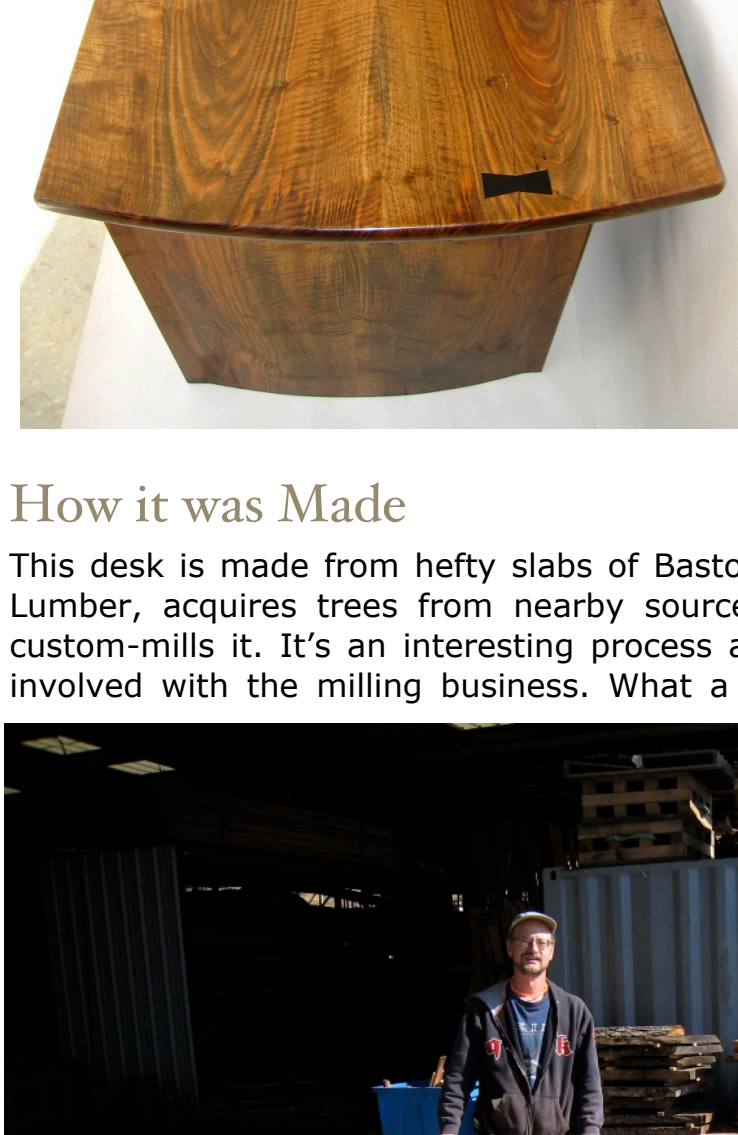


My Walnut Desk (2010)

