



Issue 48, June 2024

Hi Steve r,

As we enter summer and the next 4–5 months without a drop of rain, many of the showy blossoms in my yard have retreated. The poppies are still hanging on, but looking a little leggy as California returns to its dry palette of amber hues. I enjoy living in a place without dramatic seasonal changes. It demands that I observe and appreciate the subtleties of nature in ways I might overlook when presented with blizzards, freezing temperatures, thunderstorms, and heat waves. It's kinda like comparing sashimi to a cheeseburger. Don't get me wrong, I love both, but they require approaching from different headspaces!

Just to update the tomato scorecard, this year's plants seem to be thriving much better than last year's which were such disappointments. Why? Who knows. There seem to be more tips and tricks devoted to growing quality tomatoes than any other vegetable. I've been trying every summer for years and I cannot predict exactly what works. There are a million variables and I'm convinced that nobody has truly cracked the tomato success algorithm. Maybe better thumbnails? 😊



Last month marked my 16th anniversary of producing woodworking videos on YouTube. It kinda strains my brain to think that there are kids posting videos now who weren't alive when I started. Such is the passage of time and how warped it feels as we age; 2008 just doesn't seem that long ago. At this point, YouTube is so interwoven into my life that I'm institutionalized. As Morgan Freeman in *The Shawshank Redemption* said about serving a life sentence in prison, "These walls are funny. First, you hate 'em, then you get used to 'em. Enough time passes, you get so you depend on them—that's institutionalized." 😊



Of course, I'm being hyperbolic. A more common experience among YouTube lifers is, *"First you love it, then you hate it, then you accept it."* It's a weird freakin' job. One that has given me the privilege of becoming friends with some of the most brilliant, artistic, and creative people on the planet, both on and off the platform. I'm amazed at how much talent exists in this world and the limitless ways people find to express themselves. It's always humbling when you stop me in the wild and show me pics of things you've made based on my designs. It puts my work into perspective.

One of the questions I sometimes get asked is how my woodworking has evolved over this span of time. Like the Bay Area climate, my answer is nuanced, mostly because my goals are different than most of the people reading this newsletter. As the internet's self-appointed gateway drug into woodworking, I am cognizant of my role as a resource for people just starting out. That means my ambition isn't to continually build more exquisite furniture with each new project, but rather to provide beginners with the foundation and practical skills needed to tackle any project they want.

With every project, I'm faced with fascinating new challenges that force

me to think like a beginner and not take any step or procedure for granted. If I'm going to re-saw a board on its edge, I want to explain the reasoning behind my setup, how to work efficiently, how the wood can respond, and point out potential pitfalls and safety hazards to avoid. Effectively communicating this kind of stuff is a skill I've learned over time, simply by sheer repetition. So when I reflect on my woodworking career, I think about the enormous personal satisfaction my work has afforded me beyond the projects I've built. I enjoy being around at the start of people's journeys.



A lot going on to make this cut

Woodworkers “confess” to me all the time that they haven't been doing any woodworking in months or years, like it's a sin. They see content creators (cringe) cranking out beautiful furniture week after week, posting collabs with other makers, buying new tools, goofing around in their shops, and making Instagram Reels convincing you that they're having one hell of a good time, *all the time*, in their workshops. To be fair, nobody would want to watch the typical woodworking session filled with slow, methodical procedures, mind-numbing repetition, long moments of self-doubt, frustration, and existential angst. Okay, maybe not that last one lol, but you get the idea. No hobby or creative endeavor is 100% joyful ecstasy all the time, but we get lured into them because in the beginning, they feel that way.

Like any relationship, when you first discover woodworking you will go through a blissful honeymoon period where it's all you think about. You will spend your free time swooning over new tools and imagining your future together. You will wake up thinking about things you want to make and devote your evenings and weekends to practicing and learning new skills. You'll want to talk about this relationship to anyone who will politely pretend to listen and you'll delight in showing off the things you're making.

At some point, the honeymoon period will end and that's when things get really interesting. There seems to be a crossroad that can cause the nature of this relationship to change. I've spoken to a number of people who confirm that this is universal to all hobbies. You might be experiencing this right now: a lack of excitement that you once had, maybe even feeling shame that you haven't made anything in a while. You think about the money you spent on tools and the space they are taking up. Maybe your shop is slowly becoming a storage area. You might feel ashamed of yourself, like you are betraying who you've become or you may feel guilty that everyone spent so much time praising you for your passion. Day after day, it gets easier to not make something in your little shop space you were once so proud of.

Well, that escalated quickly. 🤪 Fear not! This is not a newsletter of doom!

