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Pocasset Native Continues Family Tradition

Furniture Maker Draws On Old-World Craftsmanship

by MICHELE K. CORCORAN

Incorporating his appreciation for natural beauty with his passion for woodworking, Murro E. Van Meter IV of Woods Hole recently started his own handmade furniture company.

To announce the startup of his new business, called Van Meter Table Company, Mr. Van Meter recently installed four handmade tables and two booths in Cape Cod Bagel on Palmer Avenue, made in different combinations of cherry wood, mahogany, ebony, hard maple, and purple heart wood.

Each piece has Mr. Van Meter's signature mark, which is a center stripe of different colored natural wood through the middle of the piece, called a stringer, named fondly for Mr. Van Meter's love of surfing because it is like the center stripe commonly found on a surfboard. None of Mr. Van Meter's tables are stained so that they show color variations found naturally in different hardwoods. All of the wood is handpicked by Mr. Van Meter and the pieces are attached at the joints without nails, using traditional woodworking methods.

"I try to show people how each piece is unique, and how grain lines, create character," he said.

"The wood is sometimes hundreds of years old. Imagine all the things these trees have witnessed. It gives me a feeling of tranquility and time, and I want others to see; and feel this, as well," he added.

Once the piece is, constructed, Mr. Van Meter sands, oils, waxes, and buffs the wood for a seamless finish.

A native of Pocasset, Mr. Van Meter first learned of the trade from his father, Murro E. Van Meter III of County Road in Pocasset.

As a high school student at Falmouth Academy, from which he was graduated in 1995, Mr. Van Meter experimented with woodworking design under the tutor-age of physics teacher and wood-working supervisor, Peter D. Conzett of West Falmouth Highway.

It was during his high school years that Mr. Van Meter was influenced by George Nakashima, a Japanese woodworker, and started creating larger pieces, like dining tables, which, years later, remained functional and beautiful in the eyes of its creator.

After Mr. Van Meter was graduated from Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in government and international relations, he moved to New York City for two years and traveled to California.

Highfield Hall

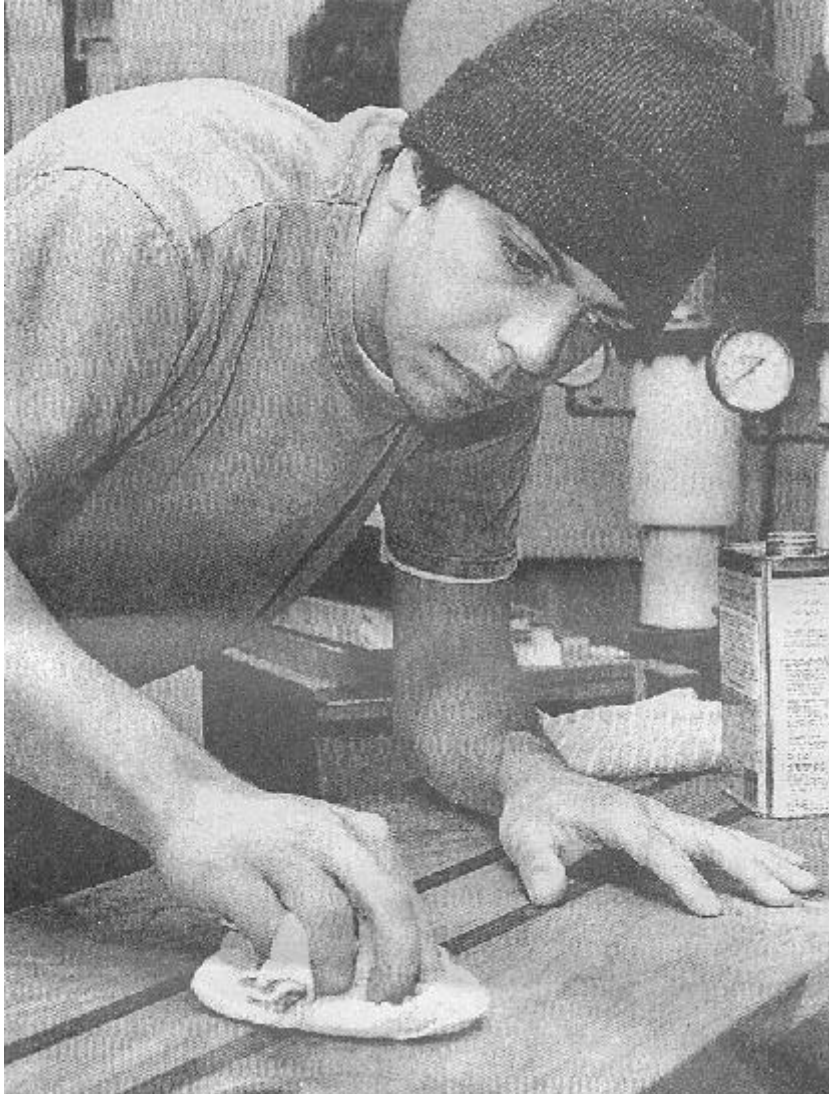
At a crafts fair in California, he saw many pieces of handmade furniture being sold, but thought the designs were boring, and his more creative. Recognizing a market for his talent, Mr. Van Meter returned to Cape Cod and started selling his own work.

Mr. Van Meter's craftsmanship can also be seen at Highfield Hall where he is working along side restoration project manager EricM. McLaughlin, of Wild Harbor Road in North Falmouth, to restore the 126-year-old mansion's staircase banister, railings, and trim.

Mr. Van Meter was recently married to Sophia Fox Van Meter at Highfield Hall. in September. Mrs. Van Meter's parents, Marilyn Ann and Scott Fox, own Cape Cod Bagel Company.

The Van Meter couple put in many hours of cleanup and labor to prepare Highfield Hall for the 150-person wedding, and has since kept close ties with the restoration project.

Mr. Van Meter uses his father's wood shop in Pocasset and the wood shop at Falmouth Academy to create his pieces, and also volunteers at the school as a basketball and lacrosse coach.



Murro E. Van Meter IV applies a tung tree oil finish to one of his custom made tabletops of cherry wood with purple heart strips. Mr. Van Meter recently started his own handmade furniture business. Van Meter Table Company.

(Photograph by Daniel W. Webb)