

The Wooden Bowl

Master craftsman Jeffrey Stephenson turns wood into works of art By Lisa Crawford Watson

Jeffrey Stephenson knows wood. He reads the grain like a profit, recognizing the durable, smooth grain of walnut, the straight grain of mahogany, and the curly grain of maple. He knows white pine is soft, and mahogany, acacia, and oak are hard. He understands the water content of wood, knows the slower effects of air drying, and the impact of drying inside a kiln. And, he knows how wood will respond to his cut.

When Stephenson works with wood, he holds it as if it were precious. Because it is.

Stephenson is a master wood cutter, who specializes in creating bowls, which he cuts or turns on a lathe, taking the wood from stump to vessel. His shop, "The Wooden Bowl," retreats from the street on Grand Avenue in Pacific Grove. Its name is as specific as his focus.

Stephenson has long worked in the trades, and continues as a successful electrician. But his passion is wood and what he makes of it.

"My attraction to wood goes all the way back to when I was a kid at a residential summer camp in the Berkshires, a region in the mountains of western Massachusetts," he said. "I got really interested in woodworking and learned how to turn it on a lathe. What we were doing back then didn't have the safeguards we do today, but it's how I got started."

Nearly two years ago, Stephenson took over his space on Grand Avenue, in which he built a wall, dividing it into his studio showroom and his woodworking shop, where he turns two or three bowls a day. "I start with a tree stump," he said, "positioned as it grew, straight up. I slice it in thirds, and remove the center, the heart. From the two remaining sides, I cut bowls on my lathe." Through a window in that wall, guests can watch him turn a bowl on one of two lathes-one for cutting and shaping, the other for sanding-seeing the shavings

flying from the point where he presses a razor-sharp gouge-a chisel with a curved cutting edge-into the wood, shaping it as it turns at 1,500 rpms. He will go through four gouges for one bowl, and later resharpen them

Within seconds, Stephenson's sweater looks like heavy mohair. He doesn't seem to notice.

Eventually, the wood shavings fall to the floor, all of which he collects at the end of the day, into large garbage bags which become green waste or the duff in his buddy's garden.

Sometimes Stephenson cuts more than one bowl out of a single piece of wood, creating a nest of bowls with complementary grain.

"I typically cut green wood," he said, "so it's wet and less likely to crack. Then I dry it in a dehumidifying kiln. After that, the bowl sits for a couple of months to get a little moisture back in it. Wood is hygroscopic. Its moisture content is always moving, fluctuating based on the relative humidity of the surrounding air."

Although Stephenson will turn two or three bowls per day, each bowl takes several months, from start to finish. Mostly because of its moisture movement.

"Wood turning is an exercise in concentration and patience," Stephenson said. "I started this because I wanted to know I could do

it. First it was inspiration. Now it's not just what I do but who I am. Most wood turners are not rich. We do this for the love of the craft.'

The walls of Stephenson's studio are finished in a faux Venetian plaster, adjacent corrugated sheet metal, which he hand-aged with muriatic acid. Wood bowls are featured upon wooden pedestals and a complementary cabinet, all of which he built. The space is a gallery of natural materials, where guests can admire and collect his bowls, ranging from \$75 to \$850, based on the size, the craftsmanship, and the wood. Every bowl is suitable for dining or display. Stephenson surveys his collection of finished bowls and realizes he knows where every piece of wood came from. All of it is sourced from trees that have gone down or were being removed. The Pebble Beach Company, he said, has been a generous resource.

"I love wood, and this is one of the most rewarding things I can do with it," he said. "It is so inspiring to be cutting a bowl and realize the tool is an extension of my hand. I know exactly what that tool is going to do based on a fraction of hand movement. Another inspired moment is after the bowl is cut and sanded, and I put on the oil and watch the grain come out. It's beautiful."



Provided photo



Provided photo





Provided photo

Provided photo



Pacific Grove adapts and adjusts during pandemic

By Dana Arvig

Walking through Pacific Grove on a couple of recent weekends has been a different experience than it was when I was writing this introductory column for the October 2019 edition of Community Focus. The scene continues to change as the months since March 2020 have progressed and presented us with challenges and uncertainty. A walk along Lovers Point in April was quiet and kind of surreal as there weren't many people out and everyone felt unsure about how the coming days, weeks, and months would unfold. Most of us felt that we were in a state of limbo wondering what we should do and what we COULD do! Do we have to stay in the house? Is it safe to go out? We all learned new terms like "social distancing" and "PPE" and the debate was on whether we should all wear a mask or only those

who weren't feeling well needed to have their faces covered. In August, we were happy to see that some of the restaurants had added more outdoor seating since indoor dining is still not allowed. We stopped at the Red House Cafe and had mimosas and a very tasty meal under sunny afternoon skies. People seemed to be really taking in the fresh air and the feeling of doing something "normal" like eating at a restaurant after having several months of only getting carryout meals. You really appreciate this simple experience if it's been unavailable for a while!

