



# The Artful DODGE R

by BARBARA BEACH & PHILIP WOLFSON

A recent trip to England left me with one unanswered question. Everywhere I went I was asked... "what is it you blokes really want" usually this came up after a few pints in a local pub). It is not that these folks were being rude and in fact the question did not even come up until after we had fully exhausted the topics of a Princess Di conspiracy theory, George Bush and "the war", Tony Blair, and how OJ finally got his... did the conversation spiral into the American Dream.

Far more lucid than my fellow imbibers (owing to the fact the dollar is worth half that of the pound, and I couldn't afford to drink as much, I tried to explain.

A few hundred years after leaving the land of kings and queens Americans have moved past the issues of freedom, religion, and royalty (unless you count Donald Trump),

and other forms of obvious tyranny. I assured them it is fine with me if all tea is dumped in the ocean just as long as no one touches my Jager Meister! As for the American Dream; well... in my opinion it varies by gender. From my perspective, the closest thing I have seen to the American Dream fulfilled (ruling out the obvious score by Michael Douglas as the older man landing Catherine Zeta'-Jones) is the story of a man I call the "Artful Dodger."

My first encounter with the Artful Dodger began when I saw him driving his ATV down a sparsely traveled mountain road from a cabin to a clap board work shop nestled in a clearing surrounded by trees. A shiatsu looking dog shadowed by the size of his owner's cowboy hat, was balancing on the handle bars. I immediately figured this was one secure guy to be roaming through the woods with a pocket book sort of dog. I pulled off the road to

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Above: Original Beach Boy Al Jardine enjoys Scott Morrison's namy or twin rocker; the Morrison's rock out; another Morrison masterpiece.

say "Hey" and quickly understood both the brave nature of the pup and the friendly nature of his owner. The "Artful Dodger" (as we soon began to call him because of his avocation turned vocation of woodworking and his very large red DODGE truck).

As it turns out he has incredible abilities to build furniture, or should I say pieces of art. Each of his chairs and other pieces (he specializes in rockers) are more like gallery pieces than furniture.

This guy was not some late in life retiree who moved to the mountains to putter in a workshop... He is a Renaissance man. He wears his accomplishments and talents behind his boyish good looks and casual manner" according to Big Sky Journal. As a guy I didn't notice his boyish looks, but after meeting and talking with Scott Morrison I did discover what I would have to tell the Brits about living the American Dream.

For those of you familiar with the classic movie "Funny Farm" with Chevy Chase (and if not rent it and watch it) the central character is a pre mid life New York City sports writer who has decided to retire to the country to write

the great American novel. The "Artful Dodger", AKA Scott Morrison has a similar story (without the insanity factor). Scott and wife Val hail from Orange County, Southern California, one of the havens for high tech and 'dotcoms'.

Scott is one of those focused individuals who are pretty darn good at anything they try. He is as excellent with a fly rod as he is with a router, or for that matter a computer.

Before Scott and Val found the peaceful life on top of a Montana Mountain, they were active participants in the high tech rat race. Scott, Val, and their partners began and built an extremely successful computer based venture that they both walked away from to start a better life building hand made furniture. Scott has been an avid wood worker since childhood, and every night after a long day at the office, he would sneak down to his garage, where he had ousted all the family cars in deference to his woodworking gear. There was, of course, the small issue of keeping his neighbors up to the wee hours of the morning. The steady whirring of the planner made a lasting impression on the neighborhood. Scott realized after several years of "dotcoming" that his true calling was to work with wood.

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Scott and Val are both best friends to each other and husband and wife. They are a truly unique team. Val, as Scott freely admits is the brains of the operation. She is an outstanding CAD designer and creates incredible pieces of furniture, "art" on the computer. It is then Scott's task to take her designs and turn them into show room pieces. Their trademark is "the Morrison butterfly joint." It is designed to increase strength and adds an artistic marquer to each piece that they build. Val is also the photographer, marketing agent, receptionist, public relations executive, web master, and accountant.

Escaping the rat race and building a dream home in the mountains, making your daily commute to work on a quad, arriving in your own workshop where your dog is not only welcome but expected, and having more orders than you have hours in the day to fill...this is sounding more and more like my idea of the American Dream!

Almost everything that they build is sold at one of several shows, by word of mouth, and on the Internet. Their pieces have been shipped around the world. While other magazines have written about the Morrison's and their legendary rockers, Dodge Enthusiast is as interested in

their higher calling and their envied position of escaping uncivilized civilization and their choice in vehicles. You see two or three times a year, Scott, Val, and their dog Sam load up their big red DODGE 3500 Diesel Big Horn Edition with matching trailer to display and take their wares on the road to the most exclusive shows in America.

Aside from having great taste in trucks, these folks to my mind, are living the dream that few of us dare to pursue. I will have to remember the next time I get caught in a British pub and queried about what we "blokes" want out of life.... I will answer; "a wife who is a great friend, a cabin in the mountains close to great hunting and fishing, a job that allows you to immerse yourself in the things you love to do, where you want to do it, a place where your dog can go to work with you, and last, but not least a DODGE truck to get you there. If that's not perfection, it's pretty darn close!

Check out all of Morrison's wares at [WWW.FINEWOOD-WORKER.COM](http://WWW.FINEWOOD-WORKER.COM) or call them at 406.322.1132 and see for yourself why we call him the "Artful Dodger."

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