Slabs of Bastogne Walnut and Some Fresh Ideas

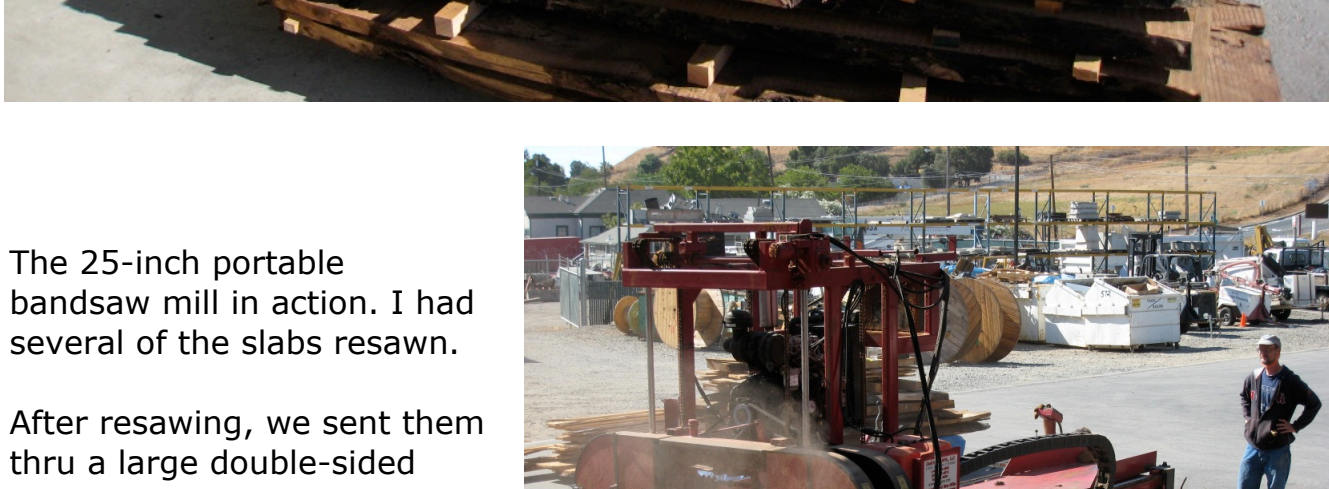
It had been over 20 years since I built Ron's Desk, so I gathered ideas, made some sketches, and located some unusual wood. What I ended up with is Bastogne Walnut, an accidental cross between English Walnut and our native Claro Walnut. Overall dimensions are 71 x 31 x 31 inches and it weighs about 150 pounds. Took me 6 months. Finish is Watco then Tung Oil then wax; some spar varnish was also used on the top.



All surfaces are bookmatched, an effect you can only get when you buy slabs cut sequentially from a log. Ends are coopered (curved).

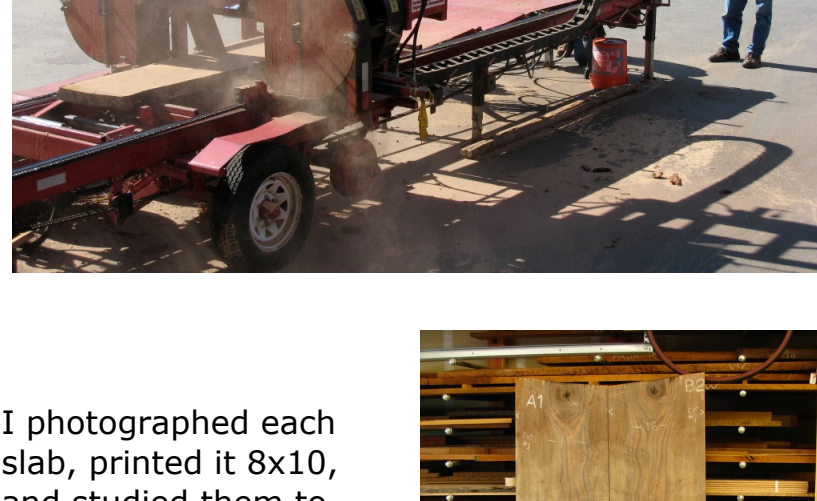
How it was Made

This desk is made from hefty slabs of Bastogne Walnut. A local mill, Cal Urban Lumber, acquires trees from nearby sources, slabs it out, dries it, and then custom-mills it. It's an interesting process and the first time I've been directly involved with the milling business. What a treat to pick out my own material



The 25-inch portable bandsaw mill in action. I had several of the slabs resawn.

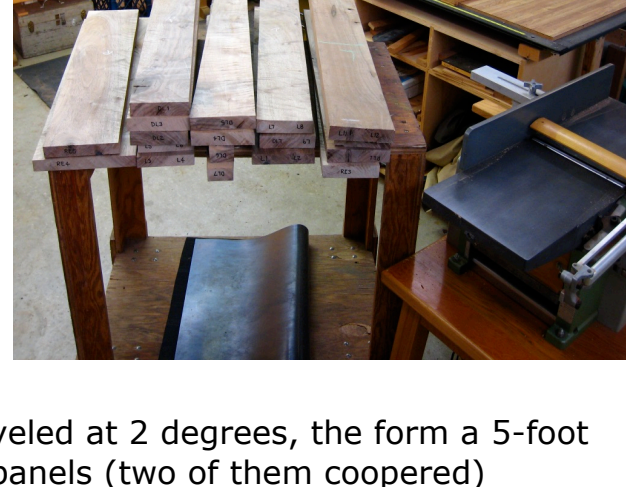
After resawing, we sent them thru a large double-sided planer to give me decent starting surfaces.



