

A Legacy of Love

For me, happiness has always been found in showing love.

My son and daughter have given me more happiness than I could ever put into words over the years—and then they topped it all off by giving me **seven precious grandchildren**. They have filled my heart in ways I never could have imagined.

I know that I will not always be a part of their lives in person. There will come a day when I am no longer here to hug them, celebrate with them, or watch their lives unfold. But my greatest hope is that I will continue to be a part of their lives in spirit—and that they will always know just how deeply they were loved.

Although our time together is numbered, I want to find a way to keep showing my love for them even after I am gone.

That would be happiness for me.

I have been blessed with a hobby that has brought me tremendous happiness throughout my life. Even more special, that hobby has given me a way to turn my love for my family into something they can carry with them for generations.

It all started when my first grandson, Caleb, came into our lives. When Caleb was adopted by Shelley and Dave, I wanted to give him something that was made especially for him—something created with my own hands and, more importantly, with my love.

So, I built him a cradle.

That little cradle became much more than a piece of furniture. It became a **love gift**—one that I eventually made for each of my seven grandchildren: Caleb, Sarah, Liza, Allison, Anna Faith, Caroline, and Sam.

My hope is that as each of them marries and someday has children of their own, their babies will sleep in **DeeDee's cradle**. And perhaps, as they rock their little ones to sleep, they will tell them, *"Your great-grandmother made this for us because she loved us very much."*

What a gift that would be to me.

Over the years, I found so much happiness in creating little things for my grandchildren in my workshop. Every hour spent sanding, cutting, measuring, and building was a joy. But the best part was always seeing the smiles on their little faces when they received something made just for them.

Those smiles were worth every minute I spent in my shop.

As my “skills” grew, so did my desire to make something truly special for each of them. I decided to try my hand at replicating one of my favorite pieces of furniture—a little German *schränk* (or “shraunk”) that had been handed down to me from my grandmother, MoMo.

That old cabinet held some of my fondest childhood memories. It housed my games and the famous stacking cups that my grandchildren loved playing with when they were little.

Sam was the expert!

My first task was to take measurements—something I had never attempted before. Then I bought board feet of oak and began cutting each piece to size. Months later, the first shraunk was finished.

“Not bad for an old lady!”

I had so much fun making it that I bought more oak and built another one. Sheryl has one, and I had planned to give one to Carol when she moved back to Louisville. Sadly, she passed away shortly after returning home, and that shraunk eventually found its way to Bryan and Marie.

By then, I was hooked.

I decided I wanted to make a shraunk for **each of my grandchildren**.

Since they were all still young—none even teenagers when I began—I decided these would become their wedding gifts someday. I knew it might take many years before they were needed, but that was okay.

I had time.

And I wanted each one to be special.

A dear friend and mentor gave me all the kiln-dried cherry planks I would need. After hauling home **two trailer loads** of lumber, I began the long process of turning 10- to 12-foot rough planks into beautiful, workable boards. I learned how to remove the bark-covered edges, cut the boards, and prepare them for construction.

The boards were originally about half an inch thick, and I needed to plane them to the thickness I needed. Working evenings and weekends, this process alone took **more than a year**.

And I loved every minute of it.

There was something incredibly satisfying about taking a rough piece of wood and slowly turning it into something beautiful. But knowing that each one was being made for one of my grandchildren made every hour in the workshop even more meaningful.

I took photographs of the grands standing beside their shraunks at various stages of construction. When they were finally finished, each of them got to choose which one they wanted.

And, of course, there had to be a little family humor along the way.

Somehow, I managed to hinge one of the doors on the “wrong” side.

Guess what?

Sweet Liza said she wanted **that one** because it was different—
“Just like me!”

That made my heart happy.

Once all seven were finished, each shraunk was carefully packed away in a huge box. Jim helped me with the packaging, and before I closed each box, I tucked in a few special things.

And for the future husbands, I included a **Persimmon putter**.

After all, I had to make sure the men got something too!

Then we waited.

Years passed.

And finally, the moment I had imagined for so long began to arrive.

July 2026.

Liza will marry Eric this fall. While they were in Louisville, I asked if they would open their wedding gift while they were here so I could be there to see it.

They agreed.

I cannot begin to adequately express the happiness I felt as I watched Liza open that box. After all those years of measuring, cutting, sanding, building, storing, and waiting, I was finally watching my granddaughter receive something I had made especially for her.

I had tears in my eyes.

Tears of joy, of course.

And Eric seemed pretty happy with his putter, too!

Then, after Sarah and Riley returned from their honeymoon, they opened their wedding gift.

More tears.

More happiness.

More memories.

And suddenly, I realized that these shraunks were never really about the furniture.

They were about **love**.

They were about the hours I spent in my workshop thinking about seven little children who would one day become grown men and women. They were about hoping that, years from now, they would look at these pieces of furniture and remember their DeeDee.

They were about leaving behind something tangible that says:

I loved you.

I believed in you.

I was proud of you.

And I always wanted you to know how very special you were to me.

There are no more weddings on the calendar right now, but someday there will be another one. And then another.

And when those days come, I know exactly what will happen.

I will watch another grandchild open a big box containing a piece of furniture made with my own hands and filled with decades of love.

And I will probably cry.

Tears of joy, of course.

Because for me, that is what happiness has always been about—not what I can have, but what I can give.

And if, long after I am gone, one of my great-grandchildren is sleeping in a DeeDee cradle, or a grandchild is looking at their shraunk and telling their own children about the grandmother who made it for them, then a little piece of my love will still be here.

And that, to me, would be the greatest happiness of all.