

BY KEVIN THOMAS

# The Addict

It's not a problem –  
and I don't want a cure.

“Hi. My name is Kevin and I'm a woodworking addict.” That's how I feel I should start each meeting of our local woodworkers' guild. My only problem is, it's a habit I don't want to break. I meet with approximately 80 guys and gals every month who feel the same way as I do.

Most addicts can remember the exact moment they were hooked. I'm no different. I was able to delay the addiction's onset in junior high school – the desire to drive and a redheaded girl named Lois did the trick. But that was long, long ago. Lois found someone else and I got my driver's license.

But six or so years ago, while channel surfing on a rainy Saturday, I ran across a guy named Norm and he was building furniture. It all looked so simple. “Why, I could do that!” I told myself. And the rest is my downward spiral into routers, planes, red oak and whisper-thin shavings. I was hooked.

My wife looked at my addiction as something to keep me out of trouble. If only she knew then what she knows now. I started out by collecting the tools I would need to become a proficient woodworker. Some were inherited, such as my father's Montgomery-Ward's Power-Kraft 9" table saw. There were estate sales, antique stores and “Oh My God” eBay.

My wife still was unaware of what she had allowed to be unleashed. For Christmas the next year, she bought me a gift certificate for a class at the local Woodcraft store on making a jewelry



box. She had no idea what the smell of sawdust was doing to me.

The next February, The Woodworking Show came to town and I had a whole new sensation to explore. In the back of the hall was a little booth manned by a gentleman named Wayne. Wayne was the president of the Kansas City Woodworkers' Guild, and he soon became another enabler.

Wayne invited me to attend a meeting of the guild. He promised camaraderie with other like-minded individuals, and an educational atmosphere. I already had a subscription to almost every woodworking magazine; now I had people to talk with about what I read. The hole got deeper yet. There were guild-sponsored classes and mentoring. There was always someone from whom to learn something.

Then someone mentioned all the great schools: Marc Adams, Kelly Mehler's and more. I couldn't resist another temptation. So when my wife offered a week-long class at Kelly Mehler's School of Woodworking for my 50th birthday, I knew I was sunk. It was during that week in Berea, Ky., that my wife finally

realized the monster she had allowed to be released. And there was now nothing she could do about it.

I've since embraced my addiction. I've built a new shop and I'm working on filling it with what I need to feed this habit. I joined the woodworkers' guild and within a year I was editing the monthly newsletter. Then I ran for the guild's board of directors and was elected.

So, as I sit back and gaze at my new Holtzapffel workbench that's covered with shavings, I say “What a great addiction to have.” **PWM**

*Kevin is a bail bondsman and woodworker. When he's not building projects for his grandchildren, he's busy as president of the Kansas City Woodworkers' Guild.*

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