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## Council Member Woehleke's furniture-making skills take the word 'hobby' to a whole new level

By Vera Kochan



Steve Woehleke stands in front of his crafted built-in (floor-to-ceiling) closet and drawers made from alderwood. Photos Vera Kochan

because it can be recycled, which is good for the environment, and it's a soft wood. It's also rot-resistant and termite-resistant." He has also worked with cherrywood, alderwood, and white oak, to name a few, adding, "I like to get my wood from MacBeath Hardwood in Berkeley. They're a good supplier for hardwood. The best hardwoods come east of the Mississippi.

"I do things on an opportunistic basis," Woehleke stated when talking about design. "I plan and execute."

Asked if there was anything on his bucket list that he'd like to make, Woehleke replied, "My intent is to broaden my woodworking to include curved wood. It's very difficult, because you have to bend the wood by getting it wet and steaming it."

Each of Woehleke's pieces are crafted with attention to detail. They are not only utilitarian, they are attractive and made to stand the test of time.



Foyer entry table (Shaker style) cherrywood Photos Vera Kochan

Thanks to a 2010 house fire that damaged the attic above his garage, Moraga Town Council Member Steve Woehleke could consider it a fortuitous accident because during the rebuild he extended the space 10 feet, giving him extra room for a furniture-making workshop.

Woehleke's skills as a carpenter first took root during his high school wood shop days and became more serious after college. He estimates that he's been turning out pieces for 40 years. His furniture is all done in straight lines. "I'm an engineer, and we're prone to doing things like that - straight lines."

His early examples were book shelves and things that he calls "simple pieces." Other than learning the rudimentary skills in high school, Woehleke is self-taught. He has gone on to create an entry table for his foyer, a built-in (floor-to-ceiling) closet with drawers and mirrors for his daughter's room, a hope chest, several bookcases, a coffee table, a TV entertainment cabinet, an indoor accent chair, and so much more. While he typically makes his furniture for personal/family use, Woehleke has donated pieces for charitable silent auctions.

Several of Woehleke's pieces are made from repurposed redwood, once part of a backyard deck, as is evidenced by the nail holes strategically incorporated into his works to become part of the design. "I favor reusing redwood



Coffee table made from repurposed redwood and trimmed with cherrywood Photos Vera Kochan

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