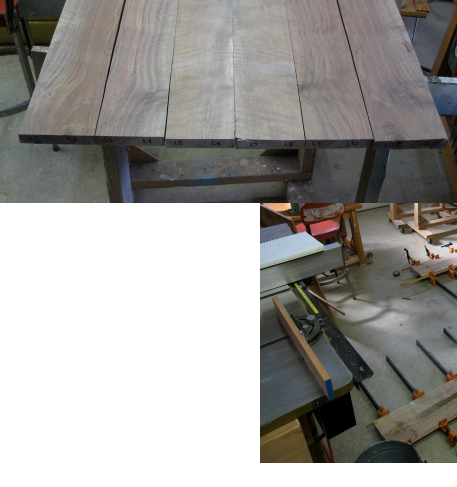
I photographed each slab, printed it 8x10, and studied them to figure out how they might turn into a desk. Here are two full-thickness slabs that became the top. Spectacular stuff.



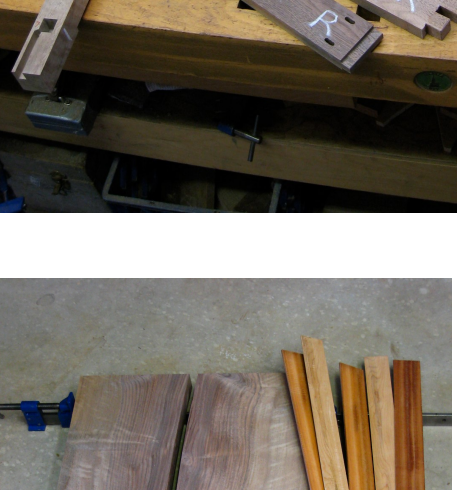
Nominal one-inch slabs were crosscut and then ripped into strips that would be glued up into the main side panels of the desk. The panels are coopered, requiring numerous strips. Also, flattening narrower strips reduces waste.



Here are the parts for one of the sides. Beveled at 2 degrees, the form a 5-foot radius when glued up. A total of five such panels (two of them coopered) occupied all my clamps for quite a while.

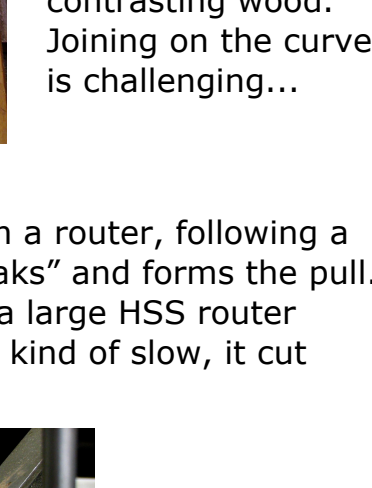
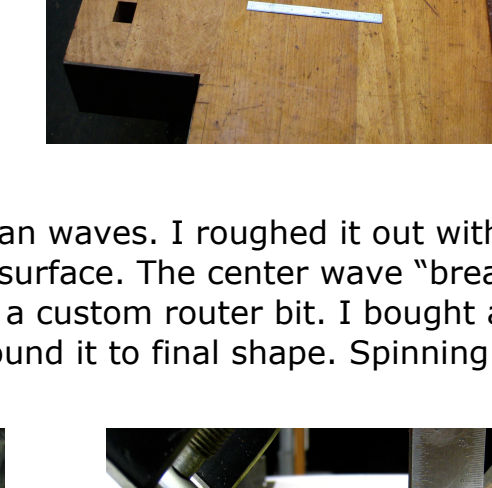
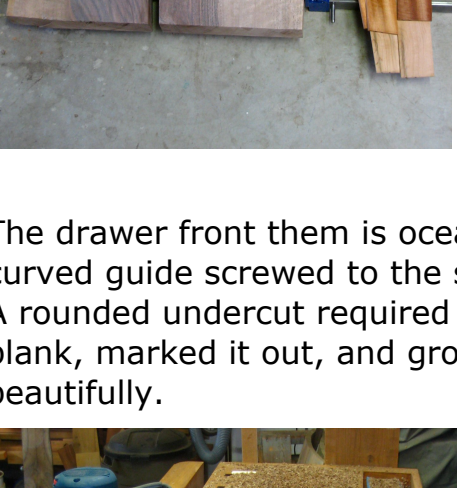


