



Issue 43, January 2024

Hi Steve r,

Happy 2024! Thank you all for your feedback on last month's massive Holiday Extravaganza issue. I really enjoyed all of your responses (read some of them later in this issue) to my nostalgic recollection of my year spent working at a movie theater. I think we're all recovering from the holidays, so I'll keep this issue a little shorter!

In last year's January issue, I talked about setting resolutions for the new year. Allow me to follow up. I wrote:

Setting a resolution is an opportunity to assess our general intentions for self improvement and share those feelings with others. The act of simply stating these things is healthy.

Personally, I resolve to be a better listener this year and to ask people about themselves. I resolve to make "yes" my default response. I resolve to project a positive, happy image to strangers and to initiate conversations.

These simple affirmations became my default way of thinking and one

year later I am stronger because I consciously put them into practice.

This year, I decided to make *intentions* instead of resolutions, especially regarding personal growth. Perhaps resolutions are better for business goals, but intentions are more about the journey than the destination.

In addition to continuing with last year's stuff, my main focus this year is on creative development. I'd like to create more art related to woodworking. I intend to balance passion projects without cutting into my practical woodworking projects or YouTube videos. I probably won't film these for YouTube, so if you're curious about what I create, be sure to [follow me on Instagram](#), where I'm a bit more free to post whatever I want.

I'd like to approach life less analytically and more intuitively. Science is great and whatnot, but it tends to dampen my passion when I reduce creativity down to logic. Precision and accuracy are important in woodworking, but there are no formulas for creativity. Oh sure, there are things like the (questionable) Fibonacci ratio, but that's an example of trying to shoehorn science into creative pursuit. I want to make some projects that *feel* right on a more intuitive level.

I want to bring uniquely flawed visions to life. I want to explore with fewer restraints from science and make this a year of growth and emergence. Check back next January to see how this vague and amorphous plan works out. And let me know what your goals or intentions are for 2024! 😊

Decluttering Challenge

Throughout 2023, I spoke a lot about being more intentional with our woodworking: the projects we choose, the tools we buy, and the personal joy we find from the hobby. For the past 15 years, I've been preaching how maintaining an orderly shop can contribute significantly to a rewarding experience in the shop. Intentionality and decluttering go

hand in hand.

Whenever I bring up the topic of shop organization, I hear from a few people who tell me they feel more comfortable surrounded by tools, lumber, sawdust, hardware, old projects, etc. If this describes you, great. Clutter is subjective and it's only a problem when it becomes a problem—it can be a source of frustration or worse, compromise your safety. (At least try to keep sawdust under control. That stuff is easy to stir up and is harmful to breathe.)

Your shop might be organized, but messy. You've seen my shop: I have places for everything, but I am less than diligent about putting things back where they belong. I have a system in place, so perhaps straying from it is just a personality flaw lol. Maybe this is the difference between decluttering and tidying; the latter having more to do with maintenance and diligence.



Messy. All these things have homes and need to be put back. This drop-down work center is always in its dropped-down position and a magnet for things I want to set down for “just a moment.”

At any rate, organizing, decluttering and tidying up is a great way to start the year. Dedicate some time in your shop this weekend to assess problem areas. Find (or make) forever homes for orphan tools that

seem to always be on your workbench.

Get rid of those tiny cut-off pieces of lumber you think you will “use for something someday”. If your bin for larger scraps is full, thin it out. Excess lumber tends to accumulate in every corner of the shop, and I’ll bet there are probably boards that have been sitting there for years.

Sweep the floor, even under and behind workbenches and tools. Vacuum all horizontal surfaces; sawdust accumulates everywhere.



Clutter. The decorative items viewers have sent need homes. I bought the projector on the left to paint a mural which I never got around to. It’s an orphan.

None of this is revolutionary, but there’s nothing like the feeling of working in a fresh workshop. And to encourage you to straighten up, I’d like to present my First Annual (okay, it’ll probably be the only one) Decluttering Challenge. Take before and after pics of your shop, describe the frustrations and problem areas and tell me some of the things you did to get better organized. Send them to me by replying to this email and I may include your shop in the next issue!

Also, tune into my YouTube channel later this month for a tour of my shop, complete with my own before and after.

—Steve

P.S. If you could use some extra guidance on decluttering and organizing your space this year, [The Weekend Workshop](#) course is a great resource!

Join today and get ready to optimize your shop. You'll also gain access to new plans for a Multi-Purpose Tool Stand (a \$27 value on [my website](#)), now included in the course!

Make this bookcase from a single sheet of plywood



I had a few goals when I designed this bookcase. First, I wanted to show how it's possible to build a stylish piece of furniture using plywood. Second, I wanted it to require only a single sheet of plywood. Third, I wanted to demonstrate an easy method for making dowel joints using a

simple jig.

Plans for this project are available [here](#), and as a **SPECIAL OFFER** for readers of this newsletter, you can use the promo code **NEWYEAR2024** to get an additional **50% off** through the end of the month!



Creative Culture Conversations

I love doing this little podcast. Creative Culture is all part of my ongoing exploration of creativity and discovering people doing all kinds of creative things. Over the past month, I had the opportunity to talk to two fascinating people. If you haven't checked it out recently, I've been posting a video version of the show on YouTube. I think you'll enjoy it!

Paul Karyakos, also known as [Chef PK](#), combines his love for cooking with his passion for anime. His videos explore how food plays a significant role in anime, often reflecting the culture and emotions of the characters. If you like food (especially Japanese cuisine) you'll love this episode.



