

## Michael's workshop (Op. 3)

(Written 9/23/2019)

My first workshop was the garage off our house in Fresno in the late 80s, where I built a houseful of kitchen and bath cabinets for a Habitat for Humanity project house. I was pretty low tech in those days but still managed to also build a few furniture items – tip-proof end tables for our family room and Angela's 'big girl bed,' for example. I was also low tech in terms of photography, so I don't have much in the way of digital pics from those days to share.

Our house in Bellevue, WA had a shotgun extension off the back of the garage that I turned into my first *real* shop. It was much more serviceable, with room for a table saw and bench space, repurposing the 1954 vintage site-built cabinets we pulled out of the kitchen in the course of renovation work. Using this workspace, we completely renovated the whole house and built a number of furniture items, including Rachel's 'big girl bed.' Also some scene shop work for Angela's theatre projects, an entertainment center for a neighbor, a collapsible puppet theatre for the girls' school, etc., etc.

This shows the space after burglars cleared out many of my tools and those that remained were packed in a container for the move to our new house.



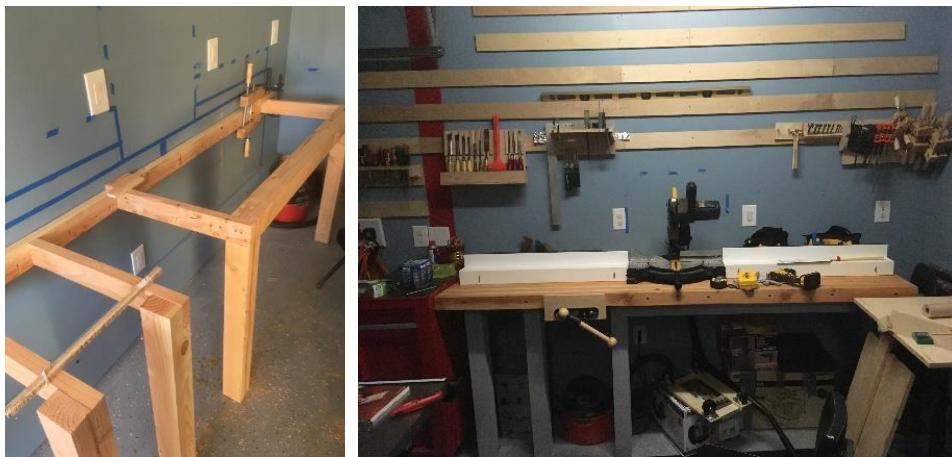
That household move came after I broke my back (note my cane above) and the planning was based on accommodating my new disability. So, while it includes a fantastic table saw, it is designed primarily around the assumption that my work going forward will concentrate on use of hand tools.

This is how it started:



I got the space on the far side of the ridge beam and floor seam, a bit more than 17' x 10,' plus some bits of the main garage. With the exception of the main workbench, everything in the shop is designed to be movable, which allows us to preserve enough space in the main part of the garage for Mary to park her car inside during inclement weather. My first project was to build several iterations of a corrugated mockup of the main bench. This was an early version.

The drywall in the pic above right is what the builder provided. I tore that out, added outlets and insulated that wall (SW facing, so a lot of summer heat gain), then replaced drywall with plywood to make wall mounting tools easier. Then I went ahead and built the workbench, anchored to the wall.



The original intent was to use that bench primarily as my cutoff station with tool wall above. However, as I've begun to use the space I've realized that a dedicated chop saw station isn't needed on a daily basis and takes way too much room in this small space. I can still use the chop saw and wings when needed for breakdown of long stock. The strips on the wall are a French cleat system for mounting various tool racks and tills and allows me to move them around as I learn what works for me.

I built a rolling tower for shelf-mounted benchtop tools such as my sharpening grinder, scroll saw, electrician's tool box, etc. Below left, see the tower, which usually resides against a wall by our bike rack. In the photo on the right below, beyond the band saw, you can see the rolling table I use as a base for whatever benchtop tool I'm using at the moment. Most recently, I've been using the spindle sander which is the orange thing in the picture.



While we're on these pics, you can see my rolling clamp rack which doubles as the home of my air compressor. I don't actually intend to use a lot of air tools going forward but I might for spray finishes so for now, the compressor stays. The band saw I use for resawing stock to thickness, curve cutting of large parts, taper cuts for legs, etc. Speaking of tapered legs, below left is a shot of the legs for my daughter's nesting tables. I cut the tapers to within about 1/32" rough (proud) on the band saw, then used hand planes (below right) to bring to final dimension.



I got an inexpensive pre-made bench from Harbor Freight (below left) that I use as my sharpening platform and storage for my sharpening stones, strops, etc. I also set it up to use as the outfeed platform for the table saw. Flip-down casters allow it to be repositioned as needed. Peeking out lower right of that pic is the corner of my rolling lumber rack.



I made the Moxon-style vice (above right) with purchased hardware and hand-shaped the jaws out of walnut. It offers the advantage of being a very flexible and strong holding device that I can clamp to any of my benches or tables to get the working height needed for planing and for cutting joinery such as dovetails (below left) without wrenching my back.

The spinner shaving at bottom right is from easing edges of some clamping cawls I was making and I include it here just because I think it looks cool.



That's pretty much it so far. More to come soon on the subject of 'a boy and his tools.'