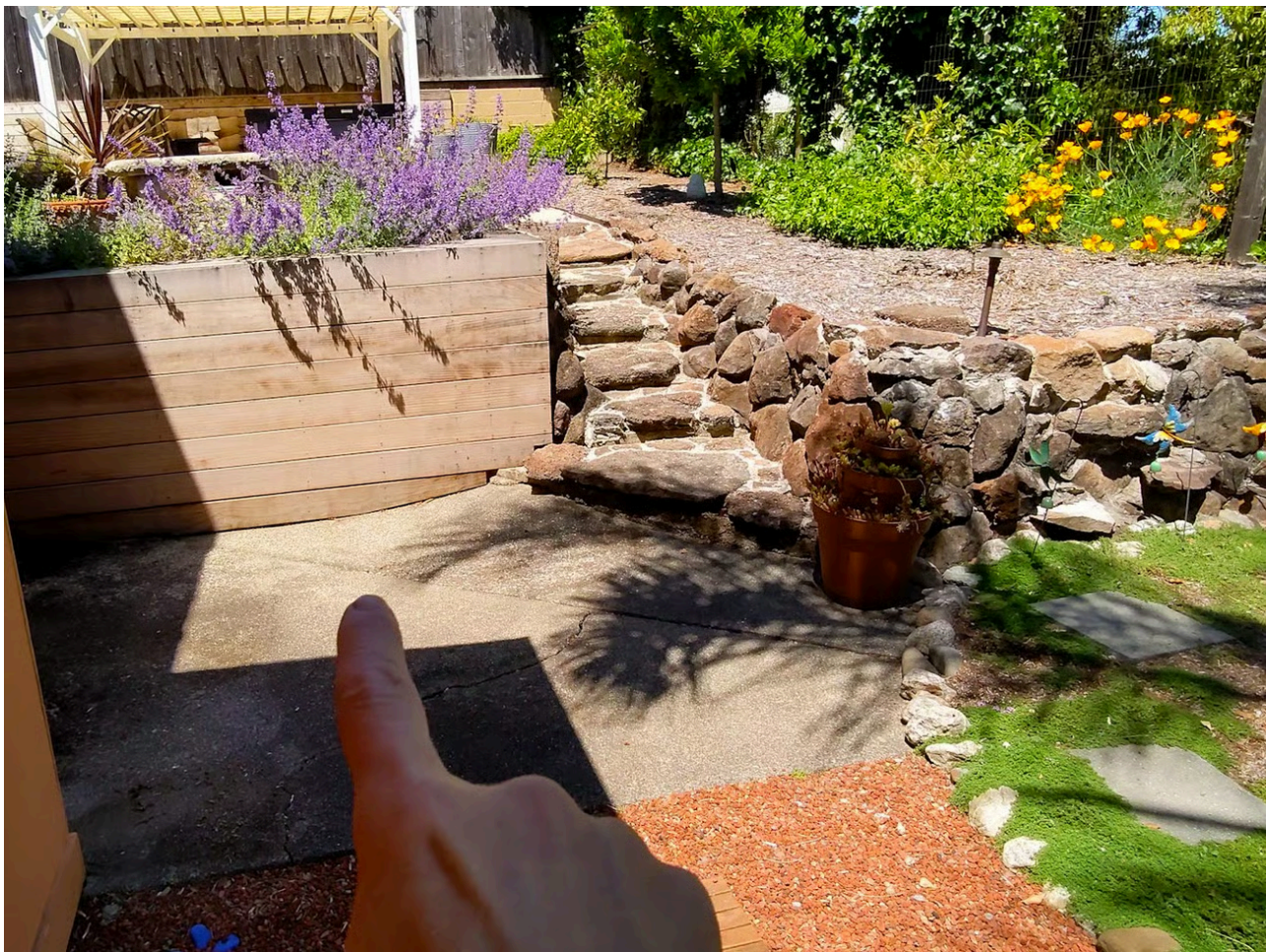




Issue 36, June 2023

Hi Steve r,

I just finished building a new deck to cover an ugly concrete slab in my lower yard (adjacent to the experimental garden area I discussed [last month](#)). For 20 years, I struggled with solutions to this eyesore. I tried breaking it out with a jackhammer once, but apparently, concrete never stops curing and will gain strength forever — a fact that became quickly evident. Yeah, no. Removing it wasn't going to happen.



