

11-18-1983

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "11/18/1983 - Bob Sonderman Shows Off Old Tools" (1983). 1983. 370.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1983/370

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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
 Charleston, Illinois

news

November 18, 1983

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--America is riding the fast lane toward high tech and the combination is producing astounding developments in many fields. But every once in awhile, when Bob Sonderman wants to show a class in primary grade technology education how to produce an extra fine piece of carpentry work, life goes back to the slow lane.

Out come hand tools that date back to the turn of the century and whose predecessors (and look alike) go back another 100 years.

Bob Sonderman is Dr. Robert Sonderman, Professor of Technology. Those wood-working tools he demonstrates to the class are courtesy of Sam Ort, a 90-year old St. Louis resident who was a "church friend" of Sonderman's late father. Through that relationship, Ort donated a superb collection of tools to the University.

Among the more unique items are a circle plane (for use in concave or convex moulding), a shipmaker's draw knife, a cast brass (as opposed to cast iron) spoke shave, and a series of rabbet planes for "rabbeting" out cuts in the sides of boards so that they may be overlapped and joined.

Sonderman has observed the superior hard wood construction of the tools and notes that the steel cutting parts keep a fine edge. He takes a great deal of pride in keeping the tools in immaculate condition and those cutting edges sharp.

"These old tools," Sonderman said, "provide a dual service. We use them on actual projects, and we compare them with tools made today for historical purposes."

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Ort, who worked as a truck body builder for 46 years, obtained some of the planes in 1915 and "some were used then." Included in that category were coach planes.

Ort recalls that he always liked tools and always had a work shop in his home. He learned "by watching other tradesmen" and through his job at McCabe and Powers Body Company in St. Louis.

Advancing years, and residence in the Good Samaritan Home in St. Louis haven't kept him from his work. He maintains a shop and does small repairs. He also indulges his hobby of making straight chairs, rockers and stools from beer cans.

"These tools," Sonderman said, "represent the lifetime skills of a fine craftsman and we are fortunate to have them."

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CAPTION

Students in a technology education class at Eastern Illinois University pose with part of a collection of antique tools given to the University by Sam Ort, St. Louis. From left: Bev Kuhn, Naperville; Jeannie Comley, Fairview Heights; and Jancye Wisdom, Hillsboro.