

Ornamental decisions

18Dec2020

I'm going to open a can of worms here, touch on the untouchable, as it were. So, if you're easily offended or simply squeamish, please feel free to stop reading [HERE](#).

Okay, I warned you... Here it comes...

Who gets which ornament?

We've never been big on dutifully sending out Christmas cards, Mary and I. Oh, we tried for a while and even wrote, printed and sent holiday newsletters a couple of times. That tradition never really became one with us and so we sought other ways to perform our Christmas well-wishing. For several years when the daughters were young, our family made Christmas ornaments for each other and members of our extended family, along with a few close friends. But like the newsletters before, ornament production was fun the first couple of years but the merriment tailed off as by the fourth year it had become an *expectation*, and therefore, something of a chore. We moved on.

This year, I decided to make ornaments once again and along about May of this year, got to it. They involved wood turning (and that's as descriptive as I'll get for now – I'll post pics after the holidays) which is a nascent skill for me and so of course, the first few took me a good part of a day, each. I gradually learned new skills and settled into a more-or-less standardized process and making them became a relaxing part of my weekends.

My intent was to make an ornament for each person whose blood relation to or friendly relationship with us might make them wonder at being excluded. Not to worry; I started in plenty of time and with the pandemic in full swing, what else was I gonna do with my time? And it was a way to build my turning skills, so on I plunged.

Then, the move happened. A couple months of packing, buying, being in transit, unpacking, selling – you know the drill. I got in some work here and there when I could but inevitably, my dreams of 'ornaments for all comers' became an exercise in the art of the possible.

In the end, I made as many as I could. Lost a couple due to rookie errors and one or two that just flat turned out too butt ugly to consider for gifting. The problem wasn't a supply of wood or even really my available lathe time; I could have squeezed in a couple more, I suppose. But the real constraint in this year of COVID and everything being done long distance is shipping time. So last weekend I declared the project complete and the other evening, Mary and I sat down and went through the durn things, deciding which one to send to whom, boxing, labelling and preparing to ship. And now they're in transit.

I suppose this is the same problem my Mom faced when I was a kid (among five in our family, living on a single income) and she had to decide how to make each of us happy (along with various cousins, who of course expected a Christmas box from their Uncle Dick and Aunt Marion) without breaking the bank. The thing is, she was so good at it, her gifts always so perfect that I don't recall anyone ever feeling disappointed or left out.

So, Mary and I tried to channel ol' Marion, looking at each ornament and saying this one would go with a sister's décor or that one is right up an old friend's alley. But admittedly, mostly it came down to just getting the things in boxes and off to their destinations in time for Christmas.

Moral of the story:

If you're one of the few (unfortunately, it was way fewer than I'd hoped) who receive an ornament this year, please don't look askance at lumpy curves or imperfect finishes. Don't try to read your importance to us into what comes to hand when you open the package. Ironically, some of the least elegant took me the longest to make and for a very simple reason – as my skills improved, so did the quality and efficiency of my work. So you might have a thing of beauty that I zipped out in ninety minutes or a 'thought that counts' artifact that required a full day of my time but is less than lovely.

And if you don't receive one but want one (be careful what you ask for) let me know. I can always whip out a couple more and it's work I enjoy. Just don't read too much into your lack of an ornament in the first round.

It's been a year of triage in more ways than one. Please know if you're reading this that Mary and I care about you and value your friendship.

(And now I understand how the coach at the Crossroads Skating Rink felt when he had to tell a much younger me that I seemed like a good kid but he could only have so many kids on his hockey team, so...)

Please have a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!