

FINE PENS AND WOOD GEMS



Tom Warnack's wife says he is the worst retired guy she's ever met. While technically retired, his schedule is full with time in his workshop, where he churns out practical wooden treasures, and weekends selling his goods at the farmers market. As his business name suggests, he sells a wide variety of wooden wares, including pens, salt and pepper mills, cutting boards, coasters, and cribbage boards.

He likes to show off the natural colors of the wood, dyeing only parts of his pens and pill boxes. In order to have an array of natural color represented, he sources a wide variety of woods of both domestic and international origin, all of which are legally acquired. "I really believe the best way to show off wood products is allowing nature to speak for itself," he said.

Tom takes pride in the fact that everything in his booth has a practical purpose. "I get a significant reward from interacting with customers and having them take something I made and bring it to their home and use it," he said. It's especially rewarding when a customer returns and talks about how they've been using the cutting board or a rolling pin they purchased a while back.

The drive to create a diversity of products, rather than focusing on just one, continues a theme of variety in Tom's life. He describes this as his fourth career, following a brief stint in architecture, 32 years of service as a police officer, from which he retired as a captain, and time spent as a scuba instructor, where he met his wife. Through all of his jobs, woodworking has been a constant in his life. He began making wood products at the age of 12, inspired by his carpenter father. When he and his wife moved from California to Vancouver, where she is from, he jumped into the business and first opened his booth at the VFM in 2017.

Since he spends most of his time working alone in the workshop, he enjoys chatting with customers, vendors, and staff at the market. "It's like my quasi-second family," he said.

