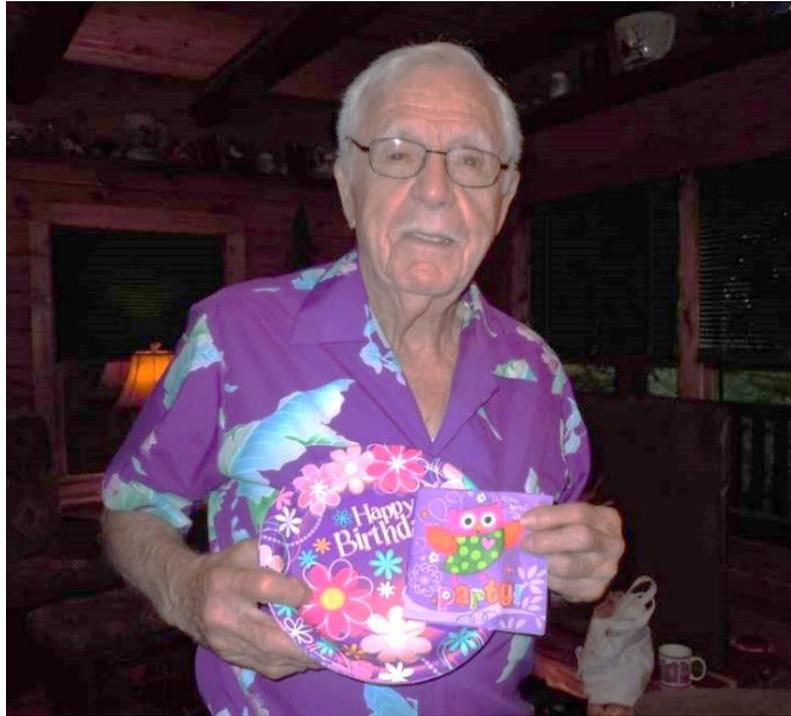


AL HUDSON OUR PATRIACH AT 100

By Yvonne and Charlie Cutler



Al Hudson joined the East Tennessee Woodworkers' Guild (ETWG) in 1985 two years after the Guild formed. In those 34 years Guild members have been blessed to have Al as a trainer, mentor, inspiration and dear friend.

The ETWG constitution allows the "Master Class Award" to be given to someone who has shown an excellence in craftsmanship, strives for perfection and willingly teaches or passes on his skills and knowledge to others. Al received this very prestigious award in 2006 and he was the first recipient. In recognition of Al's contributions to the Guild, the award was renamed "The Al Hudson Master Class Award". As this name suggests, Al provides the exemplary model of excellence to all Guild members.

Al recently turned 100. Friends and family took this occasion to express their admiration, affection, respect and love for Al. WBIR also did a short tribute to Al on their Live at Five at Four TV show.



WOODCRAFT IN KNOXVILLE



MAY ETWG GUILD MEETING



PHOTOS OF AL THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE WITH CERTIFICATE FROM GOVERNOR BILL LEE

Al is a son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, Marine, engineer, furniture designer and Master woodworker.

He was born and raised in Chattanooga, TN during the Great Depression as the oldest of 5 children. Laura Whyte and her husband Mark recently took Al to back to his childhood home that his father and grandfather built. (See separate article entitled “My Special Gift to Al Hudson on his 100th Birthday”)

When he was 9, Al milked 4 cows a day so his family could sell excess milk and butter. His dad was superintendent of a large planing mill and a master cabinetmaker. His paternal grandfather was also master cabinetmaker.

Al started woodworking when he was a sophomore in HS. His Dad helped him design his first 3 projects and he also counseled him in the evening about what he was going to do in Wood Shop the next day. Below are the 3 projects Al built his last 3 years in high school wood shop.



Al made this cherry hall table when he was 14 and a sophomore in high school. He still has it in his home office.

Al made the walnut dining table and sideboard below his last 2 years of high school. Both pieces are in one of his daughter's homes.



Al considers himself “the luckiest man in the world” for having apprenticed with his grandfather for 4 summers (2 while in HS and 2 in college).

When Al graduated from HS, top pay for a master cabinetmaker was 75 cents/hour which wasn’t enough to entice Al into doing that full time.

He recently emphasized how difficult it is for furniture makers today to make a living. Even if you just charge only ~\$30 an hour for your labor, by the time materials costs are added in, most people aren’t willing to pay nearly what these masterpieces should bring.

Al mentioned selling just 2 pieces (a commissioned gun cabinet *below* and a dresser displayed at a past Master Woodworkers show). The remainder of his spectacular furniture is for his 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren and a few with fortunate friends. Although Al’s offspring haven’t shown an interest in doing woodworking themselves, they appreciate and treasure everything Al has made for them.



Al went to UT and studied Engineering. He used this education when he was in Marines during WWII.

Al designed and acted as general contractor of his home built ~60 years ago. He also built the cabinets in his house.

