

Chair Story

Curtis Buchanan is as deft with a story as he is with a drawknife. That's no surprise, since his small town of Jonesborough, Tenn., hosts a storytelling festival each October with performers from around the world, and it seems everyone in town can spin a yarn. Sometimes even his chairs have tales to tell. This one was commissioned by three siblings as a surprise for their parents, Harold

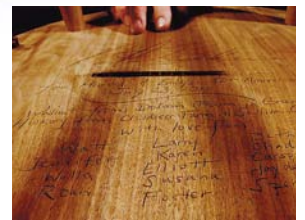
and Emily Childress, on their 50th wedding anniversary. Buchanan built it with wood from a walnut tree harvested from Emily's family farm and a hickory from Harold's family farm.

With just nine months from felling to delivery, Buchanan had to hustle to dry the seat blank and get the chair built.

The siblings, their spouses, and six grandchildren had a hand in the project. They helped with (or watched) the felling, splitting, spokeshaving, steam-bending, drilling, and oiling, and their names joined Buchanan's on the underside of the seat. When the anniversary arrived, the family took Harold and

Emily to Buchanan's shop, where the finished chair was waiting on his workbench. Buchanan joined them and found a scene unprecedented in Jonesborough: "They were speechless," he said. "It was a lot of fun to see."

—Jonathan Binzen



Chair photo: Doug Thompson; other photos courtesy of Karen Childress