



# WOOD CASTLE FURNITURE

*"fine people making fine furniture"  
- since 1978 -*

# Times

Spring 2005

Volume IV: No. 2

## *Beyond the Sawdust...*

Ron Loe: President

## West Meets East

Collection inspiration begins at  
Grandpa's house



*Harmony (n.) 1. The simultaneous combination of musical notes resulting in more complex but pleasing sounds.*

The design of our newest introduction, the Reflections Collection, began quite literally in my childhood.

Our family occasionally visited my great-grandfather's home in Silverton, a dreamy hamlet in the heavily forested hills east of Salem, Oregon. Years later I would learn his house was a fine specimen of the American Bungalow movement. This movement enjoyed popularity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I can still "see" the unpainted exposed timber and shingle siding, the mullioned windows, and the shallow-pitch rooflines. His bungalow was unadorned and practical, yet elegant in proportion and line.

The style continued inside the house. I remember the living room's built-in cabinets and their wrought iron pulls. Ceiling beams, wainscoting and hardwood floors gave the room a feeling of quiet. Great-granddad's Mission-style furniture, of course, blended in perfectly, since it, too, was a child of the American Bungalow movement.

My appreciation of house and furniture design continued to grow as I did. A design that captured me as an adult was a style loosely dubbed "Shinto." Shinto broadly defines a specific Japanese cultural belief system that reflects the Buddhist life-values of purity, sincerity and harmony. The Shinto "way" is well revealed in its furniture. Its balanced, unadorned lines and natural woods, mirror the philosophy perfectly.

Clean, balanced, unadorned, practical, harmonious: I found the parallels between American Bungalow (Mission) and Japanese Shinto are uncanny.

With the help of Frank Schoorl, our VP of manufacturing and our expert in computer-aided design (see associated Team Castle article), we came up with a collection design that stirs together elements from Bungalow and Shinto. Our Reflections Collection is, I believe, one of the most exciting, clean, and pure designs we've ever introduced. True harmony, indeed.

**NEW!**



# REFLECTIONS

**WOW!**

**F**ew designs have inspired as much "buzz" as our latest, the Reflections Collection.

With hints of Japanese Shinto and American Shaker and Bungalow styles (see Ron's comments on the left), we're confident Reflections will be one of the best-received new lines we've ever introduced.

All cherry, the collection features our typical assortment of case goods. Two styles of beds are offered. The Reflections panel bed is dramatic in its unusual design: slightly tapered posts evoke feelings of stability and strength. The headboard's center accent, of figured Oregon Maple, offers elegant counterpoint to the cinnamon-burgundy tones the cherry takes on as it ages. A low-profile footboard and a "euro-slat" (mattress only) system are standard with this bed.

The other bed style is the all-cherry spindle. Identical to the Cascadia Collection's spindle bed, this bed affords the line a conventional bed frame option for those who prefer a box-springs-and-mattress configuration. As with Cascadia beds, a low-profile footboard is an option.

All the case goods sport genuine Mackintosh black hardware (see article on back). The armoire, perhaps the most stunning piece of the collection, is accented with graceful crown molding beneath the top. Behind the doors are two adjustable shelves and an aromatic cedar back panel.

While Reflections is new and unique, we believe its understated lines will work well in any décor. The finish is our new low-luster lacquer, featuring a five-percent wax component.

The floor displays are scheduled to ship to stores near the end of April. We welcome and appreciate your comments. Wow! or otherwise.



MEET  
THE  
**Team**  
WOOD CASTLE

**Frank Schoorl**  
snowboard to keyboard

A few years ago, Wood Castle's vice president of production, Frank Schoorl, tried his first-time luck snowboarding with his kids.

The outing came to prove two things. First: A 40-something man who stands six-four falls hard. Very hard.

Second: a 40-something man with "a blasted disc, three broken ribs and man-sized embarrassment" can maximize his recuperation time learning the wonders of AutoCAD, a computer-based design program for simplifying furniture design and prototyping.

Frank, whose résumé includes college football player, teen-disco jockey, framing carpenter and UPS driver, today spends at least twenty percent of his Wood Castle hours navigating the digital world of AutoCAD furniture design. "An amazing tool," Frank says as he maneuvers his mouse to highlight an item on his screen.

That's not the way it used to be. When Frank gave notice to UPS in 1984 and began full time with Ron Loe, president of Wood Castle Furniture, furniture design began over restaurant lunches. Ron's napkin sketches started the process. Frank, a quick study, could translate pencil marks into actual wood parts.

