



WOOD CASTLE FURNITURE

Times

"fine people making fine furniture"
- since 1978 -

Summer 2004

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Beyond the Sawdust...

Ron Loe: President, Wood Castle

A new mission: Pride of ownership

A revelation came to me the other day as I walked some visitors through our factory.

Over the din of the machinery, I shouted, "Our mission is to handcraft great hardwood furniture that'll outlive your family."

That's been our promise since 1978, I added, and we've backed it by both a lifetime warranty and continuous improvement. They nodded and smiled as we continued the tour.

What I realized was this: Yes, we craft great wood furniture. But that's not our main mission. What we really do is build pride of ownership.

Let me explain. There are many manufacturers whose "bottom line" is, well, just that: their bottom line. Whatever it takes to please shareholders or bankers. Their products are usually commodities. Operations move offshore, if necessary, to cut costs. Consumers walk through Big Box stores and buy with glee, "saving" big time.

But none of these products is a keepsake, an heirloom, a cherished family possession. There is no pride of ownership built in.

Wood Castle Furniture's bottom line is not primarily financial. I mean this sincerely. More important than a focus on profit is our commitment to excellence. "How can we do it better?" is one of the most often asked - and acted upon - questions in our organization. We manage manufacturing costs by offering production bonuses, continuously improving our information systems, and staying current on new technologies to augment craftsmanship.

Equally important in our quest for excellence is our partnership with carefully chosen national retailers. Their knowledge, experience and one-on-one attention to consumers help convey Wood Castle's commitment to quality and service.

We manufacture keepsake furniture. We build future heirlooms. We make cherished family possessions. Knowledgeable consumers acquire and keep Wood Castle furniture not so much because it is fairly priced but primarily because it is excellent.

On the next tour I'll restate our mission: "Wood Castle Furniture builds pride of ownership. Along the way, we handcraft the best wood furniture in America."



STATE OF THE ART CHOP SAW INSTALLED

mark. scan. compute. chop. chop. chop.

In our continued quest for excellence, Wood Castle recently installed a state-of-the-art cross-cut "chop" saw. The German-made Paul (brand) PushCut CX features computerized numerical control (CNC) to streamline workflows and increase accuracy. The best chop saw in the industry, the PushCut CX demonstrates Wood Castle Furniture's commitment to excellence. But there's much more to this story. Read on.

One of the newest members to the Wood Castle team is Pat Green. His considerable experience and expertise in information systems was key to the installation of a wireless communications network in the factory. A dedicated PC installed on the network near the PushCut CX stores and manages cut list files for the PushCut CX. New or updated cut lists are uploaded and managed effortlessly from anywhere on the network using relatively simple Internet tools. Read on.

The PushCut CX, in turn, downloads from the local PC the next cut list in the PC's queue. The operator, needing no paperwork instructions, initiates a cutting session by a touch screen or a switch rod mounted on the PushCut CX. The cutting session concludes once all called-for lengths are produced. The software included with the PushCut CX is capable of instantaneously deciding optimum cutting strategies dynamically. As multiple lengths in the cut list are produced, the program "knows" which lengths to prioritize as the session nears its end. Virtually the only waste is that due by defects in the lumber. Read on.

A unique feature of the saw is an optical scanner integrated into the pusher bar assembly. Using a special crayon, the operator marks defective areas on the

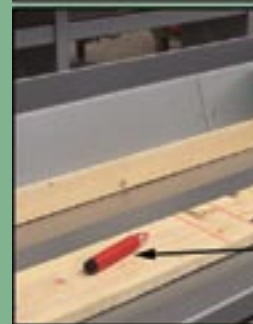
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the Paul PushCut CX CNC Chop Saw



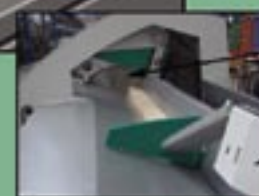
CNC Control Monitor:
The touch screen allows operator control of the PushCut CX. Displays real-time yield on current cut list.

Pusher Bar: After scanning for deflecting marks, pusher bar guides material into saw.



Crayon Deflecting Marks: Scanner "sees" operator's marks and automatically determines optimum cuts between bracketing marks.

Crayon: Operator brackets defects using special marking crayon.



Saw: CNC-driven saw automatically cross-cuts according to cut list input over wireless internet connection.

Optical Scanner: Scanner reads material length and deflecting crayon marks. This information automatically adjusts current cut list program, maximizing yields.



MEET THE TEAM WOOD CASTLE

Jerry Boal Editor and Weatherman

Editor: So, Jerry: you're the editor of the *Wood Castle Times*, and you're pretty familiar with yourself. But what about *Wood Castle Times* readers? Whaddya say we do a bio for them?

