

Ron's Desk (1987)



This desk was my first true masterpiece, built on a commission in 1987. It took me 225 hours. The entire desk is made from a single log of Claro walnut, logged near Chico, CA, flatsawn on an old circular mill, and then air-dried near my home for about 7 years. I was fortunate enough to buy the entire log, 11 feet long and 16 inches diameter at the butt. Colors are spectacular, like no other walnut I've seen. Some purpleheart was used as an inlay wood, and drawer sides are red oak. Finish was Watco natural oil, plus a few coats of varnish on the top to provide a harder, more wear-resistant surface.

There are few straight lines in the design. End panels are coopered to an 8-foot radius. I made a wooden plane to smooth the contours after glue-up. The entire face of the desk and drawers are convex with an 11-foot radius.

Here you can also get a great view of the bookmatched top. Having the whole log made that fairly easy. Rough boards were well over an inch thick.



Here is the carcass, during glue-up, showing traditional frame-and-panel construction. Joints are mostly mortise and tenon with a few dovetails.

We even had a party when the desk was finished. All my neighbors came over for the "birth" and to watch it get loaded on the truck. By the way, the owner eventually got a divorce and they fought over the thing...