



Issue 30, December 2022

Hi Steve R,

Grab a hot cup of peppermint cocoa, light a fire, and get a warm blanket: it's the

Notes From the Shop Annual Holiday Extravaganza!

We've got stories, movies, jokes, gift ideas, tools, videos, woodworking projects, and much more! By the end of this issue, you'll be so filled with sugary sweetness you'll wanna puke. (BTW, this issue is so long, it will clip at the end when viewed in Gmail...make sure you click the "View entire message" link at the bottom!)

I thought about opening with a Christmas joke, but I can never remember jokes and the ones I found online are just dumb. I'm a big fan of anti-jokes, so I'll make up a few to break the ice and get this party started.

Why is Santa Claus on a seafood diet?

Because he lives in the North Pole where vegetables are scarce.

What did the snowman say before he melted?

"I sure wish the weather stayed cold so I could continue to exist."

What should you do if Santa Claus gets stuck in your chimney?

See a therapist because Santa isn't real.

How does an elf change a lightbulb?

By screwing a new one into the socket...it's a pretty simple task.

What did Rudolph say to the other reindeer when Santa chose him to lead the sleigh?

Nothing. Reindeer can't talk.



The most bah-humbug of Scrooges have yearly traditions, even if that tradition is simply complaining about the holidays. Personally, I can't imagine a holiday season without watching *Die Hard*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Elf*, and a fairly recent addition, *Anna and the Apocalypse*. I expect peanut brittle and pumpkin pie, and I believe in the unexpected delight of receiving a well-selected gift basket.

As woodworkers, we hold some real magic: the special magic to brighten other people's lives by creating unique gifts that don't come in gift baskets. Wait, maybe they could. Give it a try.

Reader **Ted B.** understands this magic.

So, recently I completed a porch glider, about my 4th now, for a dear relative beating cancer so far, but losing both legs in the process over the last 2 years. I wanted to make something that provided her a way to be with her 5 kids out in the backyard. The first 3, I built from plans I purchased, and with my improved skills over the last decade, decided I could build one from just a picture of the product on the internet. I have made many things the last few years from pictures only because, as you say, so many items are boxes or forms of boxes. Of course, the supplier might cringe at my methods, but I found it works when you get the basic idea of boxes and several joinery techniques.



We're awesome at making gifts, but buying a gift *for* a woodworker is a daunting task. I mean, you'd think it would be easy, what with there being about a billion different tools you could buy. But here's the thing: as woodworkers, **we like to select our own tools**. We like to spend hours, even days reading reviews, talking to friends, pouring through tool sites, and comparing brands in order to add a new router to our arsenal. It's kind of fun to engage in this type of "research."

So I always issue the same warning to spouses, friends, and significant others: **do NOT buy power tools as gifts** unless you know *specifically* what your woodworker wants, down to the exact model number. Seriously, a new miter saw would be a generous gift, but it might not be the one Aunt Tiffany has her eye on after months of grueling research.

However, there are plenty of things that make *perfect* gifts for woodworkers. Things that might not be as sexy as a new router, but useful shop accessories we can all use. Any woodworker's face will light up opening a box full of clamps. We're weird.



Since you're a loyal reader of this newsletter, I'll spare you the hassle of having to scrub through the video just to get to the good parts, so here's the TL;DR version:

GIFTS MOST WOODWORKERS WILL MOST LIKELY LIKE:

1. [Wood](#). Can't go wrong giving a woodworker some exotic, fancypants wood.
2. [GluBot](#). It's how us sophisticates squeeze our glue.
3. [A Woodworking Course](#). SHAMELESS SELF PROMOTION
4. [A gallon of glue](#). Again, woodworkers are weird.
5. [Clamps](#). Doesn't matter what kind. We'll use them.
6. [The GRR-RIPPER](#). Microjig has a **special offer** right now!
7. [FitFinder](#). Really cool and useful measuring thingy.
8. [Digital angle finder](#). An absolute must for dialing in perfect bevels.
9. [This tape measure](#). It's the perfect tape for woodworking.
10. [A compact blower](#). This thing is surprisingly handy



Scroll sawing doesn't get the attention it deserves, probably because it's largely been replaced by CNC machines or laser cutters which produce far more precise and intricate

results. But honestly, there are few tools that will make you feel quite as artistic as a scroll saw. Plus, you don't need to learn any code and you can set one up in your kitchen if you want. They're compact, produce very little sawdust, and the designs you cut make fantastic gifts. Hey, maybe consider treating yourself to a scroll saw for 2023...you might fall in love. Here's an idea:



[\(Download my cutting template here\)](#)

The effort of making things can be its own reward. **Armando** tells us about discovering the world of scroll sawing:

I am extremely lucky to have a neighbor with more tools than space in his garage. When a new electric car battery charger demanded some of the valuable and sparse square footage, he decided to just get rid of his scroll saw, without the hassle of trying to sell it.