Ugly concrete that seems to have the strength of titanium.

I considered building a deck on top of it a while back but got hung up on how to anchor it, especially over the very uneven footprint. I tend to get stuck in a single thought pattern which blinds me from seeing simple and obvious solutions. Recently, I had a moment of clarity. What if I didn't attach the deck to anything at all? Gravity is a pretty powerful anchor, especially for something as heavy as a deck that is only raised a few inches off the ground. In my mind, it was a rule that a deck must always be anchored into concrete footers. So as someone who has never built a deck before, my idea for an anchorless deck seemed a bit scandalous and quite revolutionary. That was until I learned they're called floating decks and have been around forever. I will rescind my patent application.



It's just sitting there!

Like many people of a certain age, my introduction to woodworking began with my dad. For kids without woodworking dads in the 1980s, high school woodshop class was likely the only entry point into the craft. Shop classes were generally included in school programs as a means of offering teens who were on a “non-academic path” (i.e. creative, mechanical, or artistic types) an opportunity to explore potential skilled trades they might be interested in pursuing after graduation. Some kids did indeed transition into trade schools or even began apprenticeships in professional cabinet shops or other building and construction careers.

In high school, I took one semester of auto shop which taught me that I hated auto repair. Then I took a semester of drafting, which I really enjoyed. I learned how to make technical drawings on a drafting table using a t-square, triangles, mechanical pencils, and probably stone knives and bearskins. We had a blueprint machine which gassed the class with the aroma of ammonia.

It might seem odd that I wasn't involved in woodshop in school, but

considering it as a career never occurred to me. Since I was a child woodworking had just been a hobby. Perhaps I worried that taking a class in school would suck the joy out of it. The hardcore shop kids always seemed so serious about learning real-world skills; they knew where their lives were headed. I had no focus on anything in life at the age of 16 other than getting a part-time job so I could afford to combine my love of woodworking and horror movies by going to midnight screenings of *The Toolbox Murders* and *Driller Killer*. 😁



Overly ornate lamp I turned when I was about 13. Just a hobby.

Today, there are online courses, countless YouTube videos, blogs (I guess?), maker spaces, podcasts, and even in-person classes, all geared toward learning a fun free-time activity. Even more exciting is that with the explosion of interest in woodworking over the past decade, a parent (including moms!) is once again a common entry point for many kids. But does that mean they'll become woodworkers?

When my son was a baby, I experienced a bit of the Chip-Off-The-Block syndrome, imagining he would grow up to be “just like dad” and have an

interest in the same things as me. Like many new woodworking dads, I brought him into my shop when he was 5 or 6 and supervised his exploration. He was sort of curious about the machines, but not so interested in using tools to make things. I assigned him simple tasks such as sanding, and let him pull down the drill press handle. He occasionally “assisted” as I built projects which entailed wandering around or drawing in the sawdust on the floor. After a few minutes, he would leave the shop to do something else.

Eventually, I realized that he wasn't the least bit interested in woodworking. It was a revelation; “Wait a second...maybe, just maybe, he's becoming an actual human individual and is discovering his own interests that don't always align with my expectations!” 🤖 I thought back to my own dad who never expected me to become him.

Oddly enough, I don't remember what specific woodworking skills my dad taught me. I don't remember anything that seemed like a lesson. I don't even recall Dad ever asking me if there was anything I wanted to learn. There was never a time when he said, “Hey, let's go make something”, or “Come here, I want to show you how to cut a miter.” I just knew that he knew everything and was more than willing to help if I had any questions.



Dad and Lorry, probably around 1972.

My most vivid memories are simply being with him while he built things. He didn't offer to teach or explain any skills or techniques unless I asked, at which point he was more than happy to demonstrate in detail what he was doing and let me try. He understood the importance of giving kids opportunities without pressuring them to be "just like dad."

