Grampa's Browns Corner Blab

12-7-2020

The CR^2 VERSABENCH

A disclaimer. Uncle Chris never uses the CR^2 label, seemingly prefers CRR as his initials. I don't know why, but I'm his dad so I think I can use CR^2 if I want to. He'll probably forgive me.

The VERSABENCH was conceived and built by Chris in 2008 while he was helping me build the house at Browns Corner. He used drops (scraps cut from longer boards while doing framing) of 2x4 and 2x6 framing lumber nailed together with 16d nails (That's carpenter jargon for "sixteen penny nails.) Big ones.

I don't recall why he built it. Undoubtedly he was doing something requiring a work platform. It has come to see many uses over the years. Here is a nice shot of the bench as currently configured with a ½ in. plywood overlay and a woodworking vise attached. The previous picture was taken immediately after I used it as a scaffold while standing on it to cut a hole in the roof for the smoke pipe you can see right behind it.

Chris had asked me to send him a sketch so I took pictures with a yardstick to give him the dimensions.

i'm very pleased that the dimensions of that bench have proved so versatile. sketch it out for me?

On Sun, Nov 1, 2020 at 8:40 PM Robert Randall, <randall.rj@gmail.com> wrote:

In the past few days the Versabench has served in the following ways:

1. Supporting big sheets of glued up lumber coming off the back of the table saw.
2. Holding work for routing
3. Holding work for sanding.
4. Low bench to hold furniture up at convenient height while finishing
5. Today I used it as a very tall step stool while cutting a hole in the barn roof for the stove pipe. Pictures to follow later.

The long dimension, 33 inches, makes it just the right height to catch a board coming off the back of the table saw while ripping. (left)

By clamping a board in the vise, it will serve to catch the two parts of a sheet of plywood or as at right, a sheet of glued up lumber being ripped.

Another frequent use has been in the Birdhouse Projects. I have made birdhouse kits for second grade classes for many years. The first time was when Jennifer was in second grade. Since then I have done this project with twenty more second grade classes. Prior to 2008, I brought a heavy low bench made of 2x12s which, painted red, now lives out by the garage. But the VERSABENCH has been a big improvement.

At right *Grampa Sandy, Construction Guy*, explains some points to Tyler's pre-K at Tyler Elementary School in DC. I think that was six years ago. Yes, that attentive little fellow is Tyler.

Below, *Grampa Sandy, Construction Guy* , is doing a demonstration of building a birdhouse, explaining design, measurement, sawing, drilling, and hammering nails.

The height of the bench provides good visibility for the class. Note that back then, the vise was unpainted steel, not the showy bright red it is now painted.

At the Birdhouse Project events, the VERSABENCH standing on end clamps the dowel from which the kids cut their perch with a hand saw. (Right)

In the horizontal mode, the vise holds the assembled birdhouses while the kids drill the entry holes and perch holes with a brace and bit (auger). Grampa holds the brace and the kids turn the crank with two hands. Except for Biff, Buzz, and Louey.

In recent days, the VERSABENCH has been serving nicely as a platform to elevate my electric log splitter. By setting it up on the bench, I can avoid straining my back bending over to operate the splitter. The electric splitter from Harbor Freight has been a great blessing, saving a lot of effort and time.

That was all well and good until the welded extension on the splitting wedge broke off. There it is right there, kind of bent up as the weld progressively failed.

So back into the shop to be rewelded. Sitting on, of course, VERSABENCH .

TECH NOTES:

- The original weld apparently failed due to insufficient weld penetration. The lesson learned was that the flux core wire feed welder running .035” wire does not have enough heat to effectively weld heavy steel.
- The remedy was to weld with stick welder. The 3/32” 6010nrod was very difficult o use on this heavy steel.
- A bit of on-line research revealed that 7014 would be an easier rod and make for stronger welds. A trip to Tractor Supply for some 3/32” 7014 rod was the bomb. The resulting welds were not pretty. I need more practice. But they produced very good penetration and bigger beads. I’m confident that there will be no more weld failures.

OK, Campers. Grampa out.