The carcass, which carries three drawers, is made mostly from Black Walnut that I had on the rack. It's a traditional mortise and tenon design.



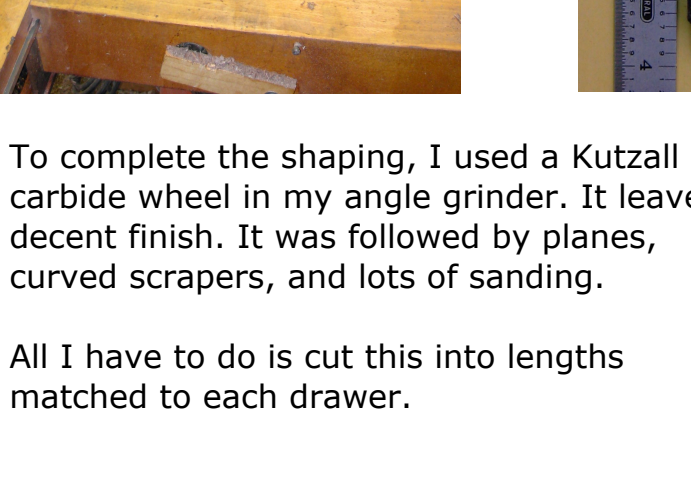
Drawer fronts are made from a two-inch slab, which had a nasty, curved crack right down the middle since it was cut right thru the pith of the tree. So I cut out that bad part, and laminated in strips of contrasting wood. Joining on the curve is challenging...

The drawer front them is ocean waves. I roughed it out with a router, following a curved guide undercut to the surface. The center wave "breaks" and forms the pull. A rounded undercut required a custom router bit. I bought a large HSS router blank, marked it out, and ground it to final shape. Spinning kind of slow, it cut beautifully.

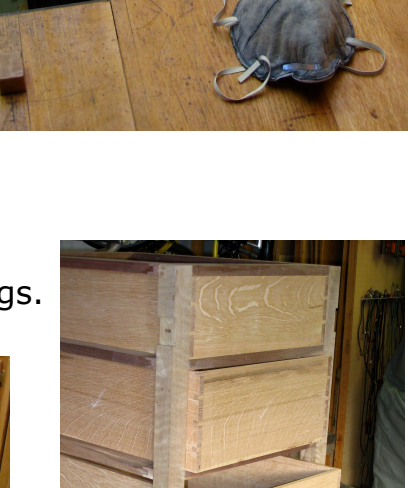
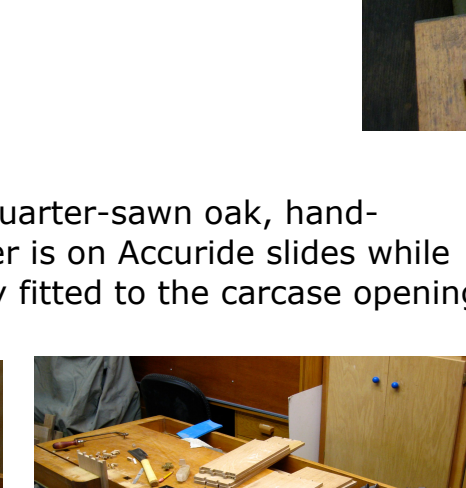
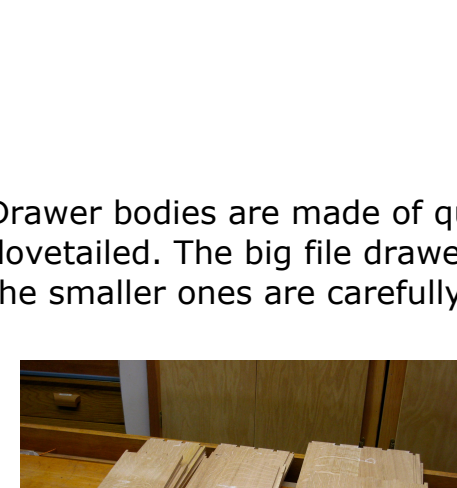


