



Issue 44, February 2024

Hi Steve r,

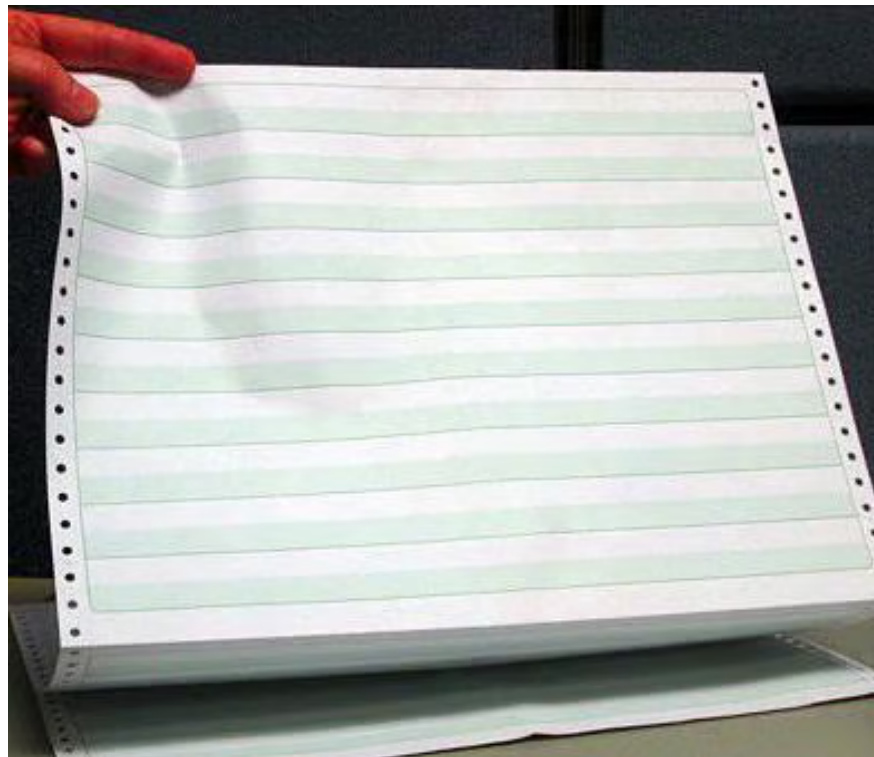
Welcome back, friends! I hope you were able to spend some time in the shop in January even though it's been quite weathery for so many of you. It was great to read your responses to last month's decluttering newsletter. (Read some of those later in this issue.) I was happy to clean up my own space too and offer a few tips. Be sure to check out my 2024 Shop Tour video.

I've been thinking a lot lately about the indirect ways that people in our lives can have a positive impact on our woodworking. My dad introduced me to the craft and his wisdom still resonates in my work today. Dad is an analytical sort, who always balanced my more impulsive tendencies.

From a very early age, I sensed that Dad was smart because I had no idea exactly what it was that he did and he drew zeros with a line through them. In fourth grade, I had one of those "What does your parent do?" assignments and had to interview my dad. It was then I learned that he was a "Systems Analyst," a kind of fancier computer programmer I think. I remember him trying to explain his job by drawing out an if/then logic flow chart because in order to explain programming

to a child, he felt he needed to explain how a computer works. I understood none of this and to be honest, I still don't exactly know what a Systems Analyst does.

One day, he gave me a big ream of used dot matrix printer paper with code on one side to take to school. The other side was blank and the entire ream had perforations for detaching individual sheets, kind of like toilet paper. I took this to class and it became a hit with the teacher who would tear off sheets all year long for coloring, glittering, and macaroni art. Dad also donated a stack of plastic magnetic tape containers that the school used for crayons and other sundries. My school was thriving due to technology.



1970's dot matrix printer paper.

The green stripes were the grown-up side that got filled with code.

The magic was on the plain white backside!

Sometimes Dad would receive emergency calls in the middle of the night, compelling him to drag my brother and me with him to a cold, brightly lit computer center downtown. He sat us on the floor and gave us markers (way more subversive than crayons) and reams of used printer paper to keep us occupied. We unfurled a dozen sheets at a time so we could lie on the floor and trace each other. While we were busy making the room look like a crime scene investigation, Dad spent hours reading through line after line of code trying to find an error in the logic

that had caused some sort of computer malfunction. I thought it was funny when he said he was finding a bug.

