

# Craftsman turns wood into art

By Jodi Schneider McNamee  
Correspondent

Blue Pine, sought after by designers for its dramatic look, gets its hue from a fungus that develops in the logs once the tree has died.

Master craftsman Dan Coker, who recently opened the doors to his Blue Pine Designs showroom on East Cascade Avenue in Sisters, has been fascinated with blue pine since he was a kid.

"The blue streaks are caused by a fungus that the insects introduce into the tree. The unique coloration doesn't affect the wood's strength or durability," Coker said. "Some of the pieces remind me of a Navajo carving."

When a furniture-maker has as much artistic talent as Coker, you'd assume he's been working with wood all his life. But his original trade was in auto upholstery.

"I've loved wood all my life and began working with it in junior high, but took an auto upholstery course right after high school and began with that," said Coker.

Coker discovered he had an artistic eye by coming up with his own unique designs

with upholstery.

"I was creating off-the-wall designs, something that didn't really fit into the mold. But my clients were happy with my weird designs," he said smiling.

During the 1980s Coker owned an upholstery shop in Springfield, Oregon, but decided to join forces with his dad who was a logger.

"I was a timber faller for nearly four years and cut wood with my dad," he recalled. "Then the spotted owl controversy stopped all that. But I still worked with wood and was always doing something artistic such as making unusual picture frames."

From 1998 to 2001 Coker sprayed finishes for Beaver Coach Motorhomes. During that time, he moved to Bend with his wife and had a home built on their acre of land.

"I've always wanted to cut and mill my own lumber," Coker told *The Nugget*.

To launch the new venture, he bought the property next door and built a 5,000-square foot shop.

"I have a saw mill and a kiln," explained Coker. "Sometimes I cut the wood down myself and then haul it

to my shop, mill it and then dry it in my kiln.

"It's fun cutting into the logs because you never know what kind of wood you're going to get. Each one has its own character."

And Coker uses just about every kind of wood you can imagine creating his furniture designs, from alder to cherry.

Coker has four employees in the shop and an operating manager in the Blue Pine Designs showroom.

"No one loves working with wood more than Dan, he has such an artistic flair," said showroom manager Kristine Johnson. "He can pick up a log from the ground and see it as something beautiful to design. It's the perfect combination for me. He's the artistic worker bee and I enjoy building relationships with people."

Johnson adds an elegant touch of her own to the showroom by bringing in mid-century antiques she buys from estate sales.

From custom furnishings with upholstery to custom cabinetry to trailer conversions, Coker does it all.

"My goal for the showroom is for people to come in and see my custom designs.



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Dan Coker is a craftsman in wood at his new Blue Pine Designs showroom in Sisters.

Customers can buy what's on the floor, but more importantly I take custom furniture orders that will give the client what he needs."

located at 411 E. Cascade Ave. in Sisters (corner of Larch Street and Highway 20). They will host a grand opening on Saturday, July 1, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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