

Wait and See

By Duke Pasquini

Our garage was full of wood working machines and an odd group of memories my father brought home from WWII. He'd been a Navy SeaBee, the short name for Construction Brigade. He'd been stationed in Guam. There was a bag of sea shells which my brother and I often dumped on the floor so we could listen to the sea. We treated them like precious stones, spreading them out to find the most beautiful ones laying claim to our favorites. Old chains and large ropes hung on the wall. Three or four blocks of ugly gray wood were stacked in a corner. I never knew why he kept them. They were junk. Half the garage stored his work bench, a drill press, a lathe, a table saw, a band saw, and a jig saw. I was sixteen and had never seen them used.

One afternoon, my father came into my room and asked me to come into the garage. "Come, I have something to show you."

"I'm busy. Can't it wait?"

"I don't care. Get your butt in the garage."

I dutifully followed. He had his machines arranged so that the family car could fit on one side of the garage and the machines and workbench he made twenty years earlier on the other. The bench had twenty drawers filled with things as foreign to my brother and me as parts for a space ship.

I stood with my arms folded across my chest. "Dad, I have other things to do."

"Just watch. It won't take too much of your precious time."

He went to the corner of the garage and picked up one of the old pieces of gray wood. He brought it to the table saw and cut off one end about 4 inches wide.

"Do I really have to watch this?" I asked.

"Just watch," he replied.

I shrugged my shoulders and frowned. He uncovered the lathe and tightened the block of wood between two blades which closed down on the ugly wood like a vice..

"Dad, I've got other things to do."

"Relax, your about to see a miracle."

I laughed. "A miracle? You're my dad not God."

He smiled. "Wait and see. Wait and see."

"If I wait and see, I could be here all day."

"Relax and expect miracles."

I laughed out loud and he only smiled.

He started the motor and the gray piece of wood became a gray blur.

"What are you doing?"

"Just wait and see," he said. "Wait and see."

He took an odd looking tool from a bank of tools hanging behind the lathe. He ran it along the wood. The gray disappeared and the outside edges slowly turned into a something else, something that had been hidden until my dad began his magic. The wood turned mahogany brown with dark lines of black weaving through it.

He looked at me. I shrugged thinking, *Never let the enemy know what you're thinking.*

He grabbed another tool and placed it on the right side of the wood and began to dig into it creating a large cavity on one side. My stoic face hid my surprise and wonder.

“Wait and see. Wait and see” kept ringing in my head as if my father was ringmaster telling me I’d soon see marvels I’d never dreamed of.

He grabbed another tool and scrapped off the gray from the bottom of what was becoming a wooden bowl. All that remained of the old wood were the two islands to which the lathe was attached.

He turned to me and smiled, but never said a word.

"Who is this man?" I wondered.

He stopped the lathe and removed his work from its jaws. He took the wood and added an attachment to the left which pierced the bottom of the emerging bowl. He stuck it in the jaws of the lathe and turned it on again. He grabbed another of his trusty tools and removed the island from the inside of the bowl before he performed his final bit of magic.

I looked on fascinated by my father's artistry. This was a part of him I'd never seen or had forgotten. He took some oil, placed it on a rag, and applied it to the spinning bowl. The bowl took on a shine that brought out the color of the wood and grain so it was completely transformed.

My father took the bowl from the lathe and handed it to me. “Here, this is yours.”

“I can’t take it. You made it.”

“I made it for you.”

He got in his teaching mode for a second. “There’s a lesson to be learned. Be patient. See the beauty in the all things, and expect miracles. You never know what miracles lay ahead”

I grabbed him and gave him a hug. “Thanks dad.”

I took it into the house and placed it in the middle of our dining room table where it sat for 20 or more years. We used it to hold walnuts and peanuts. I thought of that day every time I saw it on the table or grabbed something out of that bowl. My father is now gone and the bowl misplaced. But he's with me now as he was then a man of quiet strength, who taught me so much the day he performed a miracle on that ugly piece of wood. I still hear his words. "Wait and see. Wait and see. See the beauty in everything. Who knows what miracles may lay ahead if you just wait and see?"