

# Plane Speaking

by Lisa Haley



Cabinetmaker Yogi Steindorf's love for wood isn't limited to fabricating casework. He's also a proud collector of antique woodworking planes – 794 of them to be exact.

"I've always been fascinated with wood planes and woodworking, and my collection has sort of evolved over the past 40 years," Yogi said.

Yogi remembers buying his first plane while on his honeymoon. Since that first purchase in 1961, his collection has grown to include rabbet planes, router planes, circular planes, block planes and joiner planes (to name a few).

According to Yogi, all wood planes essentially do the same thing: They shave wood chips from a block of wood.

"What makes them special are their different mechanisms and different ways of doing it," Yogi said.

Yogi and his wife have spent countless weekends over the years at estate sales, auctions and flea markets looking for unusual planes to add to the collection.

"My wife collects antique tea cups, so this is something we do together."

With nearly 800 planes, the collection has literally turned the garage into a wood plane museum. He has even gone as far as creating custom cabinets for their display.

"My planes have become a nice conversation piece," Yogi said. "When people come over, we look at them and talk about them."

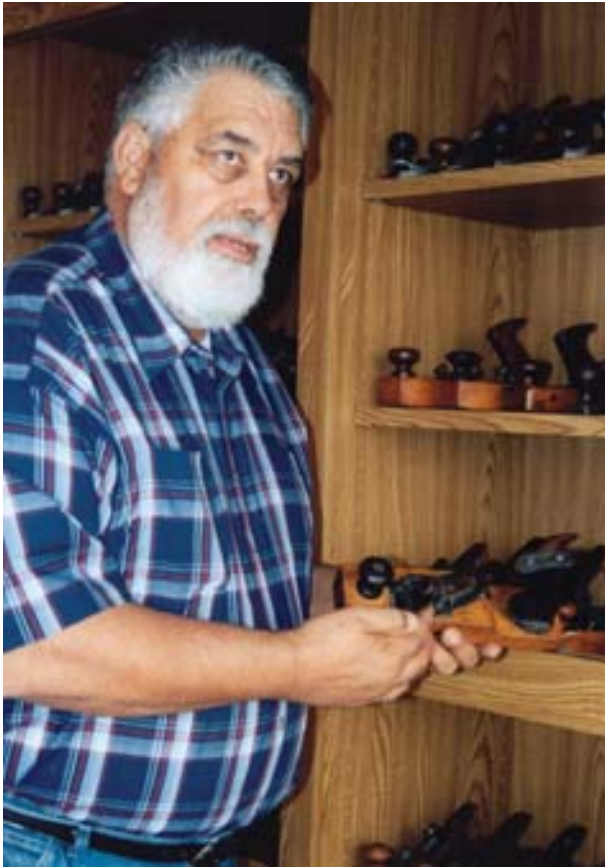
"What's really neat about most of my planes is that even though they are all over 100 years old, they still function," Yogi said. "And every once in a while, we still find a need for them in the shop. They're not at all obsolete."

The shop Yogi refers to is North Coast Cabinetry in Healdsburg, Calif., which he and his wife own and run. They specialize in commercial and high-end casework for churches, libraries, schools and hospitals. In addition, their North Bay Area location has lent itself to a unique clientele of wineries, including the Robert Mondavi winery in Napa.

Yogi began as an apprentice to a cabinetmaker in 1962, and went into business for himself in 1986 with North Coast Cabinetry.

"I've just always liked to work with my hands," Yogi said.





Even before cabinetmaking, Yogi's childhood was filled with hands-on labor at his father's vineyard.

"My father could grow the best cabernet grapes in California, but he couldn't drive a nail," Yogi remembers. "That's where I came in."

In addition to running North Coast Cabinetry, this longtime Woodwork Institute member also sits on the organization's Board of Directors, where he has a chance to vote on decisions that impact Institute and industry issues.

"I've always felt that if you belong to an organization, you should take the opportunity to participate," Yogi said. "I'm a hands-on person, and I like to be part of the group."

The Woodwork Institute gives Yogi a place to share his ideas and concerns, network, and of course, talk about his wood planes.

"The first time I was at the Administrative Office, I found myself admiring a plane that Rob [Gustafson, Woodwork Institute CEO and Secretary] had in his office," Yogi said.

"There are still some planes that I don't have. I keep buying more so I can wheel and deal and trade." ■