On weeknights and weekends, his focus shifted to raising two kids alone. That meant cooking meals, driving us to activities, helping with homework, showing up at parent-teacher nights, attending band concerts, taking us camping and skiing, and coaching my baseball team when no other dad could be bothered. He even tried to help me paint my face like a vampire one Halloween but I just looked dead, which was actually cooler.

As a child, the part that I was most drawn to about my dad was that he had the uncanny ability to build and fix things. Unlike analyzing systems, this was something I could understand. He could diagnose automotive problems and replace the defective parts himself. If a copper pipe was leaking in the basement, he got out his torch and patched it up. When he needed to add a new electrical circuit, he installed one. If he wanted storage shelves in the garage, he bought plywood and built them with a circular saw, hammer, and nails. Dad learned all of these skills from books, approaching everything intellectually, with analysis and logic. The world was a problem to be solved. I followed along whenever he was making something out of wood and learned how to use all of his power tools.

Then there was woodworking. For some reason, he bought a Shopsmith Mark V, a multi-purpose tool designed specifically for woodworking. It's a single machine that can transform into a table saw, drill press, sander, lathe, and other tools for shaping wood. Shopsmiths are still made today and offer a great solution for small-space woodworking, btw.

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The MARK V's accuracy, speed and versatility lets you easily build fine furniture, make home repairs, create gifts for family or friends—and do it as well as woodworking experts! Even start your own moneymaking business! One tool does it all!

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MARK V**

Learn why the Shopsmith MARK V is the tool to start with, the system you grow with. Watch the MARK V in use and you'll see how *easy* it is to handle and how *quickly* you can learn to use it for all your own woodworking projects. It's a handyman and woodworker's dream come true, so don't miss this limited-time, FACTORY-DIRECT SALE of this superior tool.

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It's More Than A Tool — It's A Woodworking System... one compact unit gives you the five most needed workshop tools — 10" Table Saw, 12" Disc Sander, Boring Machine, 16 1/2" Drill Press, and 34" Lathe!

Still [cranking these out!](#)

It was an odd purchase considering that Dad has never considered himself a creative, crafty, or artistic person. To him, art is a frivolous activity and not especially interesting. He never made any particular woodworky projects with the Shopsmith, using it occasionally to cut boards to fix a window sill, replace a handrail, or do other home repairs. But I used it. A lot.

He showed me how to use the table saw, disk sander, and most importantly, the lathe. This was a tool that allowed me to unleash my creativity in an exciting new way. There's magic to making a square block of wood round and we had a bunch of chisels that could make all sorts of beads and coves. There were an infinite amount of ways to shape cylinders and there were no rules to what they needed to look like. A world of creative possibilities opened up to me.

After I left home, the Shopsmith sat unused until just a few years ago, when Dad finally sold it. At that moment, it struck me why he bought that thing in the first place.

He bought it for me.

He didn't understand or actively encourage my creative passion, but he recognized it as something to be analyzed, so he put a system into place that would allow it to flourish.

All these years later, I think about how much of my woodworking approach is informed by my dad, despite how little actual woodworking he taught me. When I get frustrated that I measured something wrong, I think about my dad quietly and calmly pouring through reams of code to solve a problem. As much as I am an emotional person (never learned that from my dad), being analytical can be a very compassionate way to treat ourselves at times.

When I'm building a project, the buck stops with me. In order to see a project through to its conclusion, I need to take responsibility. Piece of cake compared to coaching a little league team. If I need to learn a new skill, I don't think twice that it's beyond my grasp. Dad could replace a freaking alternator! Without YouTube!

But the greatest thing Dad taught me was to never stop being curious and learning. To be open to a world of possibilities and see potential in others, even if we don't fully understand them. Sometimes people just need to be given the tools to realize their passions.

—Steve

Please consider supporting WWMM on Patreon!

What I've always loved about my job is being able to teach basic woodworking skills and being a resource for people getting started in woodworking. I started my YouTube channel 15 years ago because I wanted to demonstrate that woodworking doesn't require expensive tools or a lot of space. That became the fundamental mission of Woodworking for Mere Mortals and I think it's more important now than ever.

