



Gabe's Corner

Gabe Jaen

Editor's Note: Gabe Jaen spent some time with Harry Aristodu and Bill Leonhardt. Rather than have their interviews and photos be lost amidst the usual chaos of our show issue, I decided to publish them both for June. As I've always said, member interviews are my favorite parts of The Woodrack. If you want to be interviewed, or want to interview some other member, please do so. We all love reading about you. In a club of 300 members, it's the only way for many of us to recognize you.

HARRY ARISTIDOU

During our March meeting I was up front by the stage with the rest of the Show committee and behind us on the stage was the members show-an-tell articles. I happen to be in front of this beautiful box someone made and I couldn't keep my hands or eyes off of it. The box had two inlays on it both of an Oak leaf, one on the lid and the other on the front. The box had two sliding trays and a drawer in the front. The frame of the lid had its two front corners made up of two different contrasting woods. It wasn't until I sat down and show-an-tell came on that I got to find out the name of the member who made it: Harry Aristidou.

Harry joined the club in 2003; while I was still president and you don't get much of an opportunity to socialize during the meeting, so I never got to know Harry. In asking around about Harry with the other members I found out that he had gone to high school with Daryl Rosenblatt. Others told me about woodworking courses he had taken and that he was "Harry the dentist from Astoria". I wanted to know more particularly about his

woodworking.

It seems that about 5-6 years ago he felt he wanted to know more about woodworking so he signed up to take a beginners course at Peters Valley Craft Center in Layton, NJ. As luck turns out his instructor was none other than Mario Rodriguez. It was Mario who encouraged him to join the club. He also attended the Mark Adams Woodworking School in Whiteland, Indiana. Well it all paid off, in five he's managed to make a few pieces that show his talent for fine detail.

Harry's shop like many of us is in his garage which his wife lets him share it with her car and a refrigerator. Yes, all of his machines are on wheels or stored under a bench, or neatly hanging on the wall in front of his workbench. Overhead heaters keep the shop warm and an exhaust system in the corner keeps it tidy. He brought out the box for me to more closely examine it and the marquetry he had done on it, the finish was smooth as silk, and the workmanship was outstanding, delicate and yet sound. It was beautiful. I got a new appreciation for box design and construction.

The surprise of this visit was the revelation is that Harry is also a self-taught landscape painter. His home is decorated with several of his paintings one of which is on the ceiling of the living room. Accompanying these paintings are some of his wife's stained glass works, which she makes in her spare time as a consultant for business efficiency and also as a staff member at the Church of Scientology. I can almost expect to see a piece of furniture in the works with the combined talent of this couple.

It was a pleasant and informative visit and I hope to see more of Harry's projects in the future and at our show. It's not surprising since this last paragraph is being written after our Show that Harry got a ribbon for his jewelry box, congratulations.





Photos of Harry's Shop and Work
(photos of Bill and Harry by Gabe Jaen)