*I am still learning how to use it. Of course I went back to watch your videos on the subject, and then I got inspired. I tried my hand at scrolling a nativity scene out of a small section from an acacia tree I had to cut a couple of years ago and totally messed up my original design, but I think it still shows effort, a learning curve and the **joy of making a nice mess in the garage**. Now if I could just find a neighbor with an extra band saw.*

— Armando, from CA, central coast





How are you doing so far? Do you need a second cup of cocoa? Here are a couple of Holiday food traditions in my family.

Stocking jerky. When my son was little we always filled up a stocking with candy and other junk, all individually wrapped so he could savor the whole unwrapping experience longer. The stocking was the warm-up procedure before getting down to the serious business of opening the “real” gifts under the tree. For whatever reason, when Wyatt was 5 or so, I included a packet of beef jerky in with the candy. (Probably so I could eat it myself.) Turns out he thought it was a really funny inclusion and moreover, he discovered he really liked dried meat. I’m not sure how these things become a thing, but Wyatt is 25 years old now and I still get him a pack of jerky every year, all wrapped up. 🙌

Pineapple casserole. Don’t laugh. Well okay, laugh. This is a pseudo side dish that’s really a dessert, but every year my wife bakes it for Thanksgiving (or is it Black Friday Eve now?) and Christmas. Well, it’s got pineapple and bread and lots of sugar and that’s pretty much it. Just don’t even think about pulling it out of the oven before a brownish crust is formed.

I have literally been eating this concoction since I was about 10 or so when I was at a dinner with my mom’s third husband’s parents. Ada Friedman somehow had this as her family tradition and passed it to my mom who would make it on special occasions long after she was no longer a Friedman. Then many years later, Mom gave the recipe to my wife who has carried on this food ritual. It would be absolutely fascinating to trace the full lineage of the pineapple casserole.



As you know, [Woodworking for Mere Mortals](#) and [The Weekend Woodworker](#) share two core beliefs; that woodworking should be affordable and safe. For many years, people have asked me about **SawStop table saws**, the saws with flesh-sensing technology that literally prevent you from chopping off a finger. My response has always been, “they’re great if you can afford them.” That second part is a *huge* consideration, especially for someone just beginning their woodworking journey.

SawStop addressed this by recently launching their [Compact Table Saw](#), clocking in at just under \$900. It has the same finger-saving technology as their big saws but at a more affordable price. They sent me one to try out: it works great, and makes smooth, accurate cuts.



Give the gift of safety this year with the SawStop 10" Compact Table Saw, the only compact saw that stops on contact with skin. The Compact Table Saw is the smallest, most portable saw in the SawStop line-up. It brings precision, power, cut capacity, and SawStop's legendary safety system to any job site.

Features include:

- Micro-adjust feature allows you to get the most precise cutting angles possible on a job site
- Rack & pinion fence for reliably square cuts
- Rigid tube structure and rubber feet provide a durable, stable cutting experience
- On-saw storage compartment so you have all the tools you need close at hand
- Optional folding stand available



Speaking of safety, the last thing any of us need during the Holidays is a woodworking injury. (Lol like we should save them for March, I guess?) NO! There is never a good time for an accident. I want you to think about safety as you're bustling about your workshop making Christmas gifts without the assistance of elves who are busy screwing in lightbulbs.

Have you seen my latest video on the topic? It's a [comprehensive guide to keeping yourself safe in the shop](#). If you're new to woodworking, please watch it. If you're old to woodworking, watch it as a refresher.



I hope I didn't just bring the party down with all that safety talk. I know, let's look at a fun rocking horse! Here's a wonderful Christmas project from **Melissa**. Love the joinery and the confidence this was built with.

I'm building these for Christmas for my twin nephews. As I was working on them this past week (we had unseasonably hot weather for November in New Hampshire) I was thinking the whole time about how I feel confident with what I am doing because of your course.

I even used a spindle sander for the first time, and when I looked online for a video of how to use it, your video was the first one that came up. It was like you were in my garage with me.



If you've got a road trip ahead of you this month, maybe to Uncle Chucky's house for pineapple casserole and beef jerky, might I suggest listening to a couple of stellar episodes of **The WTS Podcast** to while away the hours?

Darren George is fascinating. He's a bonsai artist with over 200 trees and a YouTube channel called [Gro Bonsai](#). I loved learning about this ancient practice, how he shapes and cares for the tiny trees, and his philosophy about what bonsai teaches us about the world.