For the past six years, I have not run any sponsored ads in my videos. That has amounted to a lot of money I've left on the table because I lost all interest in trying to promote products that I don't care about. It was one of the best decisions I've made and it feels great to tell you about my own products.

At the beginning of last year, I decided to go back to my roots and produce nothing but project videos, making practical, fun projects that I enjoy building and want to share with people who are interested in woodworking.

That said, I'm asking for your help with my mission to showcase practical woodworking without the annoyance of having to click through sponsored spots that nobody watches anyway. A better way is to allow you to support the show financially by [becoming a patron on Patreon](#).

For as little as \$2 a month, you can help sustain this type of content. You'll get access to my videos without any YouTube ads, plus I'll include your name at the end of a video as a token of my appreciation. For \$5 you'll get access to my woodworking plans for free. And for \$10 you can join me in occasional online meetings to talk about woodworking or anything else. But mostly, I hope you'll pitch in just because you enjoy my videos and [support my mission](#). Thank you!



YouTube Highlights This Month

In this video, I'm making an efficient and durable dead blow mallet for woodworking. A mallet is an essential tool in any woodworker's arsenal, and this tutorial will guide you through creating one that minimizes rebound, enhances striking force, and protects wood surfaces.



My workshop has come a long way since I first started filming shop tours 14 years ago. It's now a much more minimalist and intentional space. It's been fun to see how my shop has evolved, and I'm always looking for new ways to improve it. If you're setting up your own workshop, I hope you'll find some inspiration from these tips and tricks!



Creative Culture Conversations

Ever wonder how magic tricks work? I recently had a great conversation on my Creative Culture podcast with Lloyd Barnes, a professional magician and illusion creator.

Lloyd not only develops magic illusions for magicians globally but also shares his expertise through detailed tutorials on [his YouTube channel](#). His approach to magic combines ingenuity and creativity, and in this conversation, he dives into the intricacies of his craft, offering a unique perspective on magic and illusion.



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

Reader Mail

“Steve, I derive great pleasure from watching your YouTube videos and reading your emails. Each winter, as the East Coast experiences its colder months, I make it a point to declutter my workshop, reorganize the space, construct some French Cleat Wall Fixtures, and thoroughly clean up all the sawdust that tends to find its way into every corner.

This year, I’ve conducted a comprehensive inventory of all the tools I’ve accumulated over the years. This not only aids in planning my future purchases and upgrading older models but also provides a valuable perspective from a business standpoint. Understanding the value of my assets and maintaining a record for insurance purposes is essential. This endeavor is an ongoing process, and I eagerly welcome any feedback from both you and your followers.” —George M.

Solid advice, even for hobbyists. Take an inventory of your stuff! You might be surprised by what you discover lol. —Steve

“Hi Steve, I have been a fan of yours for about 4 years. I enjoy watching your videos and reading your newsletters. The latest one really resonated with me. As an aerospace quality engineer, it was one of my jobs to train suppliers on the disciplines of continuous improvement to eliminate quality defects. One aspect of CI was the [5S system of organizing](#) and maintaining their shop and business work areas.

Sort - Straighten - Shine - Standardize - Sustain

I have limited space in my basement for a small shop and my first project was to build the workbench. Alas, knowing about 5S and implementing it are 2 different things. That large horizontal surface is a very convenient magnet for non-shop items.

You always provide good advice and demonstrate practical skills. But mostly I love your humility and compassion toward those you mentor. You are an inspiration. Keep going as long as it gives you joy.” —Jeff C.

Thanks for the reminder about the 5S System! More people need to learn about it. —Steve

My wife is a quilter and subscribes to Karen Brown: [Just Get It Done Quilts](#). I subscribe as well for ideas for presents for my wife. This year, Karan Brown is doing a “declutter challenge” on quilters and oddly enough, I find the system is applicable for my workshop. Ok—wood, not fabric, table saw, not sewing machine, but you get my point. The process works!