Fast forward to Fall 2020 and yes, it seems wearing a mask for everyone's safety and protection is the generally accepted protocol that just about everyone seems to have embraced. The fashion-

able masks are out there with everything from funny sayings on them to political slogans. Bright colors and clear plastic models have added variety and made it more comfortable to comply with the rules. I've even seen some masks with a button up hole so you can drink through a straw! Another new word we've added to our vocabulary is "parklet" - which describes the clever way many of the PG restaurants have adapted to the mandate to only serve diners outdoors. We decided to take a little staycation in late September and found the Pacific Grove Inn on Pine Street was a wonderful place to spend a quiet weekend so we could enjoy the beauty of PG while safely patronizing local businesses and spending some quality time with family and friends who live there. Wearing our masks and maintaining

social distance, we walked down Forest Avenue and were happy to see the stores had shoppers in them. We stopped at Grove Market and got some essential supplies (cheese and crackers) and brought them to the Inn for later. Then, we walked down to the water which is always such a gorgeous view no matter how many times you see it. There were a few people at the beach and children wading in the chilly waters. The Beach House restaurant had a packed house at their upstairs patio area as well as at the outdoor venue they created out front which was nice to see. We walked back up the hill and had Hawaiian pizza at International Cuisine, which is one of Brayden's favorite dining spots. It had started to get a little cold but they have outfitted the area with tall heat lamps and fire pits and created a very cozy



Dana & Brayden enjoy an evening out for pizza and ice cream- Provided photo

atmosphere. Then on our way back, it was time for the last stop of any walk through town, popsicles from Lopez Liquors. As I was thinking about all of the accommodations and adjustments to our daily routine we have all made as we continue to learn about the Coronavirus, I realized that even though it feels a little inconvenient and disruptive and if the end is nowhere in sight, we can all do this. Sure the world has changed but there is one thing that has remained and that is the uplifted spirit we get from human connection, getting outside, and being part of a community. We can still take a walk and get some exercise and support our local businesses in a safe, responsible way. And

if you're in Pacific Grove, you will still find that the residents and merchants in America's Last Hometown are just as friendly and welcoming as ever and are doing their best to keep the town vibrant. Congratulations to the businesses that have adapted and been able to continue to operate in challenging times. Our hope is that the community will continue to support you and we will all get through this together. Continue checking the Pacific Grove Chamber's website to keep up on coming events and activities and if you haven't seen it yet, check out the first virtual Butterly Parade on YouTube, it will surely brighten your day. Stay safe out there, Dana Arvig



Mimosas at Red House Cafe- Provided photo



Darin Matthews visits one of the designated Monarch butterfly areas along Lovers Point- Provided photo

Pacific Grove welcomes new hotel

Together with the support of property owner Foursome rooms wings include a Development, Comstock Development has worked diligently to bring forward applications for a new 225 room hotel that will offer a new high-quality visitor lodging option in the city at the American Tin Cannery

(ATC). The two guest 104 room business wing and a 121 room family wing. The project includes 304 parking spaces on the property, retail space, and meeting spaces for businesses and local organizations to use. Project

plans, applications and environmental documents are available on the City's website at www.cityofpacificgrove.org/

A hotel has been anticipated on the ATC property for years. In 2016 Pacific Grove voters recognized the need for a new vision for the ATC

and strongly supported with a 58.83% yes vote on an initiative measure to change the zoning of the ATC allowing development of the site with visitor lodging. Originally constructed and used for manufacturing, the ATC has been used in recent years as a retail shopping

outlet. However, consumer retail trends have changed over time and the property no longer realizes its full potential. Pacific Grove voters have expressed support for a hotel on the property and the time is right for the ATC's next chapter.

Our local economy continues to face unprecArchitects. The design concept draws inspiration from the industrial character of Cannery Row and retains the original factory building with the familiar sawtooth roof.

