



Issue 28, October 2022

Hi Steve R,

Remember when pallet wood projects were all the rage? 2013-2015 was peak pallet. It was the first big trend in the online woodworking community. It seemed everyone was grabbing all the free pallets they could find, busting them apart, and using the wood to make furniture and other projects. Entire YouTube channels sprung up that were devoted to making nothing but pallet projects. I contributed to the craze by making at least 25 of my own pallet projects, including some pretty tacky ones.

It didn't take too long for the fad to simmer down, causing most pallet projects to look pretty dated. (Is the same lifecycle currently playing out with epoxy projects?)

So what did I do? I made a pallet project in 2022, something nobody was asking for. But instead of using the pallet wood as the universe intended, for making a rustic project, I stripped it down to make clean, usable boards to be used for a "nice" project. I mean, how could I bear to show my face if I made something rustic or shabby chic in 2022?

I wasn't planning on doing anything with a pallet, but we had a big, heavy concrete bench delivered for my front yard and it arrived on a pallet. My 2014 monkey brain kicked in, triggering a conditioned response that absolutely forbade me from simply throwing this thing away. "There's gotta be some usable wood in there and it's FREEEE!"



Well, the pallet was probably built circa 2014 and had definitely seen better days. Quite a large portion of it easily fell apart and most of the slats were split or otherwise distressed. I managed to salvage a small bundle of wood I can use for small projects, but it wasn't exactly a goldmine of pristine lumber. It took several hours to get maybe 10 dollars worth of wood.

I used some of those cleaned-up boards to make a small, non-rustic, keepsake box, built using the same methods I've used on countless boxes over the years, but this time I did a complete video walkthrough, describing my technique, step by step. I even incorporated a bit of the discussion we've had in this newsletter about the value of simplicity when building projects.



Knowing that this was a very limited supply of lumber and that it took some effort to obtain it, I approached this project differently. I mean, it's not like I grew and fell the tree, but it has the feel of being a little more special than lumber I would have bought off the rack at the home center. I carefully considered the cuts I was making and took extra time focusing on the tiniest details, making sure the miters were perfectly fitting and shaving the top a hair at a time to obtain a perfect fit. The way I was treating this pine pallet wood, you'd think I had spent \$100 on an exotic piece of Bubinga.

A lot of people told me it was too much work to salvage the wood from that pallet and a waste of time, and I thought that too at first. It wasn't until I actually built a project from the wood that I understood its real value. This little box has a story. Nothing mind-blowing or earth-shattering, not even a very interesting story, but still a story. I like to look at this beautiful little box and know that it lived its life in service of carting around heavy things before ending up a filthy broken mess on my driveway, nearly destined for a landfill. That's a little overly dramatic, but it's worth reminding ourselves that value isn't always measured in dollars or hours.

Have a great month!

Steve

A Short History of YouTube Woodworking

More than a year ago I had the idea to make a documentary about the history of woodworking on YouTube. I was especially interested in finding the very first woodworking video posted on the platform and talking to the earliest makers. After interviewing a number of YouTubers, the project became overwhelming and I shelved it until a couple of months ago. I looked at that footage with fresh eyes and realized I had some good stuff. So I scaled the project down and focused my attention on telling a short narrative about how YouTube evolved from 2005-2017.

I'm very proud of how this project finally turned out and I hope you'll give it a watch. There are interviews with Marc Spagnuolo, Frank Howarth, Matthias Wandel, April Wilkerson, Anne Briggs, Mike Montgomery, Glen Scott, Brad Rodriguez, Jimmy Diresta, John Leeke, and Jon Peters.



What's New on The WTS Podcast?

I don't think I've ever taken on a side project that I enjoy as much as my podcast. Every other week I sit down with some of the most creative and interesting people on earth. It's a show about artists and makers and the amazing things they create. Talking to people who create things far removed from my own craft has given me all kinds of new perspectives and insight into how I approach woodworking.

I recently had an [insightful and somewhat challenging conversation with James Payne](#) from [Great Art Explained](#), a must-see YouTube channel for anyone interested in art, either as a viewer or a creator. He breaks down famous works of art and explains what makes them "great." (That's a loaded term.)



And with the Halloween season upon us, you won't want to miss next Friday's episode featuring The [Wicked Makers](#). I talked to them last year about their spooky creations and this year we talked about the many ways you can make your home the scariest one in the neighborhood! One of the things they are really good at is buying generic decorations from Spirit Halloween or Home Depot and then totally tricking them out.

Be sure to check out The WTS Podcast every other Friday on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or any other podcast app. Or visit the [WTS website](#).