To complete the shaping, I used a Kutzall carbide wheel in my angle grinder. It leaves a decent finish. It was followed by planes, curved scrapers, and lots of sanding.

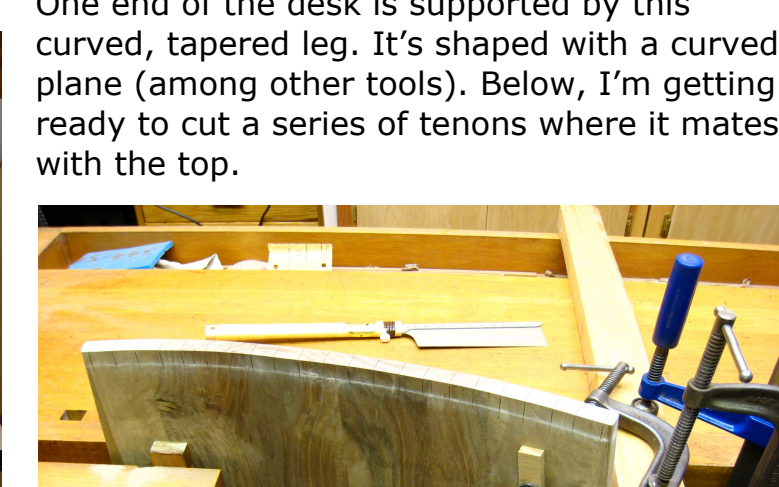
All I have to do is cut this into lengths matched to each drawer.



Drawer bodies are made of quarter-sawn oak, hand-dovetailed. The big file drawer is on Accuride slides while the smaller ones are carefully fitted to the carcass openings.



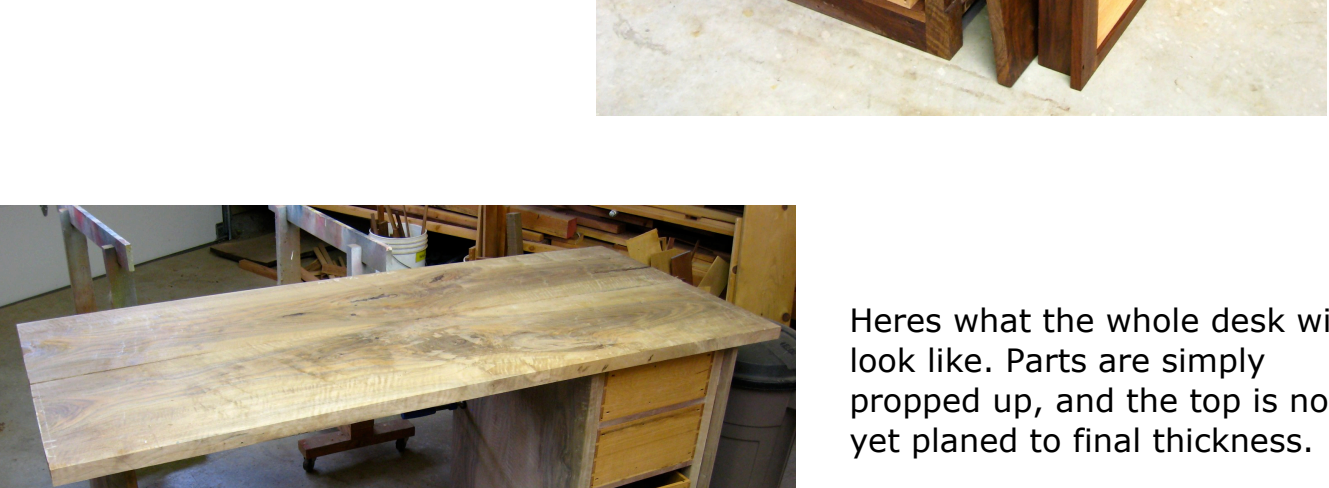
One end of the desk is supported by this curved, tapered leg. It's shaped with a curved plane (among other tools). Below, I'm getting ready to cut a series of tenons where it mates with the top.



