

THE EARLY EXPLORER

Custom sawmiller – Todd Tokar



Before he was 20, custom sawmiller Todd Tokar had travelled to various parts of the world and learnt firsthand pieces of wisdom you would only hope to experience in a lifetime.

He enjoyed playing soccer and fishing in his backyard of Belize, the Caribbean, El Salvador, and the USA.

An adventurer at heart Todd shares with us a look into his adventurous past.

Todd was born in Renton Washington, USA and from a young age he was on the move. He spent his early years on a small orange orchard after his family moved to Fallbrook California.

His father Joe worked for [USAID](#) which meant that Todd's family would often move to where there was severe need for humanitarian aid.

Todd's first experience in a foreign land was at age eight when his family moved to [Belize](#) for several months before they moved to the small island of [St. Vincent](#) in the Caribbean for two years.

Following that, Todd's family moved back to their orchard in California for a few years, before making their final trip to [El Salvador](#) in the early 90's.



"I have grown up in many different places, with different situations. The biggest wisdom I have learned is how easy people's lives are in first world countries. I can truly appreciate how nice it is to live where we have electricity, water, food, gas, money, and government services"; he says.

"I would not trade my time overseas for anything, because it has taught me more about life and living than any book, video, speech, or television show could ever do."

After spending two years in El Salvador, his family moved to Fayetteville Arkansas where Todd learnt about agriculture, logging, hunting and fishing, and he also met and began dating a friend from high school: Tonya.



After discovering a passion for working with equipment and tractors he decided to become a mechanic and found a job at a local tractor dealership where he has been working ever since.

During this time, Todd acquired a Diploma in Agriculture and Mechanics from the University of Arkansas.

It was not until a huge storm brought down around 50 large oak trees on his property that Todd thought about buying a sawmill in an effort to salvage the logs.

With no prior experience in milling he set out to find the right sawmill for his needs. "I did a lot of research into band mills and other circular mills. It took me about a year to decide on what to buy. After speaking to people in the industry and watching demo videos I knew a band saw was not for me."



He spoke to multiple reps and sawmill-owners and found that "each mill had pros and cons but after speaking to Russ Wilkins, and Aaron from Peterson Sawmills, I knew the Peterson WPF was the way to go."

Todd decided to purchase an [8" Peterson WPF](#) in 2009 and now enjoys doing custom milling as a sideline income.

"The WPF is extremely easy to learn how to use. I had never seen or been near a mill and had only seen one operating when I watched the Peterson DVD. I was worried about how I was going to operate it but once I set it up, and began milling different sizes and dimensions of lumber, it was so simple to use. Peterson's agent Russ Wilkins answered all my questions and was extremely helpful; I could not have asked for better service."

In 2012 Todd used his 8" WPF to cut enough Pine to build a 25'x55' equipment barn on his land block; a project which took roughly four months to complete. A friend also built a 30'x30' shop building using lumber that Todd milled from the storm.



"I used treated telephone poles which I acquired from a friend to create 6"x6" beams for the supports, and 2"x4" boards for the roofing. I saved a lot of money using salvaged lumber and

building it myself. I had never built anything of that size, so it was very much a learning experience”; he says.

Todd’s father was able to benefit from the use of Todd’s Peterson WPF also and is well supplied with the different kinds of salvaged lumber from the storm. The nicer boards which Todd produces for his dad are used to build furniture for people. Todd has milled a variety of lumber and as well as using salvaged lumber, he receives donated wood from the community. “99% of what I cut are 1.5”x6” dimensional boards for a variety of projects. The other 1% of the time I cut fireplace mantels.”



Todd really enjoys cutting the stranger, more unusual varieties of timber such as [Osage Orange](#), [Locust](#), [Hickory](#) or [Walnut](#). “These species are very hard to cut on a band mill because the wood is very dense, but it is so easy with my mill.”

“The ease of cutting boards without having to turn the log is probably the best thing I like about my Peterson. Second to that is the fact that I do not have to stop and change blades, I can cut the hardest wood we have without any problems. Third is the ability to cut strange size, and shaped logs.”



Todd has recruited a few helpers when he mills which includes his dad, now wife Tonya and their three year old son Lem.



Born on Christmas day in 2009, Lem has appointed himself as chief inspector of the logs before they can be put through his father’s WPF. Lem also enjoys using the sawdust for his dump truck.

Todd also has three energetic supervisors, Red, Gracie and the late Wallie.



When asked what reactions he receives from customers on the finished product Todd says “since the machine is so unique people always want to walk up to it and see it operate.”

“All my customers comment on how precise the dimensions are, and how the cut is not wavy. They are also amazed on how light the saw marks are, compared to the old style circle mills.”

Last month Todd built a porch out of white oak behind his family home and also milled two large Walnut logs into 3”x8” blanks for a client who is going to make [rifle stocks](#).



“I created the deck using telephone poles as a base, the framing boards underneath were from a red oak tree that I milled, and the top boards are white oak. It was really easy to make.”

Outside of milling Todd enjoys fishing, visiting family in Alaska, or tinkering outside on his 11 acres either in the vegetable garden, growing hay, taking care of his 11 chickens and three pigs; travelling to visit family in Alaska or collecting older rifles.

A humble man, Todd says his biggest achievements are his family and being able to live a comfortable life as he and his wife have good jobs. “I am proud that we can live comfortably through working hard.”

His goals are to have a safe and happy family, early retirement, and to enjoy life by not taking it too seriously.



Stay tuned to see some of the creations Todd’s father Joe has created from the lumber Todd has milled.

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