

Artisans Quarterly Review

H A N D C R A F T E D C U S T O M W O O D W O R K I N G

T H E R E S A ' S P R O F I L E F E A T U R E

2008 Third Quarter

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[Theresa Tonte \(Teri\)](#) joined [Artisans of the Valley](#) in 2006. After about two years on the observation deck she decided to take on the challenge of learning a new trade. To our surprise, Teri's sideline game imparted her with quite a bit of knowledge just from hanging around the shop.

Teri now provides detailed cleaning of antiques and collectables, preparation and finishing for restorations and commissions; in addition she handles Artisans' touchup and repair work. Teri will also take over Artisans' scheduling and bookkeeping very soon. We're even thinking of putting her on accounts receivable. Anyone thinking they can take advantage of this little blonde should remember that she has been documented placing a 308 behind the ear of a 300lb Austrian boar at 80 yards; any question of her tenacity, just check with the guides at [Sunrize Safaris!](#)

Teri expressed her own entrepreneurial talents by founding [Smooth Finish by Artisans of the Valley](#). "Smooth Finish" is a spin-off company chartered to provide on-site touchup and repair services for residential and commercial customers. Teri plans to explore new markets including hotels, restaurants, insurance and warranty companies, and offices, ensuring that the expectation of a pristine environment is met.

Outside of Smooth Finish & Artisans, Teri is often found at poker tournaments or honing her hustling skills with online games; at times even falling asleep with her laptop during late night events. Once she actually gained enough ground early in an online tournament to reach the final table while sound asleep for the second half! Teri aspires to win her way into the [World Series of Poker](#) and eventually enjoy the lifestyle of a professional player ultimately redefining her relationship role as "Eric's sugar-mama."

She can also be tracked traveling with her fiancé Eric, who introduced her to various hunting and fishing expeditions, Teri's exploits can be seen in our [Company Background Adventure Album](#) section and in her [personal profile](#). Of course we can't leave out Teri's all time favorite activity, burrowing into a warm wrap of blankets and catching up on her sleep!



NEW WAVE GOTHIC IN WALNUT PART II – COMPLETION

The basic premise of our [New Wave Gothic](#) line is to blend Gothic, Renaissance, Jacobean, Elizabethan, and perhaps a touch of Mission influence. The net result is a synergy between modern function and classic form that integrates seamlessly into a Tudor home, a stone castle, a timber frame or log cabin, even a New York loft. This gothic line is fully suitable for a poker room, dining room, library, wine cellar, or kitchen. This line is the essence of new antiques; handmade, far from rustic, yet with obvious age and maturity, not overly distressed or beaten down. Perhaps the best description is our reproductions look 150 years old, yet brand new.

Our goal is to maintain a substantial Gothic appearance (providing no doubt the piece will outlast us all) while mitigating the excessive mass of solid wood with elegant fretwork and subtle ornamentation. The Renaissance introduced steel tools, greatly advancing the capabilities of furniture makers and carvers in the realm of joinery and carving. During this period the mortis and tenon joint was mainstreamed, tracery evolved into an art form, extensive hand carving adorned the objects of royalty and wealth, artistic wood and stone work dominated in churches throughout Europe. Check out Eric's documentary [Creating a Priceless Heirloom](#) for more gothic history!

The "[Gothic in Walnut.](#)" project, also known as "Becky's Gothic," traverses to a frontier beyond the flat planes of tabletops by introducing two new pieces, a server and a corner unit. All four pieces (there's two corner units!) exhibit matching rope carving, corbels, and rosettes. The most obvious broadcast of continuity in this original dining set is our classic gothic tracery (also known as fretwork or piercings) reminiscent of a cathedral stained glass window.

Server storage is optimized, and space considerations within the destination result in a 20" depth for this 90" long 36" high unit. Weighing in; we're estimating close to 450lbs, this server is truly solid walnut. Custom configurations are available to suit your space and storage requirements, including options for a hutch or breakfront.