The first thing you need to know is that you aren't alone. Look, all relationships go through phases and no honeymoon lasts forever. One of the problems we all have is that we tend to define ourselves in very strict and limiting ways. Just because woodworking was all you talked about for a year, and everyone was buying you tools for Christmas, that doesn't mean you are only 'Woodworker' now. You are also Gardener, Star Wars Nerd, Mom, Reader, Writer, Dog Lover, Truck Enthusiast, Wrestling Fan, Accountant, Home Chef, Lawn Care Expert, Weird Cat Person (okay that's me) and a hundred other things. It's funny, because people who know me personally are unlikely to think of me as a woodworker, or even a YouTuber. In fact, those topics rarely come up. These are very important aspects of my life, but they don't define who I

am.

Woodworking found you for a reason. Just because you don't spend as much time together doesn't mean you are no longer a woodworker or that your craft will run off with someone else. I've known people who rediscovered woodworking after years apart and are now more enthusiastic than ever, but with a more meaningful and realistic relationship.

If you're feeling any of this, don't sweat it. You don't have to justify your lack of time in the shop to anyone, especially yourself. It's unlikely that you will *never* resume woodworking. It's possible (and that's okay too), but remember that you are not defined by woodworking. So what, if half-finished projects have been sitting on your workbench for months. If and when the energy is right, they will beckon your return. No need to force this relationship.

Like growing tomatoes, there's no surefire formula here, but if you choose to be proactive, *search for deeper intention in your work*. I know this is a recurring theme with me, but it's such an important component for building a sustainable hobby that holds your interest. I found meaning in my work because teaching has a higher purpose for me than just making things. If you feel like you're in a woodworking funk, maybe contact a local children's hospital and ask if they could use a handmade toy chest. Or set a goal to make two projects over the next two months to give to two unsuspecting friends. Try making something purely artistic. I've been playing around with pyrography (woodburning) lately and find it very satisfying. Some people have deep-dived into the dark arts of hand-tool woodworking in order to renew their passion for wood. Experiment with different materials. There's no law that says you have to limit yourself to wood; bring some steel or concrete into a project. Try bamboo. Get a 3D printer or a laser cutter and incorporate that into your work. Take a walk in the woods and see what you can make from found wood. Ultimately, start living life and thinking of yourself as a **Creative Person** rather than just a **Woodworker**.

BTW, if you're looking for a super easy, low-risk project to jumpstart your

woodworking, check out my new [standing work table](#)! You can easily make this in a weekend. Probably in one day. What creative projects would you like to tackle with it?

Also, June 16th is Father's Day! And that means it's time for a sale on [all of my woodworking courses](#). Gift yourself or any father figure in your life. It's the best way to begin the honeymoon phase of any woodworking relationship!

—Steve

Give Dad the Gift of Woodworking

As I mentioned above, in honor of Father's Day I'm offering 20% off every course registration! If you (or dad) have been thinking about joining, there's no better time than right now.

[The Weekend Woodworker](#) features 6 practical projects for inside and outside your home. It's perfect for complete beginners or those looking to sharpen their skills.

[Powered Up](#) will advance your woodworking with 5 stunning, larger projects. It's suitable for ambitious beginners and seasoned woodworkers alike.

[The Weekend Workshop](#) guides woodworkers of all skill levels through transforming their space into an efficient, organized workshop. It includes 15 space-saving projects, layout tips, detailed plans, and more.

Simply click the links above before June 16th and the promotion will be applied automatically!

Interested in gifting the course or have a question? Write to my team at team@theweekendwoodworker.com for assistance.

Basic Mobile Standing Desk/Work Table

There is nothing fancy about this workstation, but it's cheap and you can make it in about an afternoon. It's not as rough-and-tumble as a workbench but perfect for assembling projects or using in an art studio. If you want to sit sometimes, it works perfectly with my [Versatile Bar Stool](#). It's very lightweight and only requires four 2x4 studs to build the frame. You'll also need a couple of pieces of plywood for the top and back. [Watch the full video](#) for a step-by-step on how to build it!

A full set of plans are also [available here](#) on a pay-what-you-want basis.



Just for fun



(Embracing both papyrus and comic sans in one glorious thumbnail)

Well, it's been 2 years since I made my last Red X. [Here's a new, overly dramatic video!](#)

(If you're curious about what I actually use it for, [join my Patreon.](#))

Why English Willow Cricket Bats Are So Expensive

Here's a fascinating video I wanted to share. It's all about how high-quality willow cricket bats are made. I had no idea how labor-intensive these are!



Creative Culture Conversations

Half-Asleep Chris: In the latest episode of Creative Culture, I talked to Chris Burton of [Half-Asleep Chris](#), known for his charming and delightful videos featuring stop-motion animation, Lego, and pets.

