

## Woodworker Profile: Anne Briggs Bohnett



On her website *Anne of All Trades*, woodworker Anne Briggs Bohnett chronicles not only her adventures in woodworking, but also in homesteading and living as sustainably as she possibly can on her four-acre farm. As she explains on her site, its name is not meant to glorify her for being especially skilled at anything she does, but rather “to highlight the fact that it is a lifelong goal to learn how to do any and everything I can myself or to source things as locally as possible.” Here’s our chat with Anne about all things woodworking.

### How did you get into woodworking?

My grandpa was a really fun guy to be around, but it took a little work to get him out of his shell. He was always himself in his woodshop, working hard, teasing and telling jokes. I loved to just hang out with him in there, watching him work and enjoying those special times that were just ours. As soon as I could hold a hammer (probably around three years old), he put me to work straightening nails and doing little projects. He passed away when I was 12, but he left with me a huge passion for making things. I spent much of my young adult life in Asia, so I didn’t have the space or the means to pursue my woodworking hobby until four years ago when I moved from Taipei to Seattle to a house with a garage. I promptly bought my first tools, and the rest is history: I’ve spent every spare moment since reading, daydreaming about and practicing woodwork.

### Are you self-taught or did you train somewhere?

I’ve never taken an official woodworking class, but I’ve had lots of help from lots of different friends along the way. I’ve been really fortunate to become fairly well connected in the woodworking world, so there is always someone I can call and ask for help when I get stuck on a project. I’m also very thankful for a well-stocked library, Lost Art Press [the publishing company] and lots of woodworking videos.

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### Is woodworking how you make your living?

Yes, but I often like to joke that ever since I became a full-time woodworker two years ago, I've barely had any time to actually build anything.



### What's the most challenging project you've ever done?

There are actually two projects that come to mind. One is the first desk I built. It is the first project I did fully on my own, and I struggled a lot with wood movement and measuring problems – math is the bane of my existence. It was during this project, after I accidentally cut the solid teak top 1' too short, that I started using story sticks instead of rulers! The second project that comes to mind is the custom saw cabinet I built for Mark Harrell [of Bad Axe Tool Works™] last year. This was my first real commissioned piece and a lot was riding on it – it was going to be displayed at Handworks [an annual hand-tool convention] and thus every woodworker whose opinion I cared about was going to be able to see it! That project involved a whole lot of firsts. First hand-tool only project, first time using a new dovetailing method I'd recently learned, first tapered sliding dovetails, first breadboard ends, first hand-cut tongue-and-groove joinery, first time installing locking hardware and first time shipping one of my pieces (Seattle to Ohio). The project turned out better than I could have hoped, and I learned so much. But more importantly, I gained a whole lot of confidence in my woodworking acumen.

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**What project is next on your plate?**

Next up actually is another project for Mark Harrell. He and Travis Knapp of Rare Woods USA donated the hardware and materials for me to build a frame saw and kerfing plane set to give away to a woodworker who needs them.

**What's your favorite thing about your workshop?**

Our farm has a 1000 sq.ft. outbuilding that I originally was planning to put my shop in, but the roof isn't sound, so I had to get creative when it came to outfitting a shop on the property. I just finished converting the 140 sq.ft. laundry room in our house into a hand-tool-only workshop. I have three favorite things about my little postage-stamp-sized shop. It is *heated*, which is awesome for someone like me, who absolutely hates to be cold. It is *inside* the house, which is very convenient. I can pop in and sharpen something or cut a quick joint while I switch out my laundry or I wait for my pasta to boil in the kitchen. I can also woodwork in my jammies, which has become a new favorite thing. And the last thing I love about it is its size. I know, I know, every woodworker dreams of a giant shop, but having worked in that 1000 sq.ft. outbuilding all summer, I'm loving having all my tools just one or two steps away, being forced to keep my shop clean and my tools organized. I find that I'm saving steps, working more efficiently and I can hear my husband playing the piano in just the next room.

*Photos supplied by Anne Briggs Bohnett*