The table measures 108"L x 46"W x 30"H with two 30" end leaves which bring the total to 14ft. We've determined that 9' (maybe 10' in oak) is the maximum single piece top we can physically handle. Larger sizes can be configured either in leaves ... OR ... a split-top configuration. We can mate together multiple table sections to create extremely large surfaces. So what's the longest possible table? That's up to your budget!

The set includes two corner units towering at 93"H x 24"D. Configurations are available in a variety of sizes with doors or open shelf configurations. New Wave Gothic bookcases, [entertainment centers](#), and a variety of other configurations are also available.

We'd like to expand our [New Wave Gothic](#) line. With the next commission we're going to sister on a poker table for ourselves. We have chairs in the pipeline, and a New Wave Gothic frame surrounding a shadow box to house Eric's master's papers. Keep checking back; we'll be continuing to add more pieces to our portfolio. Inquiries are pending for a bed, night stands, coffee table, and a credenza!



Photo by Henry Schweber

GOTHIC IN WALNUT CONT.



Photos by Henry Schweber

2008 - TEXAS ROAD TRIP / GOTHIC DELIVERY



This 4,300 mile oddly shaped figure-eight through Austin gave us the opportunity to deliver the walnut variant of our “New Wave Gothic” dining set and provided a venue to explore the great mid-west. This is our story, maybe not the next Pulitzer nominee, but it remains our story!

Departing around 6am July 19th, we progressed without event through PA and into Ohio. It was here, and through Illinois along I-70 that we got to see, well ... corn ... which drove home that ethanol is drastically impacting our nation’s food supply by driving farmers to switch from food/feed to fuel crops. Saving you from the drive-time narration, we’ll

fast forward to [The Casino Queen](#) in East Saint Louis and a dinner at [Tony’s](#), one of the best Italian restaurants in the mid-west; make sure you stop if you’re ever in St. Louis.

The most interesting finds on our road trips come when wandering through a variety of little stores, treasure hunting for handmade knives for Stan, bears for Cindy, and an eclectic variety of items of interest to Teri and Eric. One afternoon we fell off the beaten I-55 path and stumbled upon [Stearnsy Bears](#) in Stotts City, MO, population 250, where we adopted Granny Grace. (Photo to Right; Check Page 6 for a Full Bear Feature!)

Onward south on I-55! We’d show off some photos from Oklahoma but, honestly, we figured there’s just not a whole lot there except temperatures pushing past 103 degrees. So, on towards Austin.

We reached Austin on the 23rd and successfully deposited our cargo at its new home. (shown right are Eric & Teri with Mark & Becky, the proud caretakers of this unique dining set) We gave the pieces a fresh coat of wax, and a few finishing touches then bid it farewell with plans to design additional pieces for the dining set, as well as ideas flowing to furnish their home with a new bedroom set.

We should probably put a reference here about our proximity to Dolly. At this juncture, we were monitoring closely and in the end we only caught outskirts of the hurricane for about 15 minutes of down pour just as we finished the delivery. Then it rained on/off the next day or two that’s about it fortunately.

The return voyage took us through Shreveport and the [Horseshoe Casino](#), then on to Tunica for a night at [Sam’s Town](#). Remember Teri’s passion for poker inspires the casino stops, plus we’ll note that we’ve found casinos are the most secure locations to park when traveling with expensive items, guns, or dining sets! Just stop into the guest relations department, let them know you’re better armed than their security teams and they’ll gladly lock down your vehicle for you!

We should note here, please avoid making a reservation at the Isle of Capri in Tunica (photo below), cause it’s kinda out of business. Although you’ll find the privacy is great, the room service will fall short of your expectations. Fortunately there was availability in Sam’s Town. Luckily it was a seafood buffet night, so Eric got over the frustration of finding a hotel quickly!

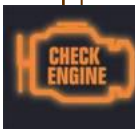


Next came a bit of a kink in our plan to avoid backtracking. We received a request from a friend (Burke) to retrieve a Polaris 6x6 from somewhere in Illinois. His logic was pretty simple, we were already travelling so given Illinois is somewhere in the middle of the country, we must be close to it! Well, backtracking six hours back through St. Louis we loaded up the six wheeler and began our migration home. It wasn't long after the pickup was completed that things got a bit annoying, starting with a sulfur odor taking over the truck.

