



Issue 37, July 2023

Hi Steve r,

First off, I wanted to welcome all newcomers to this newsletter! Tons of you decided to try something new and enrolled in my [woodworking courses](#) in June, and I hope that you'll discover it was one of the best decisions you've ever made. Woodworking is a creative challenge that will grow with you for years to come. My newsletter, *Notes From the Shop*, is a fun way for me to connect with over 270,000 friends on the first Friday of every month.

I hope everyone's summer is chugging along nicely. As a kid, my family would usually vacation in July, sometimes in the form of a road trip. It's funny how childhood memories play out, but my brain tends to recall mostly mundane moments of these trips. One year (I must have been about 6), we packed up the station wagon and drove from Denver to Chicago to visit my grandparents. Strangely, I can't really remember anything noteworthy that we did during the actual visit. I remember swimming in the pool at a hotel somewhere in Kansas and being allowed to drink an entire (glass) bottle of Coke from a vending machine. My memories of those trips are reduced to vague overall

feelings that can't be accurately described. I wonder if my adult memories would be shaped differently if I grew up in the age of digital photos and video.

A wonderful movie called *Aftersun* explores this topic. It's about a woman whose memories of a summer she spent with her dad 20 years earlier are clouded by watching home videos she shot during the holiday. It beautifully illustrates how the memories we perceive from our childhood might be imagined or distorted, and if we were to look at childhood events through grown-up eyes, we might understand them completely differently.

Today, many children are growing up on video, with some families filming their activities daily. As someone who also shoots a lot of videos, I am certain that no person in front of a camera is 100% authentic. Even the youngest kids switch to performance mode when a camera is pointed at them. It might be subtle, but we are all conscious of how we wish to be perceived in the future.

So we are either left with inaccurate recordings incapable of capturing honest moments, or we just let our brain record what it wants, even if those memories are hazy.

I think the solution is to simply enjoy our experiences, our holidays, and our summer journeys *in* the moment *as* they are unfolding, and allow them to pass gracefully. Our lives are filled with new experiences every day; we really don't need to worry about how we'll remember them in the future. And we certainly don't need to record every Kodak moment—the kids will mainly remember the hotel pool anyway.

Meanwhile, in the present day in my yard, tomatoes are finally bursting out on four plants, and the early-summer lavender and poppy blossoms are fading away. The Marin County Fair has come and gone, and it's fun to cool off in San Francisco and watch freezing-cold tourists.

Building the new deck was a much-needed summer project, but it left me with, well, a big empty deck, and I decided to build a couple of

Adirondack chairs to break up the liminal space. I'm very proud of this design—be sure to take advantage of my special offer later in this issue!



Deck cats

Summer isn't only me making summer projects, but my wife making stuff as well. I was in L.A. last week, and when I got home I discovered all of the new things that she had created, including a side table for the deck made using redwood cutoffs she found. I love this kind of ingenuity when you just build something with found materials and no tools! She also stacked a couple of pavers and concrete blocks to make a gnome shrine. Correction... I just was informed that it's a pagoda (but seriously, it's a gnome shrine).

I like that parts of our yard are landscapes of kitsch. Did I mention the

two Rapanui-inspired stone heads in the front yard that are locked in an eternal staredown with each other?



The Gnome Shrine

We can all take inspiration from such a free-wheeling approach to making things, or at least a less critical approach to woodworking. One

of the most limiting struggles in woodworking is worrying about how our projects will be perceived in the future—whether it's by ourselves or the other people who we think will surely notice the flaws in our work. As a reader mentioned last month, a common defence mechanism is to immediately point out those flaws ourselves when we show off what we built.



Your woodworking journey is an internal process of discovering what you are capable of. Try thinking of yourself as a craftsman more than a technician. Maybe even an artist! Focus on the creative process of building, even if that means just gluing some cutoff boards together to make a table. Be patient. As your skills grow, so will your precision and confidence. Cut and shape wood as accurately as you can, but understand that it probably won't matter if you're slightly off. In the future, your memories won't be as much about building specific projects, but more of a general sense of contentment and fulfillment spending time in your own workshop creating things from nothing. No video required.

—Steve

Shop WWMM

After 15 years of designing nearly 150 free woodworking plans, I decided they need to be easy to find rather than scattered in various places, so I just created the new ShopWWMM.com website.

It's taken me over a week of frustrating nerdy web stuff to get this thing online, but it's finally live, and at the moment, you can browse through one single plan (the Adirondack chairs). I'm just one guy, after all... this ain't exactly Amazon!

In the meantime, I'm working on revamping some of my favorite projects and creating all new versions of those plans. My design skills have improved over the years and a lot of my older plans leave much to be desired.

Most of the plans on this website will be offered for free (with an option to pay whatever you like), while some of the new, more detailed, premium project plans will be priced a bit more.

