



Generosity and friendship seem to be the glue that bonds all forms of the wood business, from the Tree Farmers who grow it to the end user who produces the product.

The Generosity of Wood People

By **PAUL Easley**

It is interesting how completely honest and giving most folks are who work with wood. I recently had a woodworker contact me from a town about 40 miles away regarding a large chunk of catalpa wood. His close friend was about to lose his wife after a long battle with cancer and they had asked him if he would turn an urn for her ashes after she was cremated. Her favorite wood was catalpa and that is what they asked for. He felt honored to be asked to do this for his friend but was having a hard time finding the catalpa. There was urgency in his voice and I had to tell him I didn't have what he needed. The urgency turned to desperation. I told him I would find it for him just as quick as I could.



With all the years we have been in the hardwood business, we had created a great network with the other sawmills in central Illinois. Within 24 hours I had the chunk of catalpa and he drove over that day to get it. He told me later that he stayed up that night to turn her urn. She died that night.

A loss and a gain; he lost a friend and we both gained new friends. We had



The 1990 Illinois Tree Farmers of the Year Paul and Kathy Easley own and manage Oak Leaf Wood 'n' Supplies, 210 N. Main St., Moweaqua, IL 62550; <inwoods@frontiernet.net>.

not met before, but a friendship developed just by doing the right thing. When he picked up the catalpa, I gave him a few other species because he was telling me how good it made him feel that he could help out in this small way. I didn't know it at the time, but that deed would reflect back to me very quickly.

Three weeks later, he came by with a platter he had turned from some of the figured wood I had given him. It was so beautiful! He gave it to Kathy and then went to our retail store and purchased more than \$800 worth of lathe turning blanks along with \$200 worth of oak lumber.

These are the kinds of people we deal with all the time! How could you not

asked us to please teach others how to do the things that we do. That's exactly what we would like to do. You can find more information on this at our website: <www.pauleasleysawyer.com>.

Generosity is the Glue that Binds Us

Generosity and friendship seem to be the glue that bonds all forms of the wood business, from the Tree Farmers who grow it to the end user who produces the product. They all seem to be happy and willing to share ideas and products. Many of us believe it is supposed to be that way. After all, Jesus was a carpenter and worked with wood.

I had a fellow purchase some wood online that he couldn't pay for. He

blank may be art, but it is just a cold piece of steel. Now, you put a nice set of wood handles on it and it starts warming up!" says Tom. "And if you do your best to make those handles contour and fit your hand, then you get the connection between the cold steel and your hand." I could hardly wait to see what he could do.

Three weeks later, the bartered knife arrived. It was a perfect fit! The finish and form were absolutely fabulous! As I packed up the wood that he traded the knife for, the bundle got a bit bigger with other things I found that I knew he would like. Three weeks after the shipment, a custom letter opener came for Kathy and then a beautiful knife for her, too. I put my knife in the hands of a professional knife maker



love the wood business? Is it any wonder we call them friends rather than customers or that we hug them once in a while? It has never seemed unusual that we know folks who would purchase wood, take it home, build something from it, and bring it back to give to us. They all fill up our hearts.

It was a difficult decision a few years back to close our retail hardwood store. Now we are in the same position as we shut down our e-Bay site, through which we have sold all of our inventory. The transition from walk-in business to online business was a natural and very profitable progression. An e-mail from one of our newest customers today

asked if I would be interested in bartering. Of course I was interested! At that, Tom McCarthy called me and told me he was an amateur knife maker and he would love to make a knife in trade for the wood. Now, we have a deal and my writer's curiosity kicks in and I ask him about how he got started. I came to understand that Tom had been brought to me for more than just wood. He had lost his youngest son, Bryan, at age 23. Tom's world fell down like poorly stacked dominos. We had a connection in that Kathy and I have lost three of our four children. It was so heavy on Tom that he had rather lost his motivation. Then, he started making knives. "A steel knife

and his first words were "Awesome! Why is he not signing his work?"

Tom and I have talked many times since our first trade. I had told him about a Make A Wish fundraiser that I was helping with. Tom decided he wanted to help too, and made two custom knives for a silent auction.

Here's some homework for you: Get out there and go out of your way to do some random act of kindness — it will sweeten up your life! 🌿

To find out more about Tom McCarthy's knives — T's Lil Edge Knives — reach him at <tmacmt@yahoo.com> or (904) 964-7285.