

As of today...

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This leap day of a leap year finds me seated at my writing desk dwelling on... well, everything. Reminiscence seems to be the order of the day, so here goes:

My eldest daughter closed on her first house yesterday and we are over the moon with pride and joy. It's a lovely place, in great shape and close to her best friends and the theatre where she expresses herself. And still close enough for Mary and me to make pests of ourselves.

In our spare bedroom, we have a collection of oddments, mostly in neatly stacked boxes, all the stuff she knew she wanted to keep but could not fit in her rented apartment. Among her belongings are a few items I made with my own hands. Her 'big girl bed' that I made for her a quarter century ago will find a new home in her guest room. I love those beds I made for my daughters when I was first venturing into serious woodworking. I can run my hands over the smooth contours, feel the imperfections in the knotty pine and reflect on the fact that something I made has a place in our family memory bank and continues to serve my daughter well. Of course, I also see the imperfectly mounted drawer and the one box joint I cut off center, requiring a small Dutchman to repair. And I reflect on how far I've come.

That reflection leads me to glance over to the set of three stacking tables I just completed and that will become part of her new décor. They are fairly plain, Shaker (-ish) in design and so, devoid of ornamentation. But the progression of sizes, the gentle taper of the legs and the unfussy finish to the cherry reveal craftsmanship that would have been quite beyond the younger me who set out to make her bed. The bed and the set of tables represent a natural growth, both in my furniture making as I've become more competent and in her needs as she's grown from the young girl in my house to the young woman setting up her own housekeeping.

Mary is three weeks into her retirement and the change has been a revelation for both of us. She is feeling her way, redefining what 'time' means in the unfamiliar context of having plenty of it to spend on... what? And therein lies the question and the exploration. For the moment, she's focused on helping her daughter settle into her new abode and (finally, she breathes) painting and putting up family pictures in our own. But there will come a time when she will look up and out over the view ahead and decide for herself where to set her sights. And I get to watch this wonderful woman and life partner reinvent herself once again and - perhaps for the first time - really on her own terms.

I spent a week's vacation exploring woodturning with my brother and now have a new monkey on my back. (Woodturning, not my brother; he's always been on my back so that's nothing new.) In fact, the current shop project is building the bench on which my lathe will reside. Hand-building a bench that will accommodate the torque of a lathe requires practicing some new skills which will then be useful in making certain types of furniture, which will lead me to... The journey continues.

Of course, this missive and the website in which it's posted serve as evidence of my return to my first love, writing. I hope and intend to continue that exploration and to enjoy your company along the way.

As I've said before, life is good.