

Here is my latest creation – a picnic table on 6-12-22. I delivered it yesterday. This straightforward design is more than 200 years old and an American invention. I followed [this basic design](#), but made some structural improvements. The top is a 4 X 8 foot sheet of high quality $\frac{3}{4}$ inch fir plywood. The plywood has 7 layers of laminations. All of the parts are screwed (2.5 inch deck screws) and glued (exterior grade) together. All screw holes are countersunk $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch with a dowel pounded in with glue to cover the screw. No fasteners are exposed on this table. I made this table with my Grandson, Rohan, very much in mind, but also my daughters and son-in-law. I used a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch radius router bit to round all edges - top and bottom and sanded everything. The reason is to protect Rohan from getting splinters or catching his clothes. My vision is that he will use it as a jungle gym for many years to come, hopefully. I remember growing up we had a picnic table in our backyard. We (my sisters & I) played on it all the time. We would spread sheets on it and have “camp/sleep outs” into out teens. My expectation and/or wish is that Rohan will do the same.



Picnic tables are everywhere in today's world. This table was made for the back yard between the 2 houses in Sebastopol; where Sierra, Olivia, Richard and Rohan live. Olivia asked me to buy a picnic table at a local hardware store because I have a truck and could transport it. None of the local stores had any in stock – all sold out. So, I decided to just buy lumber (Douglas fir) and build one. As most of you know; making things is what I have always loved to do. So, I was happy none were available. However, I am certainly not as fast at doing things anymore and my stamina is not what is used to be. However, I still quite enjoy making useful things. I call it functional art – WoodArt.

A table is a peculiar human invention. Archeology says tables have been with us for around 5000 years; but I think they are much older, probably. No one knows for sure when we started using tables; however we rely upon them today both literally and figuratively. Well, why do we have tables? A table presents a kind of proposition to us and the world at large. It offers us a platform to do something. We can eat at a table; or we can just think at a table. We meet at tables to share an experience or to discuss an idea. We celebrate at tables. We negotiate at tables to find a common ground. A table holds a promise of potential fulfillment in many different realms. A table is also a work platform to manufacture innumerable things. We can make art at tables; or evolve a concept into a creation. A table is also a metaphor for holding a thesis, postulate or agreement for a later date – “let’s table it”. Tables give us an avenue to see what’s in front of us and explore what is beyond our vision. When we say “come to the table” we are asking for dialog/interaction with another. Another common expression is to “bring something to the table;” which means to contribute something of value to a discussion, project, etc. We can discover ourselves at a table; and, we can understand others. Our commonly used household tables are usually treasured, no matter their condition, because of the cherished experiences and stories we have at them. My kitchen table I built more than 40 years ago, before I met Susan. It has a history and memories of a lifetime. A table is a tool. It is a simple thing and yet can be a stage for the very complex; in ways that are not immediately obvious. The possibility to bare our soul at a table is ever present; if, we have the courage to reveal ourselves. So, “coming to the table” is asking us to be honest – to open our hearts and minds.

A picnic table has a unique characteristic because it is an outdoor piece of furniture. When you sit at it, usually, your feet touch the ground. You are in physical contact with Mother Earth. You are grounded. Our Mother has immense power and many mysteries. It speaks to us in innumerable ways – constantly. Earth is our home, but also our guide. Paying attention to the natural forces all around us is not as easy or common as one might think. We get caught up in our own theater and forget to listen to the props and forces all around us. How often do we really hear the wind or smell the forest? I can attest to the fact that I miss a lot of what is front of my eyes. When I do pause, attentively, I am always amazed at the beauty and wonder which touches me. A bug, any bug, is such an amazing creature; it has a purpose and a direction. It is on its way, somewhere, a path I don't generally understand. I wish I had more patience to pay attention to the world around me. I think I could learn more really useful things.

A table is not just a physical thing. A table can be used symbolically and/or metaphorically to present a proposal for interaction. A table is a platform to hold our ideas and concerns. It is what's "on our plate". A plate is a type of table. A book is also a type of table. However, a book is a one sided table. It is static from the point of the author - fixed. We read it and can have a vigorous response, but unless we talk with the author, there is no further discussion from the other side of the table. A phone call is another type of dynamic/symbolic table. We talk to each other in real time, just like we were sitting at a table. An email is a kind of figurative table; it is recorded and it is a stage for us to talk, cry,

sing, laugh and/or work out and fashion our drama. Everyone has a physical table or two or three or more. There are end tables, coffee tables, dining tables, desks, music stands, shelves, podiums and many more different types of tables. We also have many conceptual tables that live in our minds eye. We all have emotional, psychological and philosophical tables that we sit at. Tables contain our riches; either physical things or intangible, conceptual treasures. A table holds the contents of what is important to us. Tables are also a sort of gauge of what we grasp and value - what we think is significant. Like any tool, a table has potential and power; if, you can envision where it can take you.

A bridge is a variation of a table; it spans two points which would otherwise be inaccessible. One of the most sacred of all tables is that of our heart in relation to another. When we give and receive love from another; we build a platform, together, which creates a bond. This bond contains a type of contract and venue for a mutual dance. The dance creates a bridge on the highway or the chasm between us. Like any bridge we bring things across it and put things on it. A critically important part of a love bridge is vulnerability. We must be willing to share our weaknesses as well as our strengths. We must risk rejection because of who we are. We ask the other to still love us; in spite of what we have done or not achieved. We ask the other to forgive us. We also must ask this of ourselves. It is not the easiest thing to forgive ourselves or another. Forgiveness and vulnerability are closely related.

I made a slight miscalculation in making this table. I was so focused on getting this table flat and level; I missed the obvious. I made it in my shop where I have a 4'X8' torsion box. My torsion box is a work table, which is completely flat level surface used as a point of departure to make other "things". It is flat and level so there are no twists or warps in whatever you make on it – chair, table, bookshelf - anything. It's a great tool that I made with an experienced friend on a steel press more than 30 years ago. My boo boo was - I made the table too big. I could not get it out my shop door. It was 1.5 inches or so too tall. So, I had to cut the 4X6 header above the door. My siding on my house is one inch thick stucco which is a type of concrete. I put a masonry blade on my skill saw and cut the stucco and then a used a sawzall to cut out the header and door frame. In woodworking, mistakes are always made. However, almost all mistakes can be fixed. I fixed the door frame and it is stronger than before and completely unnoticeable. I felt pretty dumb making this mistake. Life is always teaching me not to take myself too seriously. I found it a good lesson in humility; something I could use more of.



I hope you will dance with me and come sit at my table; physically and/or conceptually or both. My door (a vertical table) is usually open.