Why didn't he tell me my son wouldn't be just like me? Right — I didn't ask him!



Wyatt, me, and Princess Meow-Meow in 2005.

So how can you be the best woodworking dad? Let your sons and daughters see the joy and satisfaction you get from making things. They might not ever want to cut a single board, but they will learn the value of creating something from nothing. Your woodworking might inspire them to someday write a novel, make a movie, design a dress, write some music, or become a chef. And if we spend enough time hanging out with them, we might just learn something as well.

Happy Father's Day!

— Steve

Give Dad the Gift of Woodworking

In honor of Father's Day, we're offering **20% off every course registration!**

If you've been thinking about joining [The Weekend Woodworker](#),

[Powered Up](#), or [The Weekend Workshop](#), there's no better time than right now.

Simply click the links above before June 18th and the promotion will be applied automatically. (It's been five years since we offered this promotion, so I encourage you to check it out!)

Interested in gifting the course? Write to my team at team@theweekendwoodworker.com for details.

Weekend Projects

I made one of these wooden “doormats” 12 years ago and thought it was time to make a new one. I guarantee guests will comment on it when they come to your home.



If you're thinking about building a deck, this might give you some pointers.



Legit Grit Sanding Giveaway!

It'll come as no surprise to many of you that sanding is way down on my list of favorite woodworking activities. But it's an absolutely critical part of almost every project and if you slack off on sanding, you will regret it. Your finish will reveal your impatience and highlight every scratch or rough patch you missed.



In my quest to achieve sanding efficiency, I've discovered [Legit Grit](#). These sanding discs are not just an alternative; they've become my new standard.

Legit Grit's strength lies in its durability. With a tear-resistant plastic film layer and an anti-clog coating to mitigate friction, these discs persist, allowing more work with fewer change-outs. Coupled with their precision performance delivered by the premium velvet backing, these discs guarantee smooth and exact sanding.

What genuinely surprised me was their affordability — despite being manufactured at the same quality as leading brands, they're priced at half the cost of pro-branded paper!

Trying out Legit Grit has enhanced my woodworking experience and it holds the potential to benefit yours as well. **If I can spend less time sanding and get great results, I'm on board.**

What's more, in a bid to give back to the woodworking community, Legit Grit is currently running a promotional giveaway featuring a free battery-powered **DeWalt 20V random orbit sander, plus \$200 worth of**

sanding discs — an excellent opportunity to experience the quality of these discs firsthand.

[Enter here for a chance to win!](#)

Creative Culture Podcast

No, You Shouldn't Decorate However You Want

[Nick Lewis](#) is a designer with the goal of simplifying interior design. He's not afraid to voice his opinions on design trends that might be here to stay and others that need to go. Nick represents such a rational voice in what can be very subjective, even divisive topics.



Why is interior design important in our lives and why does it matter? If you're thinking about remodelling, or even just freshening up the look of your home, [check out this episode](#).

When Hysteria Leads to Art Censorship



I was absolutely thrilled to talk to one of my favorite new filmmakers, [Prano Bailey-Bond](#), who wrote and directed *Censor*, a movie which was on my top ten films list of 2021. *Censor* is a movie that takes place during the UK "[Video Nasties](#)" era and tells the story of Enid, a film censor who screens horror videos to implement cuts of scenes deemed too dangerous to be viewed.

The movie asks if watching violent movies causes people to act violent, and then asks what prevents the censors themselves from also

becoming violent.

I wanted to have Prano on the podcast to talk about censorship and give us some insight into our not-so-distant past and how that may have shaped today's standards and regulations. This is a fascinating story about 72 films that were banned because they were deemed "too dangerous to watch." Are we doomed to repeat ourselves? [This is one of my favorite episodes of the podcast so far!](#)

Listen to Creative Culture on all podcast platforms or the [Creative Culture website!](#)

Reader Mail

Woodworking completion anxiety still resonates with readers.

