

Shavings

By Glen Friesen

Well, it is time to start another year of Guild activities. The September issue of Shavings always sneaks up on me. I am usually very busy with my yard and home renovations. Also, I seem to get a late start with my summer activities because my spring students need a few extra classes. This can run well into July. Even though I passed the second anniversary of my retirement, my summers have not changed that much.



(I worked on my grandkids clubhouse this summer and plan to continue this in fall.)

I spent time this summer making sure that I had enough material for students should I have classes again in fall. I bought 500 fbm of pine last October and I expect that I will have enough for this coming academic year. Acquiring birch presented a larger problem. My former supplier was getting out of this business and recommended another supplier to me. Since I have to order wood many months in advance, I started talking to the new guy a while back and my 400 fbm of birch was ready this week so I went to pick it up. So, now I am all set for my students this fall, if I have them.



(My student pine and birch ready for students if I have classes this year.)

Gathering wood is something that all woodworkers do as they work in this craft. The longer they are woodworkers, the bigger the pile becomes. The wood that I have purchased since last fall is earmarked for students. If I get as many students as I have planned for, this wood will get used up. The pile that keeps growing is the wood that I have collected for my own use. Over the years, I have accumulated some unique wood. What follows is a brief description of some of the more unusual wood in my private stash.

Quarter-Sawn Birch for Flooring:

About 20 years ago, I bought 500 board feet of local birch. At first, I had it sawed into my standard thickness which is 12/4 or three inches thick. Then, I had it sawed into 1 x 3 - inch pieces. By doing this, it is basically all quarter-sawn. I bought this wood from an old timer in the Christopher Lake area. He had his own personal woodlot on land that he owned. I purchased birch from him for the school for a few years and while I was not sure of his age, I believe that he was in his late 80's when I was dealing with him. Eventually, the work became too difficult for him and he told me that I would have to find my birch elsewhere. I believe that the 500 board feet that I have stored for the last 20 years was the last that I purchased from him. This wood was already cut into three-inch-thick cants and I brought it to another partner in crime to saw it into 1-inch boards.

My new birch supplier has a machine that planes four sides and puts the tongue and groove into the long sides in one pass. I suggested to him that he should purchase a set of flooring tongue and groove cutters for this machine so we could make my birch into flooring. He is thinking about it.



(It may be old, but it is dry and in excellent condition. The plan is that someday it will be my living room floor.)

Quarter-Sawn Slow Growth Spruce:

Guitar building has also influenced my wood selection choices. Many years ago, I decided that eventually, I was going to build an acoustic guitar with only Saskatchewan materials. So, for the soundboard, I asked my pine supplier to cut and quarter saw some local spruce for me. He identified a couple of trees that he needed take down to provide road access to a new area to be harvested. This all had to happen with the government's blessing

Ross cut the spruce into 3 x 10 – 8 ft pieces. I have several pieces like this and eventually, hopefully, this guitar will become a reality. I have only had this wood for about 15 years so there is time yet.



(The pieces in the picture are a couple of the pieces of quarter sawn spruce that I have. I bet I have 10 boards like this which will make many guitar soundboards.)

Wood From Friends:

Over the years, I have managed to acquire wood from friends. I always find this quite sad. For my friends, it almost always marks the end of their woodworking hobby or career. As I work on my projects, I sometime find a piece of wood with Alf Wilson's initials on it. I remember when Alf's shop was cleaned out and it was sad to see a talented woodworker's career end. In the month of August, I had an opportunity to help a friend liquidate his wood stockpile that was a lifetime in the making.



(My future lumber storage area. I hope to complete this area this fall yet.)

My Friend's Woodpile:

As far as I know, there are only a handful of woodworkers in the town in which I live. While there have been a few that have come and

gone, the woodworker that I helped lived in Waldheim for most of my teaching career and eventually sold the log house that he had constructed and moved to an acreage in the Laird area where he constructed an off-grid premises that is truly amazing.

We will call my friend Bob for the purpose of this article. Bob was a builder. As I mentioned earlier, he constructed a massive log cabin-style house on the outskirts of Waldheim. He also constructed and sold Windsor chairs among other things. His last major project was the off-grid acreage that he constructed. Bob basically worked by himself and made excellent progress. The plan was for his wife and him to retire on their off-grid property. This all changed one summer day two years ago.

Unfortunately for Bob, he was involved in a serious auto accident. The other person involved in the accident had fallen asleep and came across into Bob's lane and struck him head on at highway speed. I think, given what could have happened, Bob was rather fortunate. If you don't know Bob, you may not realize the full extent of his injuries. Long story short, his right hand shakes uncontrollably and he is unsteady.

After two years of treatments, the doctors came to the realization that the damage was permanent and eventually Bob and his wife realized that their retirements plans had to change. That lead to a message from Bob to me to ask if I needed some wood for my projects. Of course, I did not need any of it and had no room to store it, but I went and looked anyway. After taking some pictures of the piles and circulating them through the turning club and the guild, Kim Henry and myself decided to take most of it. One nice August afternoon, Kim and I drove out to Bob's place and managed to clean up about two thirds of the wood that was to be dealt with.

What We Took:

Did I mention that I had no room for even one more stick of wood? Kim brought her kids along and they were very helpful, but they kept

asking their mom where she planned to put all the wood she selected and had paid for. Her interests were the 2-inch poplar and the 8/4 hardwood stock that Bob had.



(Removing this lumber from the storage bin made a big dent in what needed to be removed. Kim's truck was loaded down pretty good.)

My interests lay with the stack of what looked like fire wood. Yes, much of it was fire wood, but one third of the pile was Manitoba maple burl. I told Bob that I would clean up the whole pile for him. So, with the help of Kim's kids, we sorted the burl and the fire wood. My truck filled up fast and I needed to return for another load a couple of days later. While the grain bin where the wood was stored was not empty, we had made a sizeable dent in it.



(No place left to put this stuff, I put it in the front of my trailer.)

So, we left Bob's place with our new found treasures and when I got home, I had no idea

where I was going to store the burl. The fire wood got dropped off at an elderly couple's place to be used to heat their house. They really appreciated the free dry fire wood.

I realized that if I clamped a sheet of plywood to the sides of my trailer, I could put the burls under it and keep them dry. Once I get my lumber storage in my grandkid's clubhouse done, there will be room for it in there, I hope. My temporary storage situation is not great, but it will work for now.



(Temporary rain proof storage in the front of my trailer. I need to move these to another place as soon as possible.)

A couple of days later, I went back to Bob's place to clean up the rest of the firewood. It was the big moving day for Bob and his wife, so there were lots of people there. I knew most of them, had taught many of them and had a great time catching up. I loaded all the remaining wood and dropped it where I dropped off the first batch of firewood. That ended my involvement with Bob for now.

Bob had hoped to wood turn in retirement. He has turned a bit, mostly making furniture parts. I encouraged him to try left-hand turning and invited him to my shop to turn to see if left-handed turning works for him. Hopefully he can make that work.

In The End:

One never knows how much time one will have to enjoy our hobbies. Bob's life changed in an instant and everyone will eventually leave this

earth. Passing on your collection of wood to the next generation is a good thing. You may not realize a lot of profit from passing it on, but you are leaving a legacy that could give a real boost to the next generation of woodworkers.