"It was a trial-and-error process, where I'd cut and fit until I'd get my 'mule-ie' — a prototype that worked," Frank explains. From that success, the remainder of the collection was relatively quickly designed, drawn up and prototyped. With luck, the process could take upwards of two weeks.

Frank continues: "With AutoCAD, I first translate Ron's sketches to digital lines and specifications." After twenty-one years working side-by-side, "all I need from Ron are basic design concepts; he trusts me with fleshing out all the details across the collection."

"Once I've 'built' it in AutoCAD," Frank explains, "it's easy to tweak for any reason before the sawdust flies. Even better, now we can easily publish or archive computer files that used to be kept in my (or Ron's) head."

Today, the napkin-to-prototype process is a matter of a few days. Frank concluded: "Digital is the way to go; it's error-free the first time."

Away from the computer, Frank manages operations on our factory floor. At any one time, up to forty employees are under his guidance.

At home things are simpler. Sort of. Lisa, 20, lives on her own; Jake, 17 and still at home, needs minimal parenting. Frank and his wife Sherry maximize their parenting skills with dogs — Bernese Mountain dogs (visualize BIG), which they've bred for several years.

This breed's history harkens to the snowy villages of Switzerland where the Romans brought them millennia ago. That heritage may be as close a Frank wants to get to snowy slopes. Unless he can figure a way to virtually snowboard with AutoCad.

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is published quarterly.  
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•• MACKINTOSH ••  
THE HARDWARE • THE MAN

The hardware adorning our new Reflections Collection is a reproduction of an enduring design created by one of the most distinguished architects and designers of the modern era.

Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) broke away in new directions for his time. Collaborating within a famous foursome (one of whom became his wife), he earned an international reputation for unusual designs of poster art, crafts and furnishings. Ignoring the heavy ornamentation popular in Europe, Mackintosh aspired to create designs more relevant to his country. His revival of Scottish Baronial design carefully integrated architectural design elements — exterior as well as interior — with his unique designs of furnishings and metalwork.

The drawer and door pulls Wood Castle has chosen are classic Mackintosh (note especially the two groups of 4 squares on either side of the handle in the illustration above). These pulls gained wide use during the Arts and Crafts period of the early 20th century when strong and sturdy furniture (e.g., Mission style) became available and affordable for the growing middle class, especially in the United States.

Mackintosh hardware is a perfect fit for the Reflections line. With respect and reverence, it looks back at the Arts and Crafts era in America. At the same time, the collection's design is relevant to today's demand for simple lines, beauty and strength. Charles Rennie Mackintosh would approve.

## New Finish. Less Work.

Wood Castle's collections now feature **an improved finish** that features easier care and enhanced rendering of color and grain. • **Less work.** A five-percent wax component added to a clear lacquer gives the finish a hand-rubbed look, silky smooth to the touch. Along with great protection of the underlying wood, the lower-luster finish helps hide minor scratches and dust, making routine cleaning easier. • **Care for the finish** remains easy: routine damp-cloth dusting, suffices. Commercial preparations, such as Orange Oil, may be applied as needed. • **Old versus new.** Our new finish should blend well with our previous clear finish. Luster difference should be minimal. Natural color-aging is unaffected.

## Six Fast Stats

### wood furniture: comings and goings

- #1: 2004: U.S. imports of wood household furniture = \$9.5 billion (U.S. Customs valuation). Increase since 1996 = 301%.
  - #2: 2004: U.S. exports of wood household furniture = \$946 million (FAS value at port of export). Increase since 1996 = 146%.
  - #3: 2004: U.S. imports of wood household furniture from China = \$4.2 billion (44% of all imports; see Stat #1).
  - #4: 2003-2004: U.S. imports of wood household furniture from China up 16%, \$3.6 billion to \$4.2 billion.
  - #5: 2003-2004: U.S. exports of wood household furniture to China up 23%, \$5.8 million to \$7.1 million.
- And the fastest growing exporter to the U.S.:**
- #6: 2003-2004: U.S. imports of wood household furniture from Vietnam up 117%, \$1.5 million to \$3.2 million.

Statistics cited are from U.S. Dept. of Commerce web sites. See <http://www.ita.doc.gov/td/ocg/imp2511.htm> and <http://www.ita.doc.gov/td/ocg/exp2511.htm>.