You'll need some background so let's put in a flashback "interlude." A few days before we began the trip the truck decided to spit up a bit of tranny fluid out the breather, which of course placed a cloud of doubt over our mechanical stability. So what's the solution? Our choices were either a \$6K replacement, or do nothing; perhaps it was just a little overfilled and got hot so all well. Unfortunately - without dropping it and carefully performing a mechanical autopsy there really wasn't any way to know for sure.

We figured we'd give it a shot and take a trip to Austin, worst case we're stranded somewhere for a few days having a new transmission installed at the closest GMC dealer and the gamble costs us a towing bill. Well the tranny managed to hold its own, but (end interlude) there are two factory batteries that are no longer with us, one going out with a fountain of sulfuric acid spewing all over the engine compartment. Without a doubt, the five year old original batteries failed given the 100+ degree weather and obscene road temperatures we experienced for most of the trip. Batteries are no big deal, and blowing out one in a diesel that has two doesn't take us out of the race.

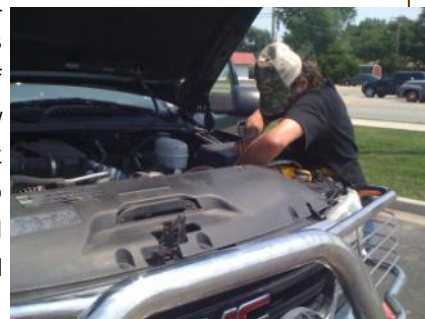
The real annoying phase of our mechanical mishaps reared when the truck's computer put us into "limp" mode and tripped on that mysterious check engine light. This, *of course*, chose to happen while merging onto I-80. We've got the technical capabilities to automate monitoring and managing a nuclear reactor but the average vehicle can't spit-up more than a little outline of an engine when things go wrong. Which of you does this not upset?



Obviously we abruptly cut short our migration plans for the night, limping through three exits (75 miles) finding vacancy status was mealy a mirage. Finally around midnight we found sanctuary in Morris, IL. Settling into the last available room, we plotted to advance on the nearby AutoZone as the doors unlocked at first light.

Well, the code scanner turns up a P1063, which was defined as a Subaru "Tumbler Generator" issue in AutoZone's knowledgebase. We all stood around scratching our heads dancing around the simple fact that beyond knowing that there hasn't been a generator in a vehicle since around 1958, nobody had a clue what a "Tumbler Generator" actually was; not to mention the fact we clearly put it in for a GM vehicle.

iPhone to the rescue! (Hey! We clearly deserve compensation for this endorsement don't you think?) Teri's new toy and a hearty breakfast later we refined our symptoms determining we had a fuel filter issue. Things started making sense now; for those of you that are not aware "Bio-diesel" is a common blend all through the mid-west. Now we're all for this, in fact we're contemplating getting a processor ourselves to make it at our shop, but one of the tips Eric remembered about this new fuel is that it tends to dissolve the deposits and residue left by petroleum fuels throughout the tank and fuel lines and drag it along into the filter. It's not uncommon to have to change 2-3 fuel filters when switching from diesel to bio-diesel.



So ... a new fuel filter and two bright yellow heavy duty batteries later (yes a parking lot install) and things started to turn in our favor; or so we thought. It's somewhat embarrassing given Eric's general mechanical abilities, but the fact is it's just not worth working on vehicles yourself anymore. Forty-five minutes of cranking, bleeding, kicking the fuel pump on/off, and a plethora of creative cursing, nada, zero fuel to the engine. Again the pondering begins ...



Finally a phone call to one of the manager's friends yielded the simple solution: That little metal thing we all were convinced was a solenoid of some sort (left) ... no it's a primer pump. Crack a screw next to it, half a dozen pumps, close it, two more pumps ... and we were back on the road!