Reader Stories

Last month I asked you to tell me about one of the dumbest things you've done while woodworking, and wow, did we hear from you! A lot of the "dumb" things we all do make a certain amount of sense at the time, but we quickly find ourselves wondering what we

were thinking.

I love Joe's story (below) because making a tapered cut is a problem many of us have faced, and I'm pretty sure we've all thought about or tried to do using a miter saw. In this case, the taper worked out and Joe stayed safe, but the most interesting comment he made was that "alarm bells" were going off in his head while he was setting it up. This is probably the biggest bit of safety advice I can stress. Always listen to that little voice inside of you that tells you something ain't right. Take those red flags seriously and only make a cut when you are certain it can be made safely.

(Also, if you are interested in making tapers on a miter saw, Kreg has a [quick and simple jig](#) you can make. If you have a table saw, check out [my adjustable tapering jig](#))

Here's Joe's story:

"Maybe dumb is in the eye of the beholder? Or history is written by the victors?"

In a recent project, I wanted to hang a removable cushion from a hook. After I had almost finished the project, I realized that the hook needed to be raised up a bit. I needed to add a block to a very visible spot, but I didn't want to just slap on a block. I came up with an idea, but it required me to cut an acute angle on a small workpiece. I'd recently gotten my first sliding miter saw, and I was anxious to use that cut capacity, but the block was only about 12" long. I set the angle and planned to hold the piece with the short end against the fence. Giant alarm bells went off as I was setting it up. This is a dumb way to do this, I thought. So, I did something that might've been slightly dumber, but at least marginally safer. I put a narrow piece of scrap over the block I wanted to cut and used a combination of the miter saw hold-down and a squeeze clamp to hold that down on top.

To describe the way I wanted to set that up, felt and sounded incredibly dumb. But in the end, it worked, and I had no dangerous injuries or kickbacks. So maybe it ended up being not quite that dumb? Here is the setup of the cut and the finished product:"



And how about this note from Gregory? As soon as I read about taping the blade back, I had a feeling where this story was headed. 😬

“I too have enjoyed a backward blade. Plus using my circular saw to cut into the fence guide bar of the table saw (it was under the pine board I was cutting).

But my most dangerous event was cutting a Sonotube that was ready for pouring a concrete pier for a deck. The tube was too high (long) for the pour and would be impossible to trowel the top of the pour so I used my circular saw to trim the tube. I was squatting and holding the saw up to cut off the end of the vertical tube but the blade guard kept getting in the way of cutting the round tube horizontally so I taped the guard open and all went well. At the end of the cut, as I had done so many times in similar projects, I just casually rested the saw on my thigh until I realized that the blade was still slowing down but not stopped and the guard was still taped back. I did need a new pair of jeans but luckily no stitches for the gash in the leg. Another lesson learned.”

Book Recommendation

Recently, a WWMM viewer and fellow woodworker Clint Rose sent me a copy of his super cute, self-published childrens' book, [The Crashing, Bashing Mallet](#). If you have very young children or grandchildren, this would make a great gift. I just adore the illustrations by Leight Rose.



This Month's Member Projects

Here are a few of the awesome projects made by course members this month.



Beautifully Organized

I love that Ben, a member of [The Weekend Workshop](#), made my drill bit organizer! Complete with unnecessary walnut trim. 😄

I [made this back in 2016](#) (post-pallet era) and still use it every day. It's incredibly useful and holds a LOT of bits. For some reason, I still manage to find bits in other places around my shop, though.

All Terrain Awesomeness

And for all you Star Wars aficionados, I submit this amazing AT-AT by Thomas, a member of [Powered Up](#). Wow!



Stunning and Functional

Finally, check out the stunning miter station John, a member of [The Weekend Woodworker](#), built.

A man after my own heart...he kept the drawers shallow!

Community Notice

There's been a LOT of scams all over YouTube recently. I swear I spend half my time trying to keep up with them. Simply put, someone uses a channel's profile pic as their own and then responds to comments with some sort of free giveaway nonsense. In the end, they are trying to get you to send them money. If something looks suspicious, it probably is. (Kinda like those alarms and red flags sensed on some saw cuts!)

Anyway, I got this note from Brian sharing his ingenious method for determining if the person was really me. This is fantastic.

"I texted that number and the person tried to tell me I'd won a table saw. Like a dummy, I gave them my address and email. Once I did that they told me I only had to pay for the shipping, which is when I knew it was a scam.

To confirm, I asked the person what their favorite holiday was. I know Steve's answer would likely be Halloween since he does a video on that most years. Their answer was "the weekend". ...wrong."

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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