The City has conducted extensive review and analysis of the project as



edented challenges. The Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce and Hospitality/ Lodging Group, and the local business community have expressed strong support for this project recognizing the new hotel will make a significant contribution to supporting the local economy. Shrinking business revenues have diminished the City's ability to provide services, maintain facilities and sponsor cherished community events and traditions. The hotel will create new employment opportunities for construction and hospitality positions that will employ local residents and infuse the local economy. Revenues from the room tax (Transient Occupancy Tax), increased property values, and increased sales tax revenues will make a significant contribution to City revenues that support our community.

The hotel has been thoughtfully designed by Carmel resident and noted hospitality architect John C. Hill, AIA, and Hart Howerton

required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been prepared that identifies, analyzes, and prescribes protection measures for potential impacts to the environment including protection of marine life and wildlife. The new hotel will be constructed and operated in accordance with the standards established by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). The Project will strive to meet LEED Gold standards. One of the prominent features of the project is a green roof atop the family guest rooms wing. According to the project description, "The roof's mix of native and adaptive species minimizes the need for irrigation (which will use harvested rainwater and greywater), while also helping to mitigate the urban heat island effect, stormwater runoff and greenhouse gas emissions." The hotel at the ATC will be the City's newest landmark and will be a place to make new memories.

Provided sketch of new hotel project

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B. BY DROPBOX

Your completed ballot can be submited at a number of dropboxes in your area. Ballots submitted through the dropboxes are processed in California as soon as they are received

C. IN-PERSON - NOW OPEN



Early voting is now open where you can deposit your completed ballot or simply vote in the booth.

For both dropbox and in-person polling place voting you can find the best location to submit your ballot at sos.ca.gov/elections/polling-place

How to ensure your ballot isn't disqualified

- Vote Early: Ballots postmarked after Nov. 3 or received after Nov. 22 will not be counted. Late ballots are by far the number one reason for disqualification.
- Read and follow instructions: Fill your ballot out completely on a flat surface, away from hazards (food, drinks, infants). If asked to fill in an oval, don't place an 'X", fill it in. Take your time. Read twice, mark once.
- Sign your ballot: Use the same signature that appears on your voter registration form or California driver's license if you registered online.
- Seal your envelope: People do forget. Remember: Signed, sealed and delivered.
- Vote Early: Yes, it's worth repeating. Vote Today!



Whether you are wondering when you will receive your ballot, or if it has been processed, you can check status at wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov

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and family members who live in other states and encourage them to vote early so their vote is included in the tally when results are announced on Election Day.

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Let's Pull Together

Whether performing or facing a pandemic, Dianne Lyle teaches kids to persevere

By Lisa Crawford Watson





"As much as I love the arts, something instilled in me by my parents," said Lyle, "my passion is teaching. And I realized early on that teaching was not just about dance. It is about developing the whole person." For Lyle, teaching is the family business. Her mother and father were teachers, as was her grandfather. A

sharecropper, he went into the city to get his degree, and then opened a school for sharecroppers. Her parents actually had high hopes that Lyle would go to law school and become a civil rights attorney. Not ready for that, she rebelled and eventually pursued something perhaps equally daunting and important teaching children.

"I share a lot about myself with my students," she said, "which helps foster an encouraging relationship, so they feel safe sharing themselves. We have discussions about life, death, grieving, joy, excitement, disappointment, hope. Students have come back and said the most valuable part of their classes was to be able to Provided photo

open up and learn how to share with each other." That dynamic is harder to create these days, while Lyle teaches dance classes outside, at Caledonia Park in Pacific Grove. Unable to get as physically close as they do when dancing inside, the group hasn't figured out how to foster the same intimacy they were used to. pre-pandemic. But they try. And, at least they're still dancing, Lyle says.

Determined to Dance

Dianne Lyle fell in love with the theater as a little girl, when her parents, en route to Germany, stopped off in New York and took her to see West Side Story. It wasn't Carol Lawrence's Maria who captivated the little black girl in the audience. She wanted the wild, colorful energy of Chita Rivera's Anita.

While Lyle's mother studied opera and taught voice and dance in Germany-the legendary Leontyne Price came to their home and hosted them at the opera—Lyle studied dance. She continued her studies in Seaside, after her military father relocated her family to the Peninsula, and she attended Seaside High School. Lyle met Frank Quilantang when he offered to do her makeup and design her costume for an upcoming performance. Quilantang is exceptional at every

aspect of the arts even before trying, simply because

he believes he is—and he's right. He and Lyle knew they were best friends upon meeting, and still are.