So at this juncture we're a day overdue, but at least the migration progressed by just after 1pm. Traversing the rest of Illinois, Indiana, and just about past Ohio and we succumbed to exhaustion and pulled into port for the night just over the PA border (off route 80.) Noticing our proximity to [Grizzly Industrial, Inc.](#) in Muncy, PA as we drifted off to sleep, we determined a pilgrimage was the logical addition to our final stretch home.

Off we went and things were great for about an hour, then we grenaded a brand new trailer tire, driver's side of course. Nothing like the opportunity for a Nascar pace tire change, interstate sideline, downhill, just past a blind turn, no shoulder, and of course, common stomping ground for overloaded dump truck traffic. We'd have gotten some photos, but you know, we had more important things to concentrate on at the time! Just in case anyone is interested, we included a photo of the blown tire! Check back in the next issue for interesting lighting upgrades to our rig ... perhaps another dozen or so strobes?

Spare in place on the trailer, original tire in the bed of the truck, we were Grizzly bound. Finally a stop without incident, and the chance to show off our work to fellow woodworkers and check out some tools we can't afford or fit in our current location. Anyone wishing to contribute to our new shop fund is welcome to forward donations in any amount.



The last casualty of the trip was Teri's little digital camera which was crushed among the luggage, along with a bottle of conditioner that was fortunately in a separate compartment from her laptop. July 28th, finally home, having invested blood, sweat, and some burnt rubber into our art. foad trips! Well, at least until one of you commissions another great piece!



GRANNY GRACE (STEARNSY BEARS)

Following through with our plans to expand the scope of our newsletter to include affiliates and other unique artists, this issue features [Stearnsy Bears](#). Since 1981 the Stearns family has produced classic styled fine quality collectible teddy bears. Never more than a small family business, Stearnsy Bears have earned the reputation for becoming family heirlooms. For 27 years each Stearnsy teddy bear has been totally hand-crafted. Charles and Vicky Stearns carry on the family tradition consistently demonstrating their ability to offer something unique to each collector. Although they do the same thing each day, bears never turn out the same way twice. Stearnsy Bears offer a lifetime of enjoyment, and like all truly artistic works, they are expensive but worth it.



Eric and Teri personally selected [Granny Grace](#) for Eric's mother Cindy. Granny, named for her personality, is known to be "Full of grace and glory" (shown left with Cindy). Granny Grace is a wonderful bear in an exquisite outfit. Her dress is from 1846 and is in mint condition. A true one of a kind piece. She also wears a vintage gray fox biting stole. They're not making them like this any more! Her hat is one that Vicky has put together and has a lovely vintage flower and feathers. Visual clarity is offered by antique (over a 100 years old) glasses. They have a cracked lens but Granny believes in the old tradition of waste not want not. She'll get some new glasses when the other lens breaks!{(

Granny is around 22" tall, fully jointed, and made from premium German mohair. Granny Grace is not some fly by night Teddy, she's a bear of substance. Now residing in Cindy's "bear room," (Eric's old bedroom), Granny Grace will be a faithful companion and friend to the Saperstein family for years to come.

HITCHCOCK CHAIR RESTORATION



[Hitchcock chairs](#) are one of the antique and collectable world's beloved mainstays. Examples of original Hitchcock chairs and countless reproductions have been on the market since Lambert Hitchcock began producing them in 1818. This distinct form of painted furniture, adorned with brightly colored and gold stenciling offers unique challenges when it comes time for restoration.

Restoring furniture with stenciling requires handling the frame structure of the chair, the finish, and in some cases, caning or upholstery. But what is to be done with the ornate paintings? Whenever possible, the original stenciling should be restored or left intact, in other words "as-is." However, there are some cases where finishes are so far gone, or perhaps the piece had already been refinished. This is when a complete restoration is required.

These six chairs received the full treatment, a complete structural rebuild, the black paint was refinished, and the stenciling was carefully patterned and restored. Finally the seats were attended to, providing a fully functional and aesthetically revitalized set of chairs.



