

# LIFE AS I KNOW IT

## Fence building in Arizona

In a previous column I mentioned making a commitment about taking senior high students from our church group to Chinle, Ariz. We would work for a week at an outpost church on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

As the Easter vacation approached, we adults had to try to anticipate and make provisions for two days of travel to the site, five days of work and two days of travel home. We decided that four rather large vehicles could carry the students, the adults, all of our sleeping and eating needs and our supplies for the fence we had been asked to build.

Peggy made phone calls and arranged with churches to house and to feed us one overnight each direction. Over the years, churches in Needles and Blythe and Williams and Prescott Ariz., were available for us.

When we arrived in Chinle that Sunday of our first trip, the pastor met us and said they would lead us to our work site.

We arrived in good



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Democrat correspondent

time and there was the church, a very old bunkhouse, a small covered picnic area, a barrel of water, two outhouses, a pile of cedar fence posts and one Presbyterian elder, Ned Bia.

We decided that the girls and women would sleep in the church and the men and boys outside in the picnic area. We unloaded and made plans for sleeping and eating.

### Rules

I told everyone the basic rules, especially about the use of water. No hair washing, only the bare basics. Some Indian children came but stayed at a distance from us.

Ned, who became a very close friend over the years, explained the Navajo culture. Indians do not knock, say anything or do anything

until the home owner sees them outside and invites them in. So, we invited and all came into the church knowing that they were welcome.

### The work

The next morning I put every young person to work. I said some of you start peeling the bark from the posts and the others to start digging the post holes we had marked.

Believe me, 800 feet of fence requires lots of holes. Someone remarked how beautiful it was at night there under a full moon. Peggy especially loved being outside at night. After several work trips we finally realized, "of course, there was always a full moon, it was Easter (you dummies)."

In the evening we would have fellowship with mostly children and one or two adults. We had guitars so we had music, told stories, played games and got acquainted.

The first night it finally dawned on me that the children were not going home. It was getting late and we were tired from our work. My solution was to say, "Everyone get in a car so we can take you

home." Driving around at night, on strange dirt roads, stopping at hogans to let kids out and finally getting back to the church was quite an experience.

### Work done

By Friday night we had finished the fence and a rather nice swinging gate. Saturday morning we packed our things and said our goodbyes to the children, to the Bia family and in Chinle, to Rev. Grey.

We said that we loved it and asked if we could come back next year and to let us know about another project. We got a big welcome home at our church on Sunday and said we wanted to do that again next year. Our pastor and a few adults had been reluctant to let us go so far into the unknown but our success relieved their worries.

A brief bit of history. When it was decided to put Indians on reservations, the Navajo resisted. Kit Carson and the army were sent to round them up and march them to New Mexico. The Navajo went into the deep canyon where they lived part of the year by the

river. The army went after them, burning hogans, destroying crops and killing some. Hence the name "Canyon del Muerto. In New Mexico, the water was polluted, the soil terrible for crops so Indians began to die. Finally, someone

in the government realized that the situation was going to be fatal so they allowed the Navajo to return to their homeland where they are today. *Robert Boggus is a retired civil engineer and a resident of Placerville.*

## Woodcrafters

Continued from B1

### Practical aspects

The Challenge Project also includes prizes, with \$25 to the winner, \$15 to second place and \$10 for third. Each monthly meeting also includes raffles, with prizes including coupons to Lowe's, Home Depot and Woodcrafter.

Club activities include shop tours, vendor presentations, member presentations (in addition to the monthly show and tell) and question-and-answer time.

Member John Roberts of Placerville said he tried to perfect his woodworking hobby alone, then found he would be better off joining Gold Country Woodcrafters. "I'm a self-taught woodworker and I had picked up some bad habits," said Roberts. "Joining the club has proved quite beneficial."

### Cool shops

Several of the club members have shops at their homes that are the envy of their woodworking buddies. But they're not stingy with their workshops and in fact enjoy inviting the gang over to take a look and get some pointers.

"Steven Cabrol has the best shop," came several voices, as Cabrol shrugged and smiled.

"There's lots of equipment and lots of room," said Cabrol, elaborating that his wood shop in Rescue once was a hangar with a 34-foot door where a former property owner built an airplane. Club members also said they enjoy visiting the workshops of Cone, Homer Rail and Bruce Wood (yep, real name).

One of the main reasons for forming and joining a woodcrafters club is the camaraderie that leads to a wealth of knowledge, most members agreed.

### Expertise

During the recent



Democrat photo by Krysten Kellum

**WOODCRAFTERS PRESIDENT** Gail Cone offers a look at a jewelry chest he has been working on.

gathering at the meeting site at 4050 Durock Road in Shingle Springs, it was mentioned that a "resource list" soon will be compiled, containing names of those with areas of expertise so that members can pick up the phone or quickly e-mail the expert when they find themselves stuck on a project.

"There's a lot of talent in this room," said member Jim Hunt. "There's nothing we can't build. I've learned a lot from Ron Sexton, for example, how to make jigs ... and Homer Rail, a good finish teacher. And the things Jim Terrill and Craig Milliron can do tuning a lathe ... "

Others are master carvers or skilled at various other specialties; virtually every member brings something to the table, according to Hunt.

"The most important thing is the friendship and camaraderie," he added. "We run into each other at stores and out and about — I went to Woodcrafter recently and I think everyone in there was a member of Gold Country."

### Show and discuss

At each monthly meeting, the highlight comes when members show off their latest work, which could be anything from a child's wooden rocking horse to a collection of wooden gears painted in bright

colors to create a child's toy that is really a piece of art.

Following the success — or failure — of projects the members are asked to share their triumphs and their tribulations. And that goes for the upcoming Challenge Project.

"We want members to be prepared to discuss it — all the problems, accomplishments, stupid little things you did that worked," said Wylie in further describing the task set forth. "Whoever wins gets to be president," he added, to a room full of laughter.

Hunt demonstrated his gear display at the most recent meeting, explaining that he watched someone making a gear on YouTube and decided to try it using ... wood ... and the project was on.

"I made eight to 10 gears; I made them for my 3-year-old grandson," he said, showing the fruits of his labor. "I haven't made one since — the challenge is over."

Hunt then showed a glowing, dark mahogany spoon, another of his projects and its beauty elicited murmurs of approval from observers.

Looking at the gear display, one member was heard to say, "Now what if ..." and the discussion was on, members thinking of

ways they might have approached the project themselves.

"We use a lot of 'ifs' around here, so we can explore all the ways a project can be improved and pitfalls avoided," said Cone.

It was hard to see how Hank Wilson's project could be improved upon, however, as he showed his buddies a white wooden rocking horse with carved stars that he built for the child of a friend from church. But Wilson, who lives in Folsom, said he does have some ideas on how to make the delightful horse even better.

"The stars will be gold," he said. "This is the first time I've carved stars; it's a new thing for me."

Then, with a smile, Wilson confessed, "OK, I cheated — I used a power carver."

The chuckles from his friends showed that they likely would have done the same.

Gold Country Woodcrafters each year creates wooden toys for children in need during the Christmas holidays, probably with golden stars galore.

Dues to join the club are \$20 a year, but the first visit is free. To learn more about the club, which always welcomes new members, visit goldcountrywoodcrafters.com.

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