"I quickly started designing clothes on Dianne; she could wear anything. She was the queen," said Quilantang. "Dianne is known, not so much for teaching dance but for teaching children. Her gift is to get through to them, especially those who are reluctant, with her quiet voice and complete attention." In the 1980s, the pair created the Monterey Dance Workshop in an old car-repair shop, which eventually grew into their performance group, the DiFranco Dance Project. The name is a blend of Dianne and Frank, with

an Italian flare. "Frank was always the face of DiFranco," Lyle said. "He always worked beautifully with adults, whereas my focus has always been kids. He is, first and foremost, a performer. I love performing but I am, first and foremost, a teacher. Frank has stopped teaching, but he still performs with us."

In 2002, Lyle established "Ragamuffin Musical ragamuffins."

"My father was a black officer in the military," she said, "so we had to represent him well in our appearance, our behavior, our grades, and our manners. I grew up very shy with a small voice. In high school, I decided to push past that and go out for cheerleader and theater."

Lyle fell in love with Shakespeare and played Lady Macbeth, but her father, who had a different vision for her, said, "How many dark-skinned Shakespearean actors do you see?" Undaunted, she continued to act and dance and, eventually, teach.

"I love Dianne so much," said singer-songwriter Laura Dare, whose daughter, Lyric, attended Ragamuffin Musical Theater four summers in a row. "I believe, with her loving, supportive nature, Dianne helped me parent my children. If we



Provided photo

Project. "Even d

could all have her heart,

we'd be much better off."

co dance classes, but the

loved most.

not tough."

Dare's daughter also took

three fall seasons of DiFran-

musical theater is what she

"The kids always knew

when Miss Dianne arrived

in the room, it was time to

stop squealing and running

around, and get down to

didn't achieve that with

an authoritarian energy;

she was encouraging and

She was patient, instruc-

supportive without babying.

tive, loving and fun, firm but

Dianne Lyle is what gener-

ations of parents and their

whose daughter Erica takes

dance from DiFranco Dance

children call an "unsung

hero," says Lisa Ledin,

business," said Dare. "She

"Even during COVID, Dianne has found ways to teach dance at Caledonia Park," Ledin said. "She knows how important it is for these kids to get together, to dance, to connect with Miss Dianne." Lyle's life has moved her into yet another season of a long and productive career. Now negotiating Multiple Sclerosis, she teaches from a walker or a wheelchair determined, even if the show can't go on during COVID, the lessons can continue. "My message has always been and will always be 'Harambe'—Let's pull together," said Lyle. "Every one of my students knows it; it's a term I heard the Black Panthers say. We can do anything if we pull together. We're proof of that."



Theater Summer Camp" for kids, which continued through 2018. The name came out of a childhood reference. Growing up as the eldest of six children, Lyle remembers how her father used to call them his "little

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Some spaces in Pacific Grove experience constant change while others seem to stay the same no matter what.

At Pacific Grove Ace Hardware in Downtown Pacific Grove, one constant you'll find is the leadership of owner Bill Derowski and his staff, who've kept the friendly hardware retailer going since 2000.

The store began in 1978 as M&S Building Supply, "M" for Martine, and "S" for Stillwell. From the outset, the store set itself apart with a focus on customer service. The focus of this philosophy came from Don Martine, who ensured that customer-centric service was would be the backbone of the experience at 229 Forest Avenue.

"Don was a great teacher," current owner, Provided photo of Bill Derowski

Bill Derowski says. "He taught us to take care of the customer. I learned you go up and greet the customer and ask them what they need. That you as an employee is there to help the customer solve a problem."

Bill himself started working the floor at the store in 1982 when it was run by Don and Richard. Despite not being in the hardware industry, he honed his retail skills by taking Don's advice seriously and developing an ear for what people want when they choose to go to a hardware store.

"I don't have training in hardware," Bill says. "I have training in customers. They'll tell you what they need something for and that's something you can learn. That's just meeting demand. It's what you learn once you know it all that counts." It's with that atti-

tude that Bill has seen to it that his service is extremely customer-oriented, and it is that orientation which has made the business successful year after year. The store stands out for its customer service experience and provides an unparalleled level of expertise to all who cross their threshold.

Walking into Pacific Grove Hardware, any customer is immediately greeted by the first available staff person who kindly inquires what they're looking for. More often than not, they'll also know exactly where to find any requested item if it is in-stock and will lead their customer straight to the item in person and answer any questions they may have. It's a retail experience that stands out for its efficiency, expertise and downright pleasantness. Clerks are never pushy, just genuinely eager to be of help and they only go behind the counter when you're ready to check out.

Bill says this service component is an intangible but critical aspect to his success in brick and mortar retail in a time when the competition has never been more fierce.