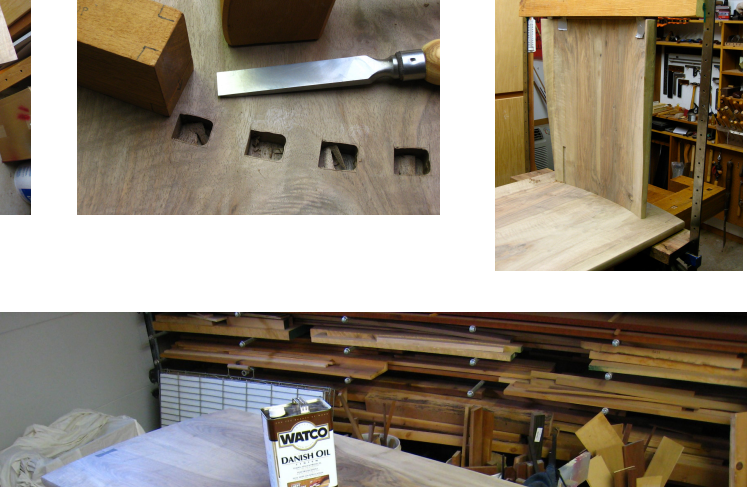
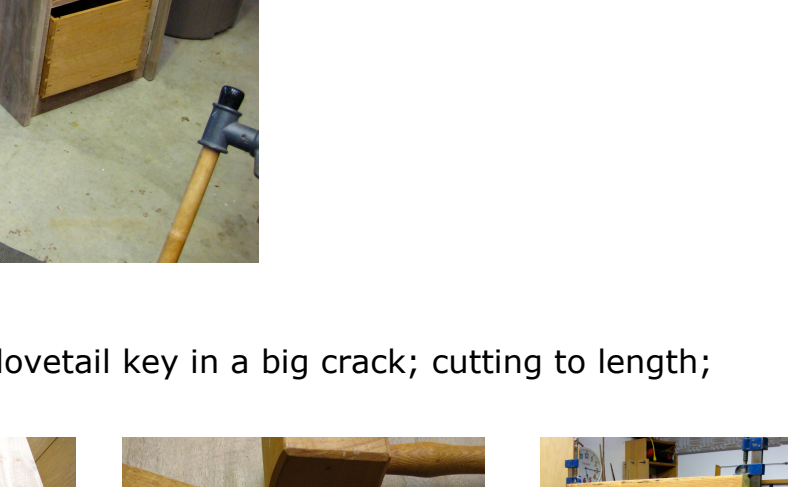
All the parts to the drawer unit, after their first coat of Watco oil. At last! It's starting to look like walnut! Drawers (made of oak) are finished with shellac.



Final work on the top. Laying a dovetail key in a big crack; cutting to length; mortising in the big curved leg.



Finishing:
3 coats Watch light walnut, sanding under oil for the second coat.
~4 coats Tung oil, sanding under oil for the third coat.
Spar varnish on the top.



The drawer case, all put together.

Home stretch!!!

