



Woody's Furniture

Real wood and custom finishing at MacGregor's doorstep.

By Matt Tuers

July 2017

As I cruise down Highway 64 at high-noon, I notice a tractor-trailer conspicuously parked at Gole's Casual Furniture at the intersection with Lake Pine Drive. Having some time to spare, and having never visited this familiar business before that's just five minutes from my home, I pull off into their parking lot and get out of my car to inspect the scene. I'm immediately greeted by a friendly gentleman with a serious demeanor. "Are you the owner of Gole's?" I ask.

"No. Woody's. We just haven't replaced the sign yet." This is Bernis Martin: owner of Woody's Real Wood Furniture of Fayetteville. Apparently, I am about ten months too late to see what Gole's was ever like inside. It's soon to be Woody's second location.

August 2017

One month later, Martin sits at a solid wood dining room table in his finished showroom. The most burdensome tasks seem to be over with: replacing that "Gole's" signage; unloading truckload after truckload of heavy wooden furniture; remodeling thousands of square feet; installing a \$50,000 HVAC unit in the previously climate uncontrolled building.

Martin whips out a tablet and reviews the first cut of a Woody's television ad for a local Raleigh station that was just emailed to him that morning. His mid-conversation scans of his showroom give one the sense that he's still inspecting the space - making sure that everything is just right. Never the less, they're now open for business.

Roots

It's been nearly five decades in furniture retail for Martin. He started as a part-time student working in the delivery department of a North Carolina-based furniture chain. Forty-four years later, he retired (briefly) as that same company's Chief Operating Officer.

"Retirement didn't work for me," Martin muses. He missed the challenges and the relationships with customers, employees and vendors. So, he set out to find a need not being met; a niche not being served in an environment of over-retailing. His customers and employees agree he found that niche with Woody's Real Wood Furniture - founded in Fayetteville in November 2015.

The idea is simple and evident as you browse the Fayetteville showroom (and this new one). Real wood furniture, designs that can be custom-made using a customer's choice of wood species, pieces that can be custom-finished with an array of paints and varnishes, and expertise on hand to assist and advise. Martin explains, "No pressure here. Grab a Coke or coffee. Move stuff

around, change chairs, fabrics, pictures, lamps. We will help as little or as much as you need us. And we love to talk wood."

The curation of products reflects the taste of Woody's clientele who, for the Fayetteville store, are mostly well-to-do Fort Bragg officers living in spacious homes off-base. "Our customers appreciate our timeless designs, the emphasis on clean, straightforward looks. No ornate carvings, no heavy molding. No resin, no M.D.s (medium density fiberboard), no particle board. Just good wood products from all over the world: Asia, Mexico, America with emphasis on Amish-crafted furniture."

For our neighbors in Fayetteville, the mother-store is now a local institution. In its first year, they won the Fayetteville Observer's Reader's Choice Award for "Best Customer Service". Then, in the second year, Woody's won the Reader's Choice Award as "Best Local Furniture Store".

Martin readily identifies two huge reasons for the store's success: "Woody's is led by a great management team. Lindsey Eitnearn in Fayetteville and now Karen Rabideau in Apex. They understand the custom wood business but most of all they understand that customer satisfaction is what makes Woody's exceptional. Our mantra is 'real wood, real service, real value' ... and we're not happy until the customer is ecstatic."

New Market

With a view towards the Raleigh/Apex/Cary market, of which he has been a native for some time, Martin had been searching for a second location there. Finally, and recently, Woody's Furniture

claimed an industrial warehouse (formerly Apex Cabinet Co.) on the border of Apex and Cary to create an oasis of custom-finished all-wood furniture. And what can be said of the building's offerings within can also be said of the building itself: it's something new, and at the same time traditional.

"The building was designed and functioned for decades as a family-owned cabinet shop," Martin recalls, referring to Gole's Casual Furniture. "How fitting that it would now be the home of the area's only real-wood/custom-finished furniture store. The building has great history and we are proud to be its caretakers and be part of the legacy".

But why Cary/Apex? And why now? "We know the last thing any market needs is another furniture store *unless* you do something different. And we are."

Woody's accentuates their wood furnishings with a selection of wall art and table lamps, as well as luxury bedding for their bedroom pieces. From Highway 64 you can see their display of outdoor furniture: Adirondacks, porch rockers, swings, benches. In answer to customer requests they're already receiving, Woody's is working to expand their outdoor selection. Martin says, "We are heading to an Amish Show in Ohio and the High Point Market in October with a shopping list specific to Apex/Cary."

For the MacGregor neighborhood, it's another opportunity to "shop local" ...to keep one's money local, while enjoying a revived approach to furniture shopping that the cumbersome bureaucracy of big-box retailers has largely failed to bring to market. Albeit borne out of forty-four years of refined expertise.

sponsor of the month