"The 7 phases mentioned in the [\[May\]](#) *Notes from the Shop* newsletter (from Christy O.) resonate with me so much! For me, I will open SketchUp and make a plan... A couple of days later, I always get an idea and remake the plan a little differently... Then, I remember I forgot something I wanted to include (most often the thing I forget is the thing that inspired/prompted me to take on the whole project) and have to make a third plan! Then, I'll make up a cut list online, and start putting together a shopping list if I need anything (i.e., paint, hardware, etc.).

Normally, my whole "planning" process takes about a week. Full disclosure, I do all these things because I have ADHD. I was diagnosed in my early 20s, and even though my doctor considers me "high-functioning", projects never get finished if I don't have a plan. The pitfalls of "finishing touches", "Oops, I forgot to get this at the store", and "Hmm, I bet that tool would make it easier" always seem to prevent me from actually getting the project done. So, nobody can even walk through my garage, my project anxiety starts going up, my bank account starts going down (making my anxiety go up more), and I just get mentally stuck.

After I have a garage full of supplies, a cut list with all my components, plus a plan for how to build everything once cut to size, my project

anxiety just VANISHES! Like, it's just gone! I wanted to share with you (and others) that anxiety in woodworking is very real, but also manageable if you can find the root cause of it! For me, I need a rock-solid plan. If I don't have one, projects take weeks or months longer than they should, never look right, and I inevitably hate showing them to anyone because of their "flaws."

I wanted to share some pictures of a dog crate desk I built for my sister. This desk probably would've taken me a year if I tried to just wing it without a plan, but I managed to turn plywood sheets and stock boards into this desk in 3 weekends.

I am a Weekend Warrior, and it's not like I'm building pianos anytime soon!!! Overall though, I experience so much less project anxiety, and I'm happy to show my work to everyone now because I've found what works best for me to manage the mental stuff that goes into woodworking (for me)!

Thanks, Bryan P."



Totally agree. I need a plan for almost everything I build. Neat idea for a dog crate desk, BTW! — Steve

“Your last few months talking about machine precision and no flaws compared to working with your hands and skills and that the flaws add character and warmth is 100% true. My woodworking has always been a hobby, something that I loved doing in high school shop class (attributed to a phenomenal teacher by the way). My other hobby is cars but I can’t afford that either. My dad was a lifetime body man and fixed almost everybody in our area’s cars when the inevitable happened and they needed repairs. When I was building my street rod 1954 Ford truck, Dad told me that when it was all done and someone complimented me on it, to smile and thank them.

The street rod community (and woodworking community too) love to draw attention to the flaws for some strange reason. I have experienced this hundreds of times. At a car show or a *Cars and Coffee* event (my favorites) you tell the owner you really like their car and they love to immediately start pointing out where it could have been better. The “flaws” are almost always in a location or so minor that unless you are a professional in the industry you would never have noticed. Most people that look are just drawn to the beauty, craftsmanship, or personal connection that the car reminded them of. They could care less about a run in the paint or some stone chips. They just think it’s cool and wish they had something like it. So heeding my dad’s advice, I thank an admirer and then talk to them. I don’t point out any mistakes and most would never notice anyway.

The same holds true with any craftsmanship work. I like your motto; “put the crappy side against the wall”. This is exactly true and accurate. But I’d like to add “don’t point out the crappy.” No one will notice or care anyway.” — Roger Sanders

So true. Remember, when you build a woodworking project, you did something most people you meet in your life will never do. Own it!
—Steve

Thoughts on this month’s newsletter? Drop me a line by replying to this email!

Reader Projects

It's a showstopper!

Reinhold from New Zealand had a colorful take on the wooden doormat, building his out of Purpleheart and Eucalyptus.



A leafy sanctuary for industrious minds

Check out this desk made by Sky E., a member of [The Weekend Woodworker](#), for her 13-year-old daughter. Pastel green with a walnut top.

Love it!

A painted oasis of storage and style

You know how much I love painted projects! This hutch cabinet made by Dave M. is a bold statement.

Nice work!



Have you made something you want over a quarter million people to see in next month's newsletter? Just hit reply and send me a pic!

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