

SJFWA Member Profile

Mike Weatherson

I was born and raised in Fresno. For the first 10 years of my life, we lived in Biola, on the west side of Fresno. After my parents divorced, we moved in with my grandfather on his 20 acres in Fresno. My grandfather came over from Spain in the early 1900s, and my grandmother from France, and I am quite proud of my Basque heritage. While attending Central High school, I took a couple of years of woodshop. During my junior year, I built and entered a 5' tall turned coat rack in the high school Industrial Arts competition at the Fresno Fair and took home the Best of Show trophy. It was about this time that my mother bought a Craftsman circular saw, 1/4" drill and jigsaw set for my 2 brothers and me for Christmas. That started my first tool collection and I still have and use the circular saw on a regular basis. During high school I worked summers on my grandfather's ranch in Five Points, driving and working on tractors. After high school I moved to Walnut Grove, Ca and worked on a ranch driving and repairing tractors, and doing custom harvesting for tomatoes and sugar beets. During my two years there I got very involved in team roping, scuba diving and water skiing.

Getting a little home sick, I returned to Fresno and worked at Boot's Camera for the next 13 years while attending Fresno City College off and on. During that time I was really into photography and was on the board for years and eventually board president of Spectrum Fine Art Photography Gallery. About this time I was running out of wall space for my photographs, so I sold all of my photography equipment to pay for a new engine for the 1955 Chevy Bel Aire that I had started building. I still belong to the Fresno Area Classic Chevy Club and have served as board president. Realizing that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life managing a retail camera store, I enrolled in Fresno City College full time in the Mill Cabinetry Program. About the same time I received an offer to work in the exhibits department at the Fresno Met Museum. Since I would much rather be building things instead of selling, I jumped at the chance. I finished my AA degree in Mill Cabinetry and started my BA in industrial arts at Fresno State. It took me so long (about 6 years) taking night classes, that I ended up being the last person to graduate with a degree in industrial arts, long after they changed the degree to industrial technology.

I have been married for 27 years and have two daughters. My wife had been backpacking around the world and came home to Fresno for her best friend's wedding. Her best friend just happened to be marrying my best friend. We met at the wedding and married a couple of years later.

I loved working at the Met Museum and planned to retire there. The job varied from month to month and included installing robotic dinosaurs, hanging priceless artwork, handling Faberge eggs, and building science exhibits as well as a multitude of other projects. Unfortunately, the Met was mismanaged and went out of business. That led to going back to school and getting my contractors' license in cabinetry and finish carpentry and starting my own business about three years ago. Having my own business allows me to work where I am most comfortable, in the shop building things. I only wish I had more time to build some of my own projects.