



Relaxing hobby
Coach Walter Barnhill finds relaxation in making furniture.

Woodcraft eases rigors of job

When the last sweaty football player has stepped off the gridiron and has headed for possible after the game celebrations, have you ever wondered how the coach unwinds?

I mean, we all know that Tom Landry spends his spare moments selecting his chewing gum for the next big game and brushing his hat collection, but can we assume that all coaches do the same?

Not all, says Walter Barnhill, line coach for the Hoke High Bucks. As a means of getting away from the pressures of coaching and teaching school, Barnhill works with wood.

If time permits during football season, Barnhill can be found in his shop behind his home (which he built), sanding, sawing or staining a piece of furniture or country shelf for his home.

"It's a good way to relax, to get away from school and coaching," Barnhill admits. "When you're out there working with wood, you've got to keep your mind on what you're doing. You can't be thinking about anything else."

A practical person, Barnhill explains that much of his furniture construction came about because he felt that he could construct a piece more cheaply than it could be bought.

"We looked at some bunk beds for our son Matt's room and I thought, 'I can make that and I believe it would be constructed better, too,'" he says in reference to the sturdy beds.

The beds are several things in one. Sitting in an L-shape, they have drawers for storage, but best of all for Matthew, they provide endless opportunities. When one

Hoke Arts Scene

By Sonya Falls



bed is not in use, it can be an excellent desk, play area or hideout.

Barnhill has reproduced this bedroom set for a friend who also saw the value in such a well-constructed suite.

In addition, Barnhill has created a bed and dresser for the spare bedroom of his home.

"I think one of the reasons Walter makes furniture is because we have needed something," explains his wife, Verna, with a laugh. "When we were first married, we lived in an apartment with a small kitchen. We needed a table just big enough for two, so he made one to fit in the corner."

This ability to see what is needed and then build to solve the problem extends to many of his projects. Out behind the Barnhill home, he has constructed a unique playhouse for his son which is a combination of swing, slides, ladders and ropes, a perfect set-up for a small guy and his friends.

"Usually I can look at something and get a general idea of how to make it and have pretty good luck with it. A lot of my stuff is trial and error. That's why I

don't use real expensive wood. I learn by doing."

Verna, a country decor lover, considers herself a lucky wife, since she can often put in her order for wooden crafts she has seen someplace and Barnhill can reproduce the item.

Country shelves and foyer bench, as well as a lovely blanket chest, attest to her husband's skills as a woodcrafter.

Although his items are professional enough, he has no desire to sell his products.

"Everyone does crafts," he says. "I don't have time to make a bunch of things and go to craft shows, which is what you have to do to sell crafts. If someone wants me to make something, I will, probably not during football season, but I'll get it done."

A native of Nash County, Barnhill has often spent his summers there working on building projects and expanding his construction knowledge. One summer, he and his friends constructed decks, fences and strangely enough, a baptismal font for a church. All of this on the job training has given him a confident, sort of laid-back approach to his hobby.

"Most wood working is common sense," Barnhill conjectures. "That's where the world goes wrong a lot of times, not using common sense."

That's good enough advice for anyone, either on the football field or in the woodwright's shop.

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