



CARPENTER DUPLICATING THE MEASUREMENTS OF AN OVER/UNDER FOR A SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH PATTERN STOCK.

CARPENTER'S CUSTOM GUNSTOCKS

A REVIEW BY **DANA FARRELL**

Doug Carpenter knows wood. He ran his own construction company for years, a career path he followed straight out of high school. It was during his construction days that he caught the bug for clay target shooting and eventually an interest in working on his own gunstocks.

With a working knowledge of wood gained over years of work, and the hands of a trained craftsman, he honed his skills on his own guns, before eventually taking the advice of his fellow shotgunning friends to give professional stock making a go. Several years after closing his

construction company, he's now fully engrossed in his own stock making business – a pursuit that gives him both a creative outlet and the added benefit of a job that allows him to be home when his kids get out of school every day. With a wife who routinely puts in long hours as a senior IT

professional, working from home is something they both agree helps bring stability to their family while also allowing Carpenter the satisfaction of doing the work he loves.

I first met Carpenter, of Carpenter's Custom Gunstocks LLC. at Hill 'n Dale Club in

Medina, Ohio, where he had a table set up at one of their big shoots. I wasn't in the market for a stock at the time, but before leaving, I grabbed a CCG walnut key fob off his table and tucked it away in my pocket. I was reminded of his business every time I picked up that key fob – and continued to run into him when I'd leave my home state of Michigan to go down to Ohio to shoot. Each time I'd see him I would inquire about business – and each time he seemed happy to report that things were continuing to go well. With a growing list of satisfied customers, he now seems comfortably settled into his career as a gunstock maker. With the contentment of a man who has found his true life calling, he recently told me, “Five years later it was a great decision for both me and my family – I hope everyone loves their job as much as I do.”

Working from his Madison, Ohio, home workshop, Carpenter offers a wide spectrum of gunstock services including gun fitting, refinishing, recoil pads, duplication, installation of adjustable hardware and full restocking jobs. Although a shotgunner at heart, he's also taken on various other types of long gun projects. “If it's wood that goes on a gun, I can do something with it – but mostly I work on long guns. I have worked on everything from clay target guns, hunting guns, benchrest and Schuetzen rifles, to family heirlooms. While I'm a shotgun guy at heart, woodwork is woodwork – and I have to come to really appreciate all forms of guns.”

The Carpenter Custom Gunstocks LLC Facebook page offers a nice photo gallery of his work – both in progress projects and finished product. Like most stock making professionals, for full



EXAMPLES OF CARPENTER'S CREATIVE WORK.



restocks he likes to use a pattern stock when possible and says a restocking job can take as long as needed to get things right. “I like to use a pattern stock to arrive at just the right fit. It may require a few adjustments along the way, so I encourage my customer to use the pattern stock for several outings so I can adjust the fit and feel as we go. Once this is done, the *real work* begins.”

The real work, as he describes it, starts by duplicating the pattern stock on the pre-selected wood blank of the customer's choice and fitting it by hand to the gun. “I'm never in a hurry to rush though a project. Guns last lifetimes and I have always felt that the wood should be an extension of that concept. I want to put out work that I am proud of – and I know if I do that, my customer will be happy.

That being said, I do what I can to limit the impact of the project on the shooter. Often times I can give the gun back with the pattern stock on it while I put the finishing touches on the new stock,” he says.

Using his duplicator, the dimensions of the pattern stock are transferred to the chosen blank and then the painstaking job of inletting is tackled – patiently and deliberately, to achieve a perfect wood to metal fit to the receiver and forend iron. Later, he

works with the customer to design a checkering pattern that both fits the preference of the user and compliments the natural qualities of the wood.

Personalization

“Checkering is my favorite part of the stock making process and where I really get to flex my artistic muscle,” he says. “I like to design a one of a kind pattern for each custom stock that I make, taking input from my customer about their likes and dislikes. From there, the wood itself often shows what will be the best-looking pattern. I'll come up with a concept, lose a little sleep and finally come up with a good layout for my customer's approval. From that point on, it's time to turn up the music and really dig in.” The result is often very creative – checkering work that bridges the artistic divide separating

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traditional patterns and wood carving for a one-of-a-kind end result.

When Steve Bartosik, of Columbus, Ohio, purchased a new Blaser, the gun came with wood, but this was a special purchase for him – likely a once in a lifetime sort of thing, so he wanted to have a personalized, custom stock. He learned of Carpenter through an on-line shotgunning forum and decided to let him take on the job. They started with a gun fitting, progressed to a pattern stock and played with the palm swell until they got it just right. Then the two met up a few times while Bartosik was shooting the pattern stock to make some needed adjustments. Bartosik says he was looking for someone who was willing to spend

the time, put in the effort and get everything perfect – regardless of what it took – and feels Carpenter did all of that, going above and beyond his expectations.

They went back and forth, bouncing different checkering pattern ideas off of each other. Knowing they wanted something out of the ordinary, Carpenter sketched ideas down on paper, tweaking it a little bit here and there, before settling on the final design – the result of which is almost a flame-like pattern – a personalized, one of a kind composition, both pleasing to the eye and creatively unique.

“I had never had a fitting or worked with a stock guy before Doug. Before I had the stock made I was starting to get a few recoil issues and thought I might have to go to an auto, but once I got this fitting the recoil issues went away,” Bartosik later told me. The gun now fits him to a T – both literally and figuratively and his scores reflect it. Shortly after the project was finished he won his class at the Ohio State shoot. ■

Visit Carpenter’s Custom Gunstocks LLC on the web at www.ccgunstocks.com or call 440-479-1476.



CHECKERING ON STEVE BARTOSIK'S BLASER.