

Okay, so I am also a worker of wood ... by Cliff Bowers



Reading the woodworkers article in the last newsletter made me want to tell my own worker of wood story.

I started by helping my father who handy-manned to supplement his regular job earnings. At 16, I helped him completely renovate a seasonal cottage, which then became our year-round home.

Between high school and college, I worked as an apprentice in the carpenters' union. I went to college as a co-op student at Northeastern University in Boston with Metcalf & Eddy (M&E) so there were no days to carpenter. After graduation, I continued to work at M&E until my military service started.

My military service was at Fort Belvoir, VA, where I was assigned as a platoon leader in a construction support company. Then I was a commander of a water purification detachment, and then an instructor at the Army Engineer School where I taught theater of operations construction, which included buildings, pipelines, water, and wastewater. It was a great fit.

I also discovered the Post Woodworking Shop and its abundance of power tools. Because my father never owned a power tool — he could cut a 2x6 in three strokes with a hand saw — I never learned how to use any. To my delight, the Master Sargent in charge of the Shop provided instruction on how to use them. I spent a lot of time in the Shop learning how to use all the tools and making a few pieces of furniture in the process.

When I left the Army, I went back to work for M&E and began work on the 2,000-sf home, 20 miles north of Boston. We are still in the house 54 years later. I laid the first of 13,000 bricks on 4th of July weekend in 1966; and we moved in the following February 6th with wet plaster, huge mosquitoes, and minimal finish. I had a full-time job in Boston the entire time. Even though I was fresh out of the Army, I still remember how tired I was when we moved in.

In the early 1980s, we bought 9 acres of shorefront in Boothbay, Maine. I designed and built a 1,700-sf 5-bedroom 3-bath saltbox there entirely by myself except for earthwork, rafter setting day, and drywall installation. It took 3 years working on weekends and vacations to finish it. Designed as a four-season home, we use it mostly three seasons. It has turned out to be a wonderful vacation home and weekend retreat for the whole family.



The Boothbay House
Designed as a 17th century New England house built 1987 - 1989

In the late 1990s, I designed a 5,000-sf house with/for my daughter; and she, her husband, and I built it. He had never held a hammer before we laid the sill, but she had; and she even shingled the 12-pitch roof by herself. They moved in 12 months after the foundation was set. We subcontracted the foundation, plumbing, heating, and drywall. We all had regular jobs; but they

are both school teachers, and that helped a lot that summer. I did all the finish work, hardwood floors, crafted cabinets



My Daughter Laura's House

Grandfather's Clocks -(from cherry boards)
Built two, one for Ginny and one for Laura

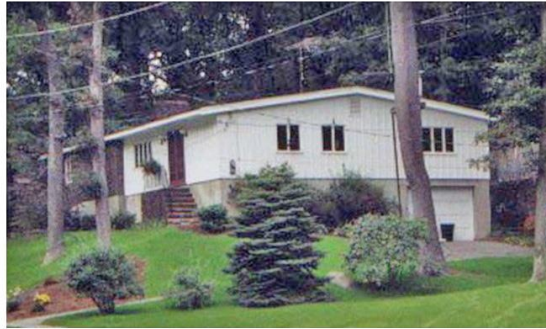


and stair railings, doors, and trim after they moved in.

I had outfitted the cellar workshop in Boothbay with all the machines as part of that construction. It is one of my favorite places. I genuinely enjoy rainy days and nights there building furniture and toys. I love seeing a need, designing, and detailing the project and then implementing the item by turning rough boards into the finished item. Here are photos of a few of my favorite projects.



Walnut Hutch built while in the Army - 1965



Our home built in 1966-67



Cherry all wood music stands and tables for granddaughters

American Girl design bunks - (252 mortise and tenon joints) and a doll sailboat for Abby.

Abby saw a train like this in a shop in town and I told her we could build it. We went home and did - together!