"It costs you no more to wait on them like that and retail competition is so fierce now," Bill says. "We can't compete on price compared to Home Depot or Amazon so we have to compete on something."

His commitment to customer service has paid off and ensures he runs a healthy business that relies almost exclusively on full-time staff with a generous bonus and benefits structure that has allowed him to hang on to staffers long-term.

Bill is also active in the business community and has taken his work ethic out the doors of the hardware store and into the business community, serving on the Chamber's board of directors and remains active in the Downtown Business Improvement District. On the Chamber

board, Bill keeps an eye out for retailers and wants to ensure the downtown business district has a strong and diverse mix of businesses. He chalks up his involvement in the business community to wanting to do his utmost to ensure success both for his own operation and those of others. "Take care of your employees they'll take care of you, do the same with your business and it'll take care of you and always take care of the customer. You get out what you put in."

Pacific Grove Ace Hardware is located at 229 Forest Avenue in Downtown Pacific Grove. The store is open daily from 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. except Sundays. (831) 646-9144.



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Pacific Grove's annual Butterfly Parade 2020

The parade streamed "live" on Saturday, October 3rd at the regular start time of 10:30 am. It is available on YouTube. Just search for Pacific Grove Butterfly Parade 2020!



Gavin Jacobi's kindergarten class at Forest Grove Elementary participated in this years virtual Butterfly parade Photos Credit: Vanessa Ramirez-Jacobi





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Mugo Tersakyan Named to Chamber Board of Directors



Provied photo of Mugo Tersakyan

Mugo Tersakyan, owner of Mum's Place Fine Furnishings, recently joined the Pacific Grove Chamber's Board of Directors. Mugo brings considerable financial acumen and a dedicated customer service perspective to his service on the Chamber's Board. For more than three decades, Mum's Place has been a lynchpin of the Pacific Grove business community. Mugo is a frequent attendee at industry trade shows and is extremely attentive to customer feedback, both of which allow him to keep his fingers on the pulse of the industry. He keeps abreast of current trends in the furniture business and has stayed competitive in the face of staggering changes that online shopping has wrought on brick and mortar retail. "We don't really compete,"

what we have, you cannot find online." On the floor, Mugo and wife Talin prioritize clean lines, traditional colors and collective groupings in the merchandise they carry, being careful to keep their inventory compatible with their base's tastes and carefully selected for price, color and style. It's a combination of factors the Mum's Place owners take seriously, all three must be right on a given item or the store will not carry it.

Mugo and his staff are

Mugo says. "Much of

also extremely dedicated to customer service. The moment a customer walks through the door, Mugo rises and asks "How can I help you?" before directing them himself to a piece that fits their needs.

"I don't have an office in the back," he says. "I like being out on the floor. I'm on the floor six days a week." Mugo knows the value of a business owner seeing his customers every day, even if he doesn't necessarily have to. It shows on one of their walls near the door, adorned with seven "Best of Monterey County" awards from the Monterey County Weekly and recognitions from the Monterey Herald, Carmel Pine Cone, California State Senate. and the City of Pacific Grove.

The business's combination of quality products and dedicated service have kept Mum's Place thriving in Pacific Grove for years and will surely keep them around for years to come.

Mum's Place is open Monday – Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. and closed on Sundays. Mum's Place is located at 246 Forest Avenue in Pacific Grove. (831) 372-6520.



Web photo



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Mum's Place in Pacific Grove is a family-owned and operated furniture store serving the Monterey Peninsula and beyond.

Owners Mugo and Talin Tersakyan originally opened Mum's Place on 17th Street in Pacific Grove more than 34 years ago with a modest 700-square-foot showroom. Mum's Place later relocated to their current 10,000-square-foot showroom at 246 Forest Avenue.

More than 50 brands of furniture are available at Mum's, including American Leather, Lee Industries, Flexsteel, Rowe, Stuart David, Stressless, and more. In addition to furniture, they carry a huge selection of accessories, lighting, and rugs so you are certain to find everything you need all in one place. Mum's can help you create the living room, dining room, bedroom, and office of your dreams! Their friendly staff is ready to assist you in finding the ideal pieces to update your existing spaces, or to redecorate one room or the entire house. Stop in today and say hello!



This photo of Mum's Place staff was taken prior to the pandemic. At this time, they are practicing all safety protocols, including wearing face coverings.





Some of our featured brands



246 Forest Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950 831.372.6250 mumsfurniture.com info@mumsfurniture.com @mumsfurniture Mon-Sat 10am-5:30pm