

From Where I'm Sitting Back on the sawhorse



By Luke Anderson
Stouffville Free Press

Without the use of my hands someone might question why on earth I would purchase a 10 piece cordless power tool set. It seems reasonable for somebody to be wondering how I would be able to pull the trigger on a drill, a jigsaw or a circular saw.

I can only imagine what the cashier at the hardware store was thinking when I had two courteous customers lift the extremely heavy box up onto the counter. Her facial expression said, "Maybe he has some sort of contraption that lets him hold the tools on his wheelchair. His mouth; yeah, that's it. He holds the tools with his mouth. No, his feet; he must use his feet. I've seen people on TV who paint with their feet."

I felt an urge to explain my situation to the confused clerk behind the counter, but she remained in the dark as I eagerly instructed another clerk to load the small refrigerator-sized box into my van. It was an impulsive decision, but at 75 per cent off it was a deal I couldn't pass up!

Heather accompanied me on this shopping excursion and while she piloted the van out of the store parking lot, a look of confusion similar to the store clerk's emblazoned her face. Unlike the clerk, she knows my limitations and that I wouldn't be operating power tools with my feet or my mouth anytime soon; she would probably take me to get my head checked out if that was my intention. Similarly, she'd probably leave me and my cordless power tools for fear of her life if my plan was to mount a spinning circular saw on the side of my chair.

There was method to my madness that day. You see, ever since returning from the timber framers' conference we attended in the spring, Heather has expressed an interest in woodworking. For me there was a time that working with wood in a timber frame shop paid the bills, and not a day goes by when I don't think about how satisfying it was to work with a sharp tool and create something beautiful out of wood. I may have lost the physical ability to hold onto a tool and power it through a piece of wood, but I have definitely not lost the know-how.

One by one Heather pulled the different tools out of the box while I explained to her what each of them is used for. Quite handy and full of common sense, she quickly shed any feelings of being overwhelmed. With the circular saw held firmly in both her hands, fresh blade installed and battery charged, we were ready for our first collaborative woodworking project.

A design meeting was held prior to construction to figure out the configuration and dimensions of the wooden pieces comprising our project, the flowerpot stand. I addressed important issues like how the stand should be braced in order for it not to fall down, while Heather described how she wanted the stand to look.

Using a pen held in my mouth, I sketched out the design on a piece of paper. With the plans laid out on my lap, we sorted through some scrap pieces of wood that had been lying around and selected a few to get us started.

Directing people how to do things is a skill I have developed over the last four years and one I use every day. From brushing my teeth to cooking my dinner,

I have learned how to describe how I would like something done and the steps it will take to do it. So with an emphasis on safety and the proper technique of holding a piece of wood securely on a sturdy surface, I described to Heather how to cut the pieces to the right size.

Soon sawdust was flying, the smell of freshly cut wood was in the air, and my insides flooded with that old feeling I used to get while working in the shop. What made the experience even more exciting was the look of fulfillment on Heather's face when she put the saw down, inspected the cut she had made and blew away the residual shavings.

The flower pot stand turned out great, and since then we have built a small table which doubles as a bench and our latest wooden creation, a step stool. You know that saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words": It's true. When words don't work the pen and paper come out. Sketching with my mouth and finding diagrams in a woodworking book Heather got for her birthday allow us to understand what we are both talking about.

I had long ago ruled out ever being able to do woodwork again as I figured any variation other than that which I was used to just wouldn't do it for me. I was scared of being frustrated and disappointed.

Whether it's a flowerpot stand or a 40,000 km wheel around the world, I often think of what my hero Rick Hansen once said, "If you believe in a dream and have the courage to try, great things can be accomplished."

HARVEST TIME IN WHITCHURCH

By Steve Pliakes

Summertime is over and it is time to bring in the crops.

Whitchurch is a rural area and the farmers make a living from the land. They plant in the spring, tend the crops throughout the summer and harvest in the fall. As the old saying goes, "as you sow, so shall you reap".

Sweet corn season is now over. The corn that you see in the fields is not sweet

corn, but it could be used for flour or for grain to feed the animals. Then come the squashes, pumpkins, wheat, oats, barley, and let's not forget soy beans, as these are all fall crops. I should also mention grapes, as we do have some wineries in the municipality.

The poor, hardworking farmers have to do what Mother Nature allows them to. They have to watch the weather reports, and watch the clouds in the sky.

See Harvest page 17



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