



Issue 3, September

5 Ways to Find Deeper Meaning in Your Shop

Hi Steve r,

This year we have seen massive growth in the number of people embarking on a woodworking journey. In uncertain times, we look for activities that provide stability and meaning. Activities where we are in control.

A lot of you who are new woodworkers sawed your first board and made your first project because you simply wanted to do something productive while sheltering in place. Or maybe you thought it would be a reasonable way to kill time and distract yourself from the craziness of 2020.

But after you make a project or two you likely notice something deeper: woodworking isn't about taking a break from reality, but rather discovering harmony amid uncertainty and chaos. In other words, it doesn't take long for woodworking to be less about distraction, and more about purpose.

No matter where you are in your journey, here are five things to help you find more meaning in your shop.

1. Woodworking is one activity where you are in complete control. There is no one looking over your shoulder or setting a due date. There is no one demanding edits or redos. By the same token, there is no one to fix your mistakes or point out when you're about to make one. It's all on you. Every project is an empowering act. Embrace that autonomy.

2. Michelangelo is famous for saying, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” Take a moment to look at your scrap bin and think about all the projects that lie undiscovered in those pieces of wood. Don’t let your scrap bin be a permanent resting ground...use that lumber. I suggest making an experimental art piece with some of it. It doesn’t have to be anything spectacular, just let your mind wander and see what you come up with. You might be surprised. Maybe consider something like these two pieces I made with various species of scrap wood.



3. Respect your shop and be grateful. There’s plenty of chaos and uncertainty in 2020; your shop should be your sanctuary and reflect stability. No matter how small it is, respect it by keeping it orderly and clean. Reducing the clutter will have a transformative effect on your woodworking. Every time you step foot in your neat and tidy shop, pause to reflect on how grateful you are to have such a space. Your space is so cool.

4. Surprise someone special with a handmade gift. I’m not talking about a birthday or Christmas gift, but just an out-of-the-blue surprise. I tend to approach gift projects with greater attention to detail than other projects; I’m more careful with every cut and take extra care to avoid any flaws. I think about and consider the recipient throughout the entire building process. Gift projects give our time in the shop more focus, but even better, you will make somebody’s day extra special, something we can all use.

5. Designate your space as a *workshop*. Avoid describing your shop as a basement, a garage, a man-cave, or a she-shed. These tell others that your space is just a storage room or a playhouse without any clear purpose. When you look at your workspace as a shop, you will begin to understand that it’s a distinct addition to your life, not a repurposed, multi-use space. Even if you just have a corner of the garage, delineate its boundaries and don’t let non-workshop items encroach.

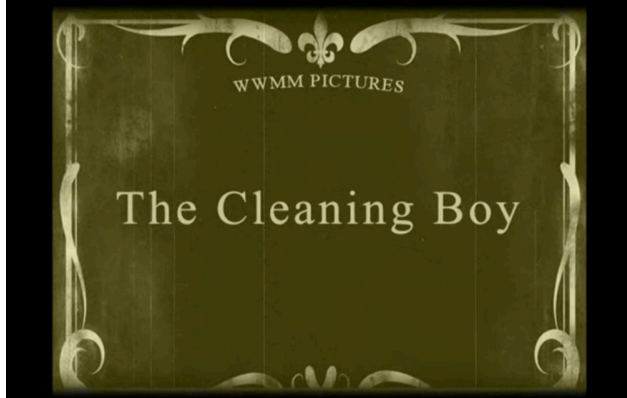
And if you are struggling with setting up a shop space, or just don’t think you have the room for one, my online course, [The Weekend Workshop](#) will show you exactly how to tackle setting up a new shop and making your existing shop more efficient. It’s a step-

by-step approach that covers everything you need to know.

Show me your shop and tell me how you find meaning in it! I'm [@steveramsey_wmmm](#) on Instagram.

Have a great September!

- Steve



FROM THE VAULT

[Make a Banana Hanger with the Cleaning Boy](#)

I had fun taking a look through some of my old videos and thought you would enjoy this one from 2012!

MEME OF THE MONTH

A bad day woodworking



beats any day behind a desk.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

Jim, a member of the Woodworking for Mere Mortals community, has found deeper meaning in his shop by dedicating time to making projects for others. He has recently built 54 apple-shaped bandsaw boxes for all the teachers of the primary school he recently retired from. Such a thoughtful gift!



What course members have built this month

Looking for deeper meaning in your shop? Find inspiration in these fun projects built by members of [my courses!](#)



Colorful Pool Storage

Check out this bright and colorful project that Mark built to organize his pool toys. Functional storage with a fun touch is a great way to make us all smile, something we could use a bit more of these days!



Scrap Wood Projects

Andrew turned his scrap wood into a handy banana holder and altered my [Shop Stool](#) plans to make an awesome bedside table for his daughter. Great use of extra wood.



Thanks for reading, be well.

- Steve

P.S. If you are new this month, you can read last month's issue of Notes From the Shop [here](#).

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