And because I KNOW you love epoxy and can't get enough of [Blacktail Studio](#), I had another conversation with **Cam Anderson**. This guy is all over YouTube...you simply can't avoid him or epoxy furniture, no matter how hard you try. Honestly, Cam's a super cool guy.

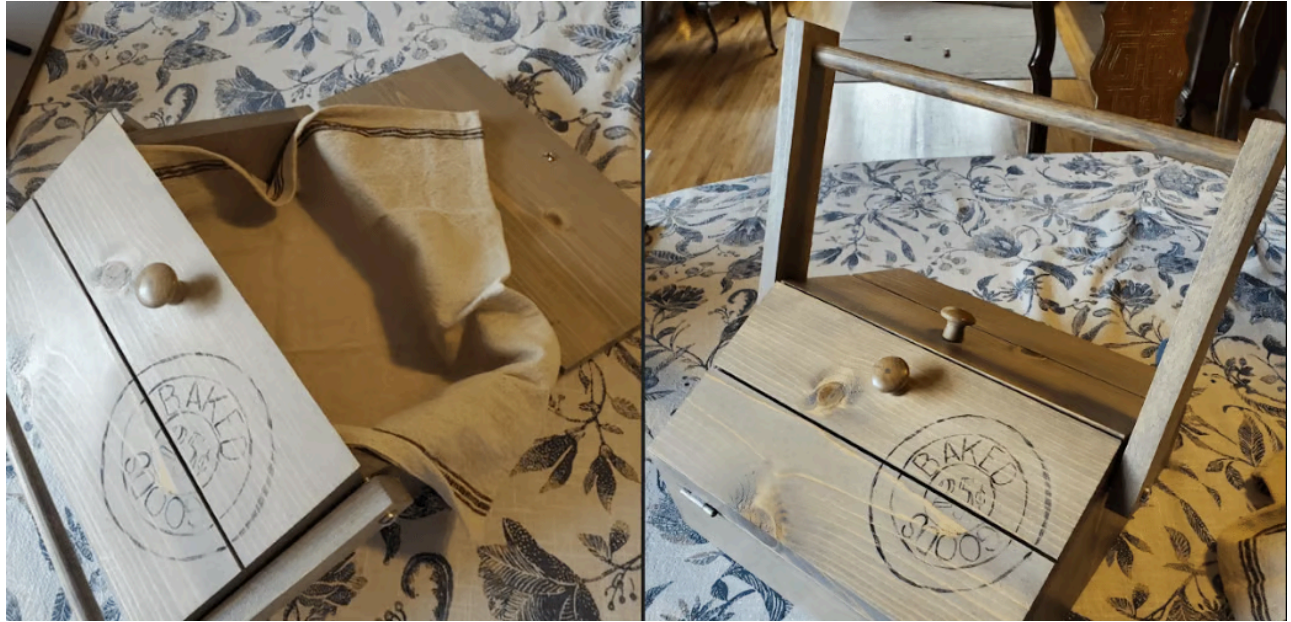
Be sure to check out **The WTS Podcast** every other Friday on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or any other podcast app. Or visit the [WTS website](#).



Still looking for gift making ideas? Here's a favorite of mine. You can make these wooden snowflakes in batches on your table saw. I like to string a bunch together and wrap them around the Christmas tree. They're also neat to include tied to gift boxes.



Here's an interesting idea from Weekend Woodworker member **Debi**. It's a dessert carrier. Grandma will be so surprised when you show up for Christmas dinner with a pie in this! Unless she's already made a pie. Yes, she probably has. Better use this for the pineapple casserole.



Fine. I know you're dying to try the pineapple thing now that I've hyped it up. I warned you that this issue would be packed with sugary sweetness.

Pineapple Bake Casserole

Makes 6 Servings

- ½ cup margarine
- 1 cup sugar (Wait, a cup? Holy crap that's a lot of sugar)
- 1 20 oz can of crushed pineapple
- 5 white bread slices, cubed
- 4 eggs

Cream margarine and sugar: beat in eggs, one at a time. Stir in crushed pineapple with juice. Fold in cubed bread. Place in a buttered casserole dish and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees until it's got patches of brown crust.



Thank you for reading this issue, and all the other issues of *Notes From the Shop* this year. I really enjoy this medium of communication and hope to make the newsletter even better in 2023. I'm always thrilled to hear your feedback and I love seeing everything you make, so keep all that coming. **Do you have any woodworking resolutions for the new year?** Just hit reply and let me know.

Happy Holidays and I'll see you next year!

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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For Mere Mortals, 448 Ignacio Blvd. #237, Novato, CA 94949, United States