

Barn & Mill Gallery: Revealing the art in the wood

by Jo O'Connor

Meet Kevin Shea – the proprietor of Barn & Mill Gallery and a woodworking master – who produces amazing works including artisan-quality benches, coffee tables, side tables, farmhouse-style console tables, lazy susans, centerpieces and serving trays.

His story is an interesting one. The affable Shea grew up in Roslin-dale, Massachusetts, in a working-class family full of contractors, painters and carpenters. Shea said, “I have always been working with my hands.”

Shea went on to earn his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Northeastern University. He then spent five years at the Charlestown Navy Yard outside Boston, and another five years at the Department of Energy traveling between Boston and Washington, D.C.

Shea then opened his own software company and later sold that company. In his final career move in the business world, Shea settled in as a consultant for the Ford Motor Company for 15 years.

All along the way, he seemed to find a way to do more than dabble in his woodshop. When he was 17 years old, he purchased a 1935 Ford Woody Station Wagon, which he kept over the years and rebuilt it in 2002. Shea still owns the old girl today.

Some years ago, a friend of his was getting married, so he decided to make pine

bench as wedding gift. The bride loved it. He has built many pieces of furniture for his home, which is now Old Orchard Beach – but his travels have taken him on an interesting journey.

About 13 years ago, he and his wife Alicia (a computer consultant) found themselves in a position to both work remotely and entered a life on the road. “I guess you would call it nomadism.”

For the next 12 years, they picked a summer destination out West and returned to Maine in the off-season to rent out vacant summer homes in southern coastal Maine.

“It was quite an existence.”

The Sheas’ itinerant travels found them living in Montana, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. In the winter, they stayed in Maine at Ferry Beach, Cape Porpoise and now Old Orchard Beach. The Sheas have always been the outdoorsy type and have been avid rock climbers, wind surfers and even took up fly fishing. In 1996, they took 64 days to bicycle from San Diego to Boston.

“We were in pretty good shape when we returned,” Shea said with laugh.

In 2021, Shea decided he really wanted to focus on woodworking and set up Barn & Mill Gallery. Business is booming.

“The first year, I spent loads of time sourcing out



A Barn & Mill Gallery collection of wooden serving trays with themed handles. Courtesy photo

local sawyers and then I wanted to use other materials to use for the legs. Once I could get those systems in place, I was off and running... I love working with different types of wood and creating live edges that bring the artistry to my pieces. I spend hours sanding and polishing the wooden slabs and applying just the right finish to bring out the natural grain. Presently, there seems to be a trend to custom-designed dining tables and the use of natural wood.”

Shea has found that his food-safe serving trays with various handles – representing golf, fishing and nautical-themes – are very popular.

The creative woodworker uses numerous varieties of wood such as pine, black walnut, hemlock, birch, cedar, apple, pear, plum and maple. His finishes range from rustic to farmhouse to exotic. To view his handmade wooden pieces is to understand that no two are alike.

“My goal is to create one-of-a-kind designs that

are truly unique and that can become topics of conversation in your home. More importantly, I want to create items of lasting beauty that will bring you joy.”

Shea loves doing custom work and the adventure that takes him on. After taking a look at his pieces, you may say you like “that tabletop” or “that bench” or “those legs” or “that base” but maybe you need a different size or height. Just ask him, and watch the magic happen.

“The art is in the wood – created by nature,” said Shea.

Check out Barn & Mill’s woodwork in Kennebunk at Coffee Roasters, Tip Toe Eco Marketplace and Local Bottega, and at Maine Art Gallery from May 25 to June 7; Portland Fine Craft Show on August 26; and at the Laudholm Nature Crafts Fair in Wells on September 9-10. Barn & Mill Gallery is also on Etsy, Facebook and Instagram.

FMI: barnandmillgallery.com or (617) 515-3690



Kevin Shea in the Barn & Mill Gallery sanding a live-edge piece. Courtesy photo

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The Sheas proudly pose with their 1935 Ford Woodie Station Wagon that Kevin restored. Courtesy photo

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