

Roatan – 11 First, two things I just have to say....

G Joseph Wilhelm

1. The world seems blessed here. The sun shines, the clouds rain and except for the Krackles, the birds sing. I now take a nap each night before going to bed. Whole flocks of parrots and macaws fly overhead, the cats purr, the dogs play and our plants thrive for us like nowhere else. Plenty of time to think and observe the gloriously beautiful Roatan environment around us. Then we get the wine, assemble a charcuterie board, make popcorn, settle in to a comfortable chair and turn on the news. We then subject ourselves to this drama of semantic psychological manipulation of information that pours forth, trying to gain our favor for an ideological theory, philosophy, material thing or person and then send them money. This is just the commercials. The actual news content seems far more conniving and entertaining.

My wife and I then discourse upon how much better we could run the world and how the intellectual prowess of everyone else has declined, leaving us the only two smart responsible adults left in the world. It is a heavy responsibility to bear, so we don't. "No amount of evidence will ever persuade an idiot" (near as I can tell this quote is falsely attributed to Mark Twain, but he *should* have said it). This statement seems to accurately evince the steadfastness of those caught up in the "groupthink" so prevalent on all sides of our social and political spectrum. Therefore, my wife and I keep our opinions to ourselves while holding the Diogenes lantern high seeking not only a truthful, but wise consciousness with which to debate the foibles of civilization. Any takers?

2. I have read with concern Mol Smith's comments prefacing the June Micscape edition. His lament over vanishing insect species does not seem to pertain here. There is an abundance of them, all seemingly happy to coexist with humans, sometimes to the utter vexation of said humans. They will be an unending source for observation, spectacle and articles, if I ever get my act together. We feed and water most anything that flies, crawls, walks past our door or grows in the ground.

I too fear the eventual environmental decline here as Roatan has become an expat destination. They are paving roads and everywhere building seems to be booming since we arrived. To paraphrase Joni Mitchell, "I seek to know what I got before it's gone". Three acres of forested land that abuts our property's southeast corner has just been clear cut, bulldozed and filled for a house and plantation.

Also of concern is the decline in articles submitted to Micscape. I sincerely urge the readership to contribute articles or donations if financially feasible. If I could psychologically manipulate you into doing so...I would. Or. If you are hesitant or shy to submit an article, send it to me so I can tell you it's absolutely fine and you can proceed with confidence knowing it has been proofed by a really intelligent guy. Microscopy and the wood shop are my entire world. A vanished Micscape would break my heart! Should I write two articles a month?

Nuff said. Now, to the Lab.

Dust from the clear-cut area has been brutal and gotten into the house, lab, shop and all required a thorough cleaning. Closed cabinets and covered or cased