

Kauffman Wood logs excellent furniture record

By **CHRISTINA HILL**
Correspondent

Driving through Kerby, it's almost impossible to miss the numerous displays of wood products hand-crafted by local artists, including log furniture from Kauffman Wood Products.

"Kerby is kind of known for its wood work," said Delbert Kauffman, owner of Kauffman Wood Products.

"There's me, It's a Burl Gerald Work and another guy down the street," said Kauffman, who has been in the wood business for three decades, and who had "two or three gone-bust enterprises," before he reached success.

"I blamed it on everyone else and decided to move to a different town," he said, "but then I realized that my biggest problem followed me and that was me," Kauffman said with a laugh.

He moved to Illinois Valley with his wife, Helen, two children and "one on the way" in 1968. After relocating, they had three more children, all of whom graduated from Illinois Valley High School and college.

The parental educational roots also run deep.

Kauffman graduated from the University of California at Long Beach with a degree in economics. He then went on to the University of Utah where he spent a year in graduate school studying economics. His wife, he said, graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in teaching.

"My wife had supported me as a school teacher while I was trying to get something going," he said. "We've been mar-

ried 43 years, and she is still a teacher at Dome School," Kauffman said.

Kauffman's business success didn't happen

for his quality wood work. "We have sold stuff to people as far away as Canada, Japan and New York," Kauffman said.

deliers. And, just they've just recently developed log kitchen cabinets.

Most of the logs Kauffman uses come from thinnings — suppressed trees of second-growth forests -- which he refers to as "fuel."

"There's a lot of that material available," he said, "but our specialty logs are getting harder and harder to come by. There's not that much logging activity going on for a number of reasons.

"Most of our logs nowadays come from private property."

Despite the dwindling number of resources available, Kauffman is certain about his future in wood work.

"I have to keep working," he said. "It's almost out of desperation. I'm 70 years old and was such a bad boy all those years avoiding taxes and not paying into Social Security, that I won't have enough to retire on Social Security, so I have to keep working," Kauffman mused.

To view Kauffman's work, visit 24126 Redwood Hwy. in Kerby. The second story of Kauffman's gallery features the work of local wood artist, Mike Kain, who operates Amongst The Woods.

The upstairs and downstairs show rooms are open Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information on Kauffman Wood Products, log onto kauffmanwood.com or telephone 592-2568.



DELBERT KAUFFMAN (Photo by Christina Hill)

overnight either.

"I was cutting fire wood and building fences," he recalled. "Then we started building log barns.

"We were building log barns and had all these hand-peeled logs around, and people said, ' You should market this stuff,' and we were silly enough to believe them."

Fifteen years ago, Kauffman moved to his current location in Kerby. Prior to that, the business was based at his home in Takilma.

Most of the work he does now, Kauffman said, is hand-crafted furniture.

Using a combination of strong, rot-resistant Douglas fir and manzanita for specialty trim work, Kauffman set out to create beautiful pieces of log furniture. During 30 years, he also has built literally a world-renowned reputation

He admits that he's had "celebrity sales" too.

"We've shipped a whole room of furniture to a man who was the third baseman for the New York Yankees at the time," Kauffman said.

"We also sell a considerable amount of our furniture wholesale to Lake Tahoe and that goes to a lot of celebrities."

But, there's something for everyone he said.

"We have napkin holders that start at 10 dollars, and the most expensive item has been a table for \$ 10,000; and sometimes beds for \$4,000 or \$5,000," said Kauffman.

His work doesn't stop there. He and his employees, usually numbering around 10, also craft desks, mirrors, mantles and chan-