We discuss Chris's journey to 3.2 million subscribers, his creative process, the challenges of producing high-quality content, and the unique appeal of his videos. [Check it out on YouTube!](#)



*Creative Culture is available on all podcast platforms, [YouTube](#),
and on the [Creative Culture website](#).*

Reader Mail

“[May’s] newsletter was especially impactful to me due to a couple of reasons:

1. I am a 29-year veteran teacher and we stress growth to our students constantly. All the points that you have recognized are not just applicable to woodworking, but also most, if not all endeavors in our lives.
2. I started my woodworking during Covid... fast forward and due to coaching and teaching responsibilities I got out of the shop for a period of time, and man did I miss it. I recently have been able to get back to my shop work and it is great. I see where I now am more willing to venture out of my comfort zone and try projects that are more challenging where I didn’t have the confidence to attempt before. I will try something and even if it’s not perfect... nothing ever is... I am just pleased that I tried. Best of all most of what I build is for my wife and family and are gifts. They like you said don’t see, or at least don’t point out the issues that I see. They

appreciate my efforts and that makes it all the more worthwhile to me!!!

Thanks for a great read! Go make some sawdust and be safe!" —JS T.

I couldn't have asked for a note that so neatly ties last month's issue on growth, to this month's issue of sustaining a hobby! —Steve

"Your points about growth really hit. It's easy to measure progress by comparing your skills over time but it's far trickier to understand the depth of progress in terms of how we approach challenges and solve inevitable problems.

I am enjoying your newsletters and I'm looking forward to June's. Your description of your backyard made me want to go out and get a bunch of new native plants to supplement our existing greenery.

Just as I look forward to your newsletter, I always look for your new YouTube videos. You've taught me a lot. Thank you for that." —Peter M.

Once you go native, you'll never go back! 🌱 —Steve

"Your skill and creativity goes beyond woodworking. The way you use words to craft your newsletters makes them an absolute joy to read. You're able to touch people where it matters in a very sincere way. Thank you" —Lorain H.

Creative pursuits offer us new perspectives on life if we just pay attention. 😊 —Steve

"I recently turned the biblical '3 score and 10' and wonder whether you

could do something on “working with wood, into your dotage.”

As another one of those millions of Boomers, we’re a large group. Can you offer any ideas for how to keep productive, and safe, into old age?”
—Peter T.

Believe it or not, I was considering this as a topic for this month’s newsletter. Maybe I’ll revisit it. Setting aside any physical limitations for now, the single phrase I hear people say that absolutely drives me crazy is, “I’m getting too old for _____.” I want everyone to banish that self-defeating language from their vocabulary. —Steve

“Wood grain tells its tale,
Craftsman’s hands shape bamboo dreams,
Shadows of the work.” —Marte P.

Thanks for the haiku! Even ties in with the article about bamboo from last month’s issue! —Steve

“First I just want to say thank you for all the time, energy and patience you’ve expended to put together the Mere Mortals Universe. My interest in woodworking was always tempered by the fact that I knew absolutely nothing about what to do and where to start. Thankfully I stumbled upon your videos years ago and slowly and deliberately I’ve cobbled together a nice (very small) shop in my garage. [...]

I’ve seen you push your table saw out onto the driveway more than a few times and thought I’d ask you your opinion of something that’s been bothering me lately. I’m starting to wonder (worry?) about the noise my woodworking creates and whether my neighbors are bothered by it. Let me be clear no one has ever complained to me or made the slightest reference to noise. But lately for whatever reason I’ve become self-conscious, and it’s starting to impact the joy I get out of woodworking. I

was wondering if you've ever covered woodworking "noise" in your videos or newsletters and was wondering if others in the Mortals universe share the same apprehensions, and how they might deal with it. I've never been a "it's my property and I'll do what I want" type of person, but perhaps I'm just too sensitive to the noise issue. Or perhaps I'm not alone. I do know I take great care about when I work outside and how long I'm running my saw, but you know neighborhoods are fragile ecosystems.

Anyway, I just thought I'd write and share my new "neighborhood woodworking noise apprehension" and see if you or others share or have shared in the feelings and how they managed it.

Again thanks, Steve! I look forward to your videos and newsletters and appreciate all you've done to help make me a better (if not less noisy) woodworker. 😊" —Bill R.

"Do your neighbors complain about the noise?" is the most common question I get asked. I feel like I might have talked about this in a previous issue, but it deserves a thoughtful response. Maybe I'll expand on this next month. In a nutshell, woodworking is mostly quiet with short bursts of noise so it's probably not as annoying as a neighbor with a leaf blower lol.

I'm also a proponent of inviting your neighbors over to show them what you're making. People are usually fascinated and much more forgiving of noises when they are friends with the person making them. —Steve

***Thoughts on this month's newsletter? Got a story to tell? Just want to say hi?
Drop me a line by simply replying to this email.***

Member Projects

Ash's Book Keepsake Box



Love this project! That wood is spectacular. ([Plans here](#))

Peter's Floating Walnut Vanity.



Wow! What a great idea. Perfect small space solution.

Ken's Folding Miter Saw Station



Love seeing all of your miter saw stations! It's one of my favorite projects in [The Weekend Workshop](#).

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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