



Mac Moulden, 71, on the job.
Photo by Adam Reynolds

GODSEY CABINET SHOP A FAMILY TRADITION SINCE 1932

Furniture runs in Mac Moulden's family. His father and grandfather both worked at the Showers Brothers Furniture Factory—his father Guy in the veneer mill and his grandfather Carl Godsey in the cabinet shop. In their spare time, Guy and Carl ran a furniture restoration business from a building next door to the family's West 12th Street home, and Mac learned, quite literally, at their feet.

In the family shop each day after school, Moulden dismantled furniture and stripped brittle varnish from wood, passing the parts on to his father and grandfather for restoration. Over the years his skills progressed from basic woodworking to traditional furniture making. He learned to make durable repairs that blended seamlessly into a piece's original lines. He also mastered a variety of finishing techniques, from French polishing to applying modern lacquers.

After his father's death in the 1960s, Moulden took over the business. In the 1970s he was joined by business partner Michael Lester, himself a highly skilled furniture craftsman with special expertise in traditional faux-grain finishes.

Godsey Cabinet Shop, in the same location

since 1932, is the quintessential furniture restoration establishment. Chock full of clamps and tools, suffused with the scent of wood and polish, a fire crackling in the woodstove while drafts of chilly air swirl around the floor, the rooms are a maze of old furniture in various stages of repair. With a carved headboard here, a gilded plaster mirror there, chairs, picture frames, and a hodgepodge of other objects hanging from the ceiling, Moulden, now 71, works happily at his grandfather's wooden bench amid the relative disorder. "My work is my enjoyment in life, not riches," he remarks with a smile.

The shop has seen countless commissions, from modest refinishing jobs brought in by neighbors to valuable antiques belonging to IU's beloved former president Herman B Wells. Among the most distinguished antiques was a Japanese bed made for an emperor. Splendidly decorated with hand-carved dragons, the bed had been exhibited at the 1894 Chicago World's Fair and was eventually donated to IU, whereupon it found its way to the Godsey family's business for restoration.

—Nancy Hiller

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