As a way to say thank you to readers of this newsletter, I'm offering

the Adirondack Chair plans for **20% off** through next **Friday, July 14**. Just type in **discount code NEWSLETTER** at the checkout. Two chair sizes are included.

Easy Adirondack Chair

This is a great beginner woodworking project. Its construction is straightforward and simple, requiring no fancy joinery techniques.



Creative Culture Podcast

Recently on Creative Culture, I talked with everybody's favorite advocate of epoxy resin tables, [Cam Anderson from Blacktail Studio](#). His latest work involves combining epoxy and denim to make tables. Is he a trendsetter, or what? We also discussed how the first person to do something is rarely the best.



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

Reader Mail

“I have been a long-time follower, and always run into this problem... I watch a video and say ‘That is interesting, I will try to make it.’ Then I do, and then I make another one. This time, the Perfect Barstool got me... I made 1 chair and then another one. My wife liked them and then in passing said ‘Why don’t you make a table?’ Yup, that is exactly what happens... And out popped the table.



I must say these turned out better than I was expecting, and glad I took this project on, however, I may not be able to watch any more of your videos because the projects just keep multiplying!” —Cyrus

My wife has been asking for another chair and a table too! —Steve

Regarding my Father's Day essay:

“Steve, I just wanted to say thank you for your notes. My dad passed away when I was 14. My son is 13 now and I sometimes feel I'm trying to cram everything in quickly in case I don't have much time left. Thanks for pointing out the importance of just being together and not forcing my interests on him. You are right, my fondest memories of my dad are also just hanging out with him as he did something.” —David Kirba

How timely. It's amazing how our important memories are as simple as just being together. —Steve

“Brilliant story about you and your relationship with your Dad.

Here in Ireland, my son made the international football (soccer to you guys!) team for Northern Ireland at age 16. As any dad would, I hoped that he would pursue it and maybe turn pro but it didn't work out and he went in a different direction.

Yes, I was a bit disappointed initially but I got over it quickly and from then on just decided to back off and let him make his own decisions for good or ill. A valuable life lesson learned.” —Jonathan Cullen

It's amazing how kids become adults, complete with their own interests and passions. Our main job is just to be there. —Steve

“I thoroughly enjoy your woodworking videos. I found your \$1000 tool list very interesting. My dad was a carpenter and cabinet maker, so I've been woodworking for most of my life. In my adult years, I've tackled dozens of projects, all completed with the most basic tools. My powered

tool list includes only a circular saw, a handheld router, a drill, and a jigsaw.

Yet with these simple and inexpensive tools, I've been able to build some amazing projects. Here are three examples; a rolling stand-up garden, bookshelves, and a 14' shuffleboard table (in progress). Since I do NOT have a table saw, it takes me longer to construct my projects, but my experience has shown that anyone who wants to start a new hobby as a woodworker can do so on a very minimal budget—much less than \$1000.” —Robert Kumza



Preach! —Steve

“Thank you for getting me jump-started in woodworking at age 83. After completing your weekend projects, I opted to organize my small garage-based shop.” —Gene



*Congratulations! The best time to begin a woodworking hobby is today.
—Steve*

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

Reader Projects

An awesome custom-engineered Loft Bed emailed in by Morgan

“I wanted to share this loft bed that I built! I’m really pleased with it. At the time that I built it, I was living in a small studio apartment and needed more storage space. All the dead space above my bed bothered me, so I decided to make a loft bed that lifted my existing bed frame up kind of like stilts. That way I could utilize the space underneath for storage—mostly for wood and tools. 😊 I even managed to find the white cabinets that fit perfectly underneath for free on Facebook Marketplace! I have now moved and no longer need the loft bed which

I'm quite sad about. It's disassembled and sitting in my shed. I may sell it, but it's so hard to let go of things you custom-build for yourself!"



This. It's amazing how often we overlook the vertical space when designing for a small space! —Steve

A supersized BMW+ modification that Nancy B posted in the Weekend Workshop Facebook Group

“This is Steve’s BMW+ on steroids and gone rogue. It will be a quilting table with 5 drawers left, right, front and back. I looked in the dictionary and couldn’t find the word for fear of making many uniformly sized drawers, but that’s where I’m at and I needed the flat space so the tops

are just sitting there. Bungee cords may come while I tackle drawer therapy.”



Not sure why, but I experience drawer phobia with every drawer I make. One thing to think about... They don't all have to be uniform! —Steve

Beautiful course project that Bob S shared with the Weekend Woodworker Facebook Group

“I completed the Catalina Wall Cabinet. Used Varathane dark walnut gel stain and Minwax polyurethane to finish it. Didn't realize how different the wood grains were on the door panels until I stained them. I guess this is another thing to think about when designing.

Not sure if I'm keeping it or gifting it.”



It's easy to forget the star of the show, the wood, when we're wrapped up in cutting boards and getting everything to fit together. On the other hand, I like this bold design choice! —Steve

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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