[Have a look, it may interest you.](#)” —Percy

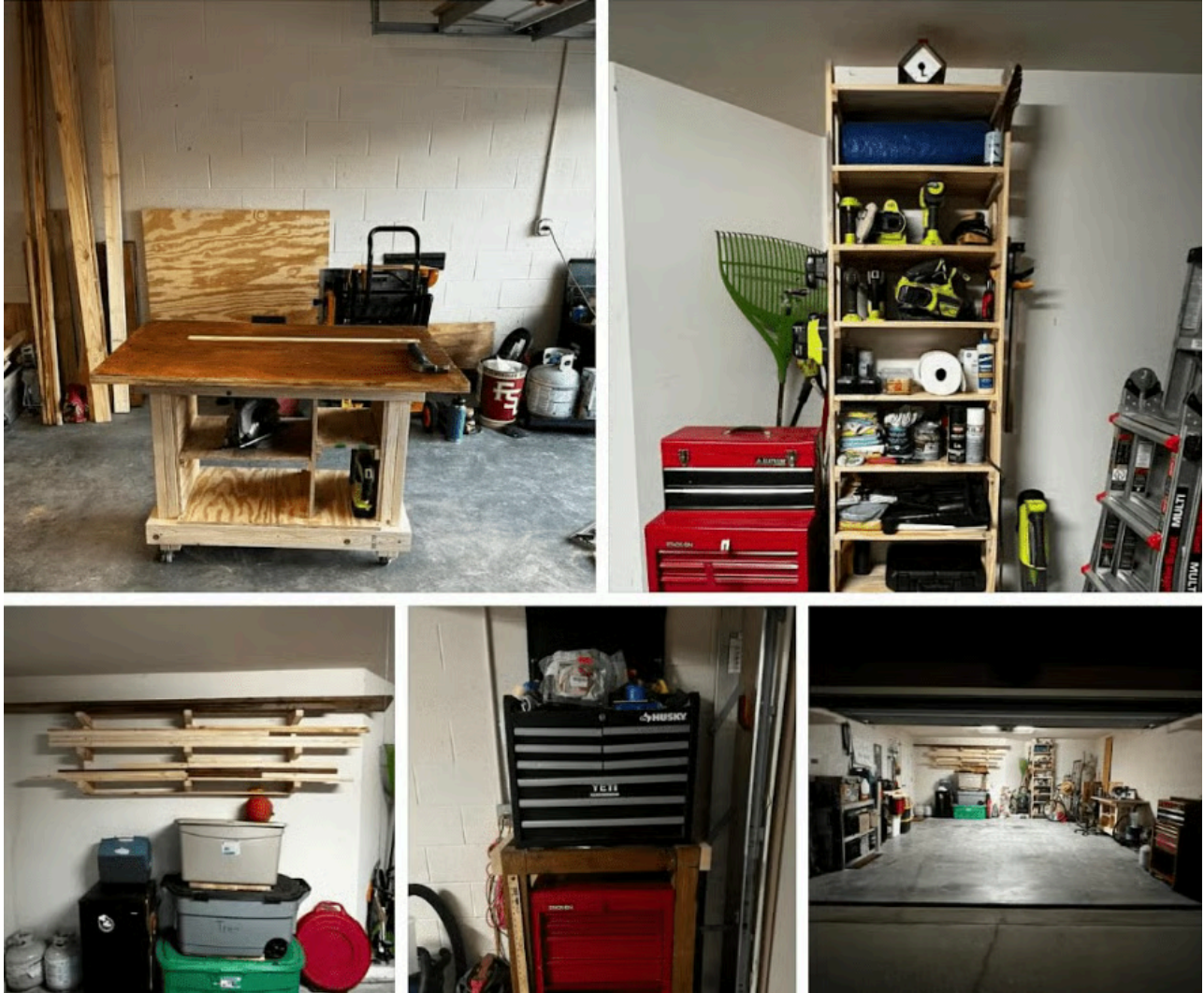
So funny you mentioned Karen. I totally stole her idea for the declutter challenge! My friend Chad and I talked to her on [our podcast](#). Your wife might enjoy it! —Steve

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

Reader Projects

This month, I wanted to show off a few shop organization projects. These projects are all featured in [The Weekend Workshop](#) and proudly shared by members of the course Facebook group!

Creating a Woodworking Haven



“Finally getting some space, essential storage and work spaces to create my woodworking sanctuary! Thanks, Steve! Now if I could get rid of some Christmas decor...” —Benjamin V.