I then talked to Madison from [EsoTarot](#). The episode explores the art of tarot reading, its cultural significance, and its comparison to psychology.



Madison shares her journey into tarot reading, discussing the personal and broader implications of tarot, its misconceptions, and its role in self-reflection and personal growth. This is a fantastic episode, especially if you like learning about things you might never have given any serious thought to or maybe even if you are a bit skeptical.

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

Reader Mail

“Steve,

Your stories about working at a movie theatre really hit home for me. I worked at the Brookside Theatre in Kansas City, MO from age 14–17.

I started at a reserved seat run of *Gone with the Wind* on its 20th-anniversary release. I made many lifetime friends working there. We had semi-regular reunions through the years. Our last reunion was in 2018 at the home of one of the other workers in Kansas City. It seems incredible that we all stayed friends and in touch for 60 years.

The Brookside Theatre burned down several years ago, and some of the “Brookside Gang” have passed on, but the memories are incredible and always with me.

Thank you for reminding me of how fortunate I was and am to have had those experiences and friends.” —Jeffrey S.

How wonderful you stayed in contact with your movie theater friends for so long. I often wonder about what became of the people I worked with,

especially the assistant manager I dated for six months who I conveniently omitted from my story. —Steve

“Hey Steve!

Thanks for the great email. Though I’m only a young adult (mid-twenties), I felt a longing for living in the time period you grew up in. It sounds like a wonderful time. Thanks for sharing your memories and everything you do to help me become a better person and builder.

I love tinkering and I’ve enjoyed your videos for years and years. I look forward to thanking all my fellow mentors and people I appreciate.

Merry Christmas and I hope you have a good one. —Josh R.

Thanks, Josh. Telling people in our lives that we appreciate them can have such an impact. I want to do this all year long. —Steve

“Steve,

Your vulnerable, humanistic writing is so lovely to read. I never thought a story about a projector room hero or the ethos of a candy cane slasher film could make me tear up...and yet they did. Thank you for continuing to be an inspiration—in the woodshop and generally in life.

Best wishes for the holiday season and 2024!” —Carla

Thank you Carla. I wish we could all recognize our heroes before they’re gone from our lives. —Steve

“Please tell me you’ve seen Cinema Paradiso. Your story reminds me so much of it.

Thank you for your positive energy. Merry Christmas!" —Dawn M.

Of course! It's a classic! Everyone needs to experience Cinema Paradiso. —Steve

"That is one of the best memoir pieces I have read in a long time. And I teach a class on such things. (I'm a university professor.)

One thing to think about: were those two men "stuck"? Or did they enjoy the lives, and work, they had; it was good enough? One of the things that woodworking has managed to teach me is the value of "good enough." Projects in our minds are sometimes like our lives; resplendent, perfect in every way. And then we start working on those projects, and we realize two things: either we don't have the materials, the tools, or the skills to achieve that vision, or—and this is important—that vision exceeded what was needed, perhaps even desired.

For me, this means that sometimes shop projects are the most enjoyable. I'm not worried about perfection. I'm just enjoying the moment of making, thinking, doing. I've written a bit about makers over the years—I wrote an entire book about guys who invented an amphibious boat to catch crawfish in sufficient quantities to make it profitable—and one of the lessons I think I learned from them is that they never think of themselves as stuck.

Here's to being unstuck!" —John L.

Well said. There is such value in appreciating where we are in life and embracing imperfection. —Steve

"Hi Steve,

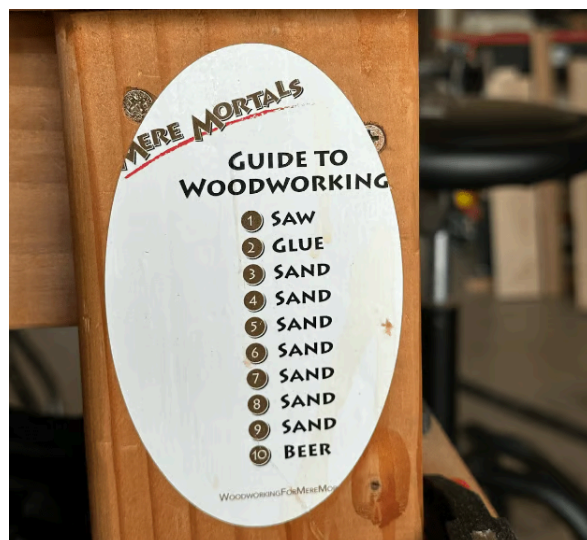
Thanks for being one of the friendly folks on YouTube who inspired me to get into woodworking.

The wood map of California on your wall made me want to do one of my own, with a little different design (hexes, not parallel boards). I use this same technique with other wallhangings that I make. —Misha P.



That's so cool! Those scrap wood maps are fun. Unless you live in Colorado. —Steve

“Greetings from Florida! Just sanded a ton of cedar (with epoxy) and sat down to enjoy a beer. This sticker is extremely true. Thanks for all you do, Steve!” —Rob S., Swanson Woodshop



OMG I forgot about these! That was probably 2010 or so with my old logo! —Steve

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

Reader Projects

Frederick K., a member of The Weekend Workshop Facebook group, built a couple of [course](#) projects and they turned out awesome!

Here's his Table Saw Cart. My number one shop tip (as you know) is to put everything on wheels!



And everyone needs a Handi-Cart in their life, even outside of the shop!



This Flower box from Sky E. is simply stunning. Wow!



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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