REINVENTING THE WHEEL

The [spinning wheel](#) was as common as the kitchen table in every home, pretty much around the world, right up into the 1900's. This functional staple wasn't a luxury; it was an absolute necessity to fulfill the needs of making clothing, blankets, linens, hats, etc. Today many of the remaining antique sewing wheels exist only in museums, and occasionally in basements and attics.

The family that possessed this wheel through several generations decided it was time to bring a piece of their family history back into their living space. It's unfortunate that this piece was so far gone that regaining its functional state would require replacing almost everything. Because of this, our client elected to complete a preservation and display restoration. The wheel and supporting structures are now rebuilt, the components set in a permanent place to avoid further loss, and the wheel is safely stayed for display around young children.



CHERRY RESTORATIONS

Restoration is not just for antiques and collectables. High quality [modern furniture](#) requires attention as well. This handmade solid cherry kitchen table with matching benches sustained years of daily wear-and-tear until finally the finish was almost worn through.

Restoration procedure is not in question for modern pieces as they are simply refinished. The original finish was removed and a hand rubbed Waterlox tung oil finish was applied. Keeping up a good coat of Renaissance wax ensures this finish will serve for many years to come.

Severe finish damage or wear can be addressed by removing the wax, giving the piece a light sanding, applying fresh layers of Waterlox, preserving the piece for generations to come!



TIKI TIME

We're due for another summer style feature, so here's "Tiki Time!" by [Master Chainsaw Carver Bob Eigenrauch](#), "[Tiki Time!](#)" Take time out to enjoy a little colorful artwork, have a few drinks served in coconuts, and lounge out by a Tiki bar with Jimmy Buffet strumming away in the background. That said, logic dictates we must blend a few [tropical birds](#) into this tropical paradise.

Chainsaw carvings are not limited to the common [bears](#), [frogs](#), & [gnomes](#). Artists like Bob can carve a raw log into an array of creatures in natural or full color formats. These creations provide the perfect accent to your outdoor bar, kitchen, deck, or pool area. Other than that, not much we can say, the photos make our point!



ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING

Publicity Alerts!

"Artistry Goes with the Grain" - Published in the MetNews Daily "What's your Passion?" section, June 12, 2008



Artisans of the Valley offers museum quality period reproductions, original designs by commission, and antique restoration/conservation services, hand carving, modern furniture refinishing, onsite furniture repair, hand made walking sticks, and educational programs. Our website is now over 225 pages, including galleries, feature articles, and educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site, and contact us directly with any inquiries or questions you may have.

Eric M. Saperstein is Master of Artisans, Owner, Webmaster, Editor, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Office Manager, Legal Pit-bull, and he's in charge of vacuuming the shop: eric@artisansofthevalley.com



Theresa Tonte (Teri) is the Owner of Smooth Finish by Artisans of the Valley. Teri provides onsite touchup & repair services for residential, corporate, and institutional clients as well as serving to fill a variety of roles in the shop including referee: terri@artisansofthevalley.com

Stanley D. Saperstein, Master Craftsmen, Author, & Historian founded Artisans of the Valley in 1973. Stanley offers historic presentations, impressions, and various lecture series ranging from Civil and Revolutionary War, American Folk Art, and Interactive Role Play of Characters ... sometimes trying to reenact American Chopper episodes in the shop: woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com



STUFF STILL PENDING

Well as time passes, we realize a few things just sometimes don't get finished when we hope they will ... here's some:

1. For starters we haven't gotten back the Florida wedding photos. We're expecting those back soon, but they missed our hardcore editorial deadlines for this issue so they were left out.
2. We just haven't had time to finish caning Teri's chair, that'll show up hopefully in the next issue.
3. The buffalo panel took a back seat to getting the gothic dining set ready, so that'll be in a future issue.
4. Diamond in the Willow, that just wouldn't fit in this issue so we'll publish it later!

COMING Q4 (MAYBE!?)

Cover Story; English Library Makes a Book Cover!
History Happening Today
Signs of the Times
Restoration of the Game
The Buffalo Panel!
Fudge, That's Right Fudge.



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