" is becoming smaller); golf (I have a 'robust' handicap, so there is a lot of room to improve); walking; reading; and being a "work in progress" for Marge, my loving wife of 52 years.

Following are some examples of my work over the years.



Commissioned corner cabinet, Oak



Coffee Table, Wormy Curly Maple & Mahogany



Donated Community Garden Gate



Storage Box made by G'daughter Erin and me



Marge's Jewelry Box, Paduk & Birdseye Maple



Garden Bench, Spanish Cedar (a Mahogany species)



Baptismal Font, (Given to the Lutheran Church of Guatemala during our mission work there), Mahogany.



Shop Stool, Maple (many jigs needed to make this!)



Mike's Shop



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