Most of his career was as Head Mechanical Engineer in charge of design at TVA where he designed coal-fired steam electric plants and retired in 1980.

Al builds primarily period furniture: Federal, Chippendale, Sheraton, etc. and has been a member the Society of American Period Furniture Makers for many years.

Al's work has also appeared in the reader's gallery section of Fine Woodworking magazine.

Al considers this double oxbow Salem secretary the highest achievement of his woodworking career. It took him ~700 hours over 9 months to make.





In 2009, Al received the People's Choice Award at the Master Woodworkers Show for this desk that he made for his grandson



Al spent many hours and lots of paper designing and building this feminine lady's writing desk - curly cherry and ebony – for his granddaughter in 2002. Al considers this his most difficult and beautiful piece of furniture.



Some of the other masterpieces AI has built include:



HEPPLEWHITE SIDEBOARD - Ca. 1790
SERPENTINE FRONT OF CROUCH
MAHOGANY & DOMMELE SAPELE VENEER
DOORS & DRAWERS. INLAID WITH
HOLLY, PADOUK, SATINWOOD, LEMON
WOOD & EBONY - MADE 1999
60"W x 40"H x 24"D

spice cabinet - claro walnut and tiger maple – 2015



cellarette cabinet to store liquor/wine bottles



Through his encouragement and teaching, Al has given generously of his time to support the Guild and his fellow woodworkers. Al has taught classes on: hand tools, power tools, wood finishing, hand-cut dovetails, inlaying, veneering, and cutting cabriole legs.

In June 2017 Al did a very informative demonstration to the Guild of carving finials without a lathe using Microplane rasps; all in approximately one hour.



Some pieces Al has made since turning 98



Al with the coffee table he made from Pommele Sapele with exceptional grain he got from Woodcraft. The end table on the right below is made from the same lumber.



Tiger Maple table



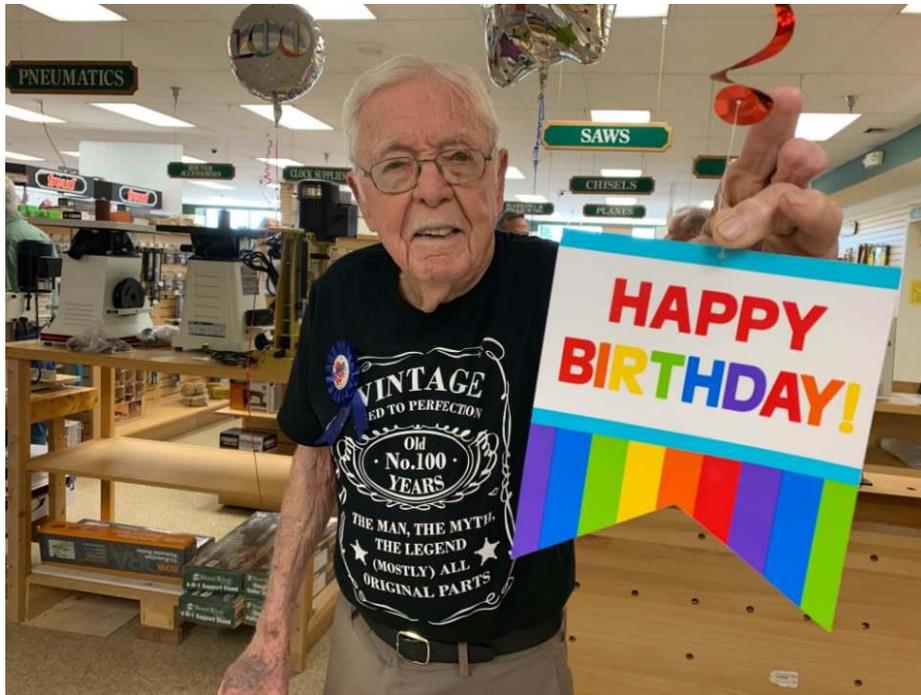
See description above

Al's advice:

- find someone to teach you; especially in the beginning
- don't buy junky tools. It's better to buy a few good ones than lots of junk ones
- the most cost-effective tool is a \$6 card scraper
- it's well worth the effort to properly sharpen tools
- accurate drawings save time, lumber and money
- buy the most beautiful wood he can find for your projects. It takes the same amount of work whether you use inexpensive ordinary wood or special, expensive wood. However, the finished product is far more valuable. He buys his walnut from Oregon, curly cherry and tiger maple from Pennsylvania
- be sure your wood is straight, flat and square before you begin working with it

May Al live at least another 100 years because he still has so much to teach us about woodworking, life in general and what it means to be one of the best men to ever walk this earth.

May the skills Al has so willingly shared with others live on forever.



"The Lyf So Short, The
Craft So Long To Lerne."
John Ruskin

Sign on Al's shop wall: "The life so short, the craft so long to learn"