Sanding Station



“My shop is mostly already set up but I joined The Weekend Workshop for some ideas on how to really make it flow for me. My first project was the sanding station and it took me a lot longer than I anticipated!

I definitely need to start cutting as I go and not doing it all at once, lots of little adjustments and some pieces I had to recut along the way. I don't have my table saw yet so all dados and rabbets were done with my router and cuts were made with my miter saw and Milescraft track saw guide (awesome helper if you don't have a track saw or table saw). Right now it's mounted on the far edge of my desk and secured to the wall but I may move it elsewhere, I work out of one bay in my 2-car garage.” —Alyia W.

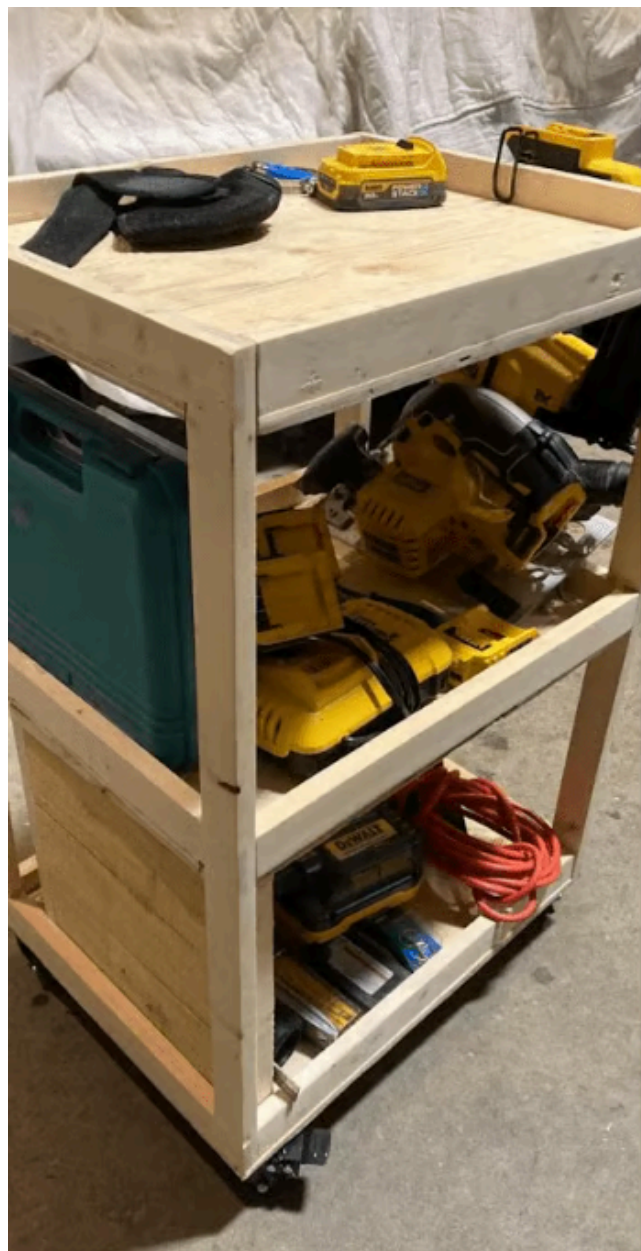
Drill/Driver Cabinet



“I’m pretty pleased with this one. The final measurements came out spot on and it’s square. The top “lip” is a little less than the 1” on Steve’s. The reason is that this was built purely out of scrap and leftovers from other projects so I adjusted a bit to make it work.

My niece inspired the last-minute paint job and I’m glad she did because the back is a piece of plywood rescued from a dumpster and wasn’t the prettiest. I’m thinking of hanging it on a French cleat as it’s fairly heavy (I had to deadlift and squat it a couple of times during a frantic glue-up) and I’m working in a metal barn. I can’t wait to load it up and free up some bench tops and other clutter-collecting spots.” —Joanna M.

Half-Lap Handi-Cart



“You really DO need this in your life! It was great to make! Comes in handy, simple. Moves with you. Not looking for the famous lost pencil or tape anymore.

Thanks, STEVE!!!!!!” —Sobe B.

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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