

Retired teacher earns the moniker 'Stool Grandpa' for gifting handcrafted chairs



Lin Chucai, a former teacher in Anting Town, has been making stools since his retirement. — Jiang Yichao

Staff Reporters

Lin Chucai, an Anting Town resident, recently presented the local Home Study outlet with 10 handcrafted wooden stools as a special gift.

The 88-year-old retired teacher has donated more than 1,000 stools to neighbors, co-workers and acquaintances over the past 16 years. Not surprisingly, he is also known as Stool Grandpa.

Lin began his carpentry career after his retirement. One evening, while taking a stroll after supper, he stumbled upon a pile of old, discarded wood. Being thrifty by nature, he could not bear to waste the wood and decided to make a few wooden stools from it. Since then, he has never put aside his carpentry tools.

He enjoys working in his workshop, where a stool is crafted in 31 distinct steps. Since 2017, he has created four generations of stools, with the most recent of them having a unified decorative surface and mortise-and-tenon joints.

Guan Youmei, Lin's wife, assists with some refining tasks, such as putty and sanding. Guan, a former educator herself, concurs that it is wonderful to be able to assist those in need and continue to contribute to society after retirement.

Lin began his Thousand Stools Project at the age of 72, with the goal of giving away 1,000 stools in his lifetime. To accomplish this objective, the gray-haired Lin had to ride his moped all around in search of materials. People who had heard of his good



Lin reads a book and jots down the 31 steps needed to make a stool.



Most of the stools are made from discarded wood. — Wei Mingkai

deeds provided assistance by delivering supplies to his home.

Lin crafted 34 tools for school teachers to celebrate the 34th Teachers' Day in 2018. His thoughtful gifts moved the recipients of the stools deeply.

Now that the Thousand Stools Project has been completed, Lin, despite being an octogenarian, has decided to continue making stools for those in need until he is physically incapable of doing so.

Zhang Sichun and Jiang Mengyu

THE history of Chinese bamboo root carving dates back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), when it was particularly popular in Shanghai's Jiading District and Nanjing in Jiangsu Province.

There are two schools of carving: the Jiading school is characterized by subtlety and delicacy, while the Jinling (the old name of Nanjing) school is wild and natural.

This extraordinary art form enthralled Chen Hongming, a former carpenter and resident of the Zhongfang neighborhood in Malu Town. After years of study and practice, he has created his own impressive works.

When Chen was young, he met Wang Wei, who was then in charge of the Confucius Temple Bamboo Carving Studio and a master of Jiading bamboo root carving.

Chen regularly visited Wang to study the intricate art of bamboo root carving. Initially, it was more of a hobby for Chen, who enjoyed carving a few lines in his leisure time.

However, after several setbacks, he decided to take carving more

Jiading resident keeps alive the fine art of bamboo root carving



For Chen Hongming, bamboo root carving is not only a hobby but also an inseparable part of his life.

seriously and was determined to create some beautiful pieces. Every year, Chen travels to the mountains of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces

to purchase bamboo roots that are 2 to 3 centimeters thicker than the bamboo above ground and therefore more appropriate for carving. He prefers these aged bamboo roots because such high-quality materials lend more texture to the carved works.

One of his works, a strolling *luohan* (Buddhist arhat), was displayed at the China Pavilion during the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Through exquisite craftsmanship, the lines conveyed the pace of walking.

Nowadays, the extensive use of mechanized equipment has led to a decline in the demand for pure handmade bamboo root carvings, resulting in a lack of vitality.

In Chen's opinion, the reason why he persists in this art is to revitalize these seemingly useless bamboo roots with his own hands.



An incense burner created by Chen from a bamboo root. — Zhang Sichun