Jerry: Sure, why not – it's a nice day.

Editor: From the beginning: where/when were you born?

Jerry: Alongside my identical twin, Jeff (who lives in Sebastapol, Cal.), I was dropped-shipped by stork to my parents in Los Angeles. It was April 1944. Mom said the weather was nice that day.

Editor: California to Oregon. What happened?

Jerry: Our little house was directly under smoggy skies and the planes landing at LAX. Did school half time: the other half was waiting for the jet noise to clear. College in Santa Barbara (UCSB), then the Peace Corps. Returned and married Eileen, who was born in Eugene. So, in 1974 we I became a California ex-pat and sneaked into Oregon with my wife. We wanted to live where I could safely ride a bike to work. And not hear jets. And breathe. It was 1974, March. Nice weather, as I recall.

Editor: What happened next?

Jerry: A print shop job, a used Nishiki 10-speed, and two sons.

Editor: Printing, eh?

Jerry: Over twenty years putting ink on paper, a few as co-owner. Helped usher in digital tools in the early 90s. Rode the bike a lot of those years, good weather or bad. Left in '96.

Editor: For what?

Jerry: An MBA. Wanted to try something different, maybe do consulting.

Editor: How'd it work out?

Jerry: Nice weather we were having... I dropped out after a freak accident to my left hand. After healing up I did volunteer work for a while. Then hired on to help in the office for a tiny tech company, developing marketing products among other tasks. I joined Wood Castle Furniture in October 2001.

Editor: So, in 2004, do you bike to work?

Jerry: Yep. I ride two to four times a week. 11 miles one way.

Editor: So you must be really slim and trim, eh?

Jerry: Nice weather we're having.

Editor: How about family?

Jerry: The two boys grew up. One's married and on the east coast; other's an hour or so away by bike. Eileen is an HR manager at a local manufacturer.

Editor: So, tell us about what you do at Wood Castle Furniture.

Jerry: Besides helping give customers information about their orders, I do marketing chores. Newsletters, brochures, product literature, ads, store visits, customer service. I also do lunch. You buying?

Editor: Nice weather we're having.



Shaker ladder back rocking chair

American Design here ... there ... here again

While most influences on early American furniture were European, at least one uniquely American design had a significant impact on European-designed furniture. Then, in turn, on American markets. What goes around, comes around.

The Shaker religious colonies of the late 18th century in America came to be well known and respected for their unique wooden furniture. These ascetic Christian communities dedicated every waking moment of thought and deed to the worship of God. Toil was prayer, they believed, and what they crafted by their hands should serve specific needs and no more. Function and durability trumped decoration and style. Ornamentation was rare.

Even as the Shaker movement declined in the late 19th century, their furniture production for outsiders (to support their communities) would come to impact European furniture design. Especially Scandinavian.

As told by Christian Becksvoort in *The Shaker Legacy: Perspectives on an Enduring Furniture Style*,

well-known Danish shaker (no pun intended) Shaker rocking chair in the impressed that he ordered an American publication one there knew the origin rocker. But the Continent design concept, so elegantly



Danish (Hans Wegner) J16 rocking chair

to the doctrine of functionalism that was the rage at the time in Europe and U.S. Functionalism, like Shaker ideals, held that "utility should dictate design."

The Danish Cooperative Wholesale Society, according to Becksvoort, was founded in 1939 to mass-produce clean-design, affordable wood furniture. Their factory, FDB Mobler, was run by a friend of Kaare Klint, who expanded on the Shaker "stripped-down designs [so] well suited for the manufacturing process." The popularity of the Mobler (and other Scandinavian) lines ultimately spilled into American markets. Danish modern was a huge style hit for years in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. What goes around, comes around. Indeed.

Wood Castle Furniture's clean style lines certainly continue the design legacy of the Shakers. Our Cascadia Collection, resonating with American buyers for over 10 years, reflects an unadorned, unpretentious elegance, we believe. Our Crescent Panel Bed, recently added to the line, is a good example. Though not direct descendents of Shaker designs, our lines nonetheless represent a keen connection to American tastes.



Cascadia Collection Crescent Panel bed

chop. chop. chop. (cont.)

next board to be cut. The board is then placed against the slanted infeed trough, where the scanner measures the length of the piece and notes the defective areas identified by the crayon markings. Once scanned, the pusher bar feeds the piece into the saw section. The software directs the saw cuts on the marked board, maximizing yields between defect zones.

The PushCut CX increases our materials utilization by 10% or more, reduces operator fatigue, and provides real-time information to help us control costs. It's an example of our dedication to improvement, our commitment to excellence. Because of this marvelous technology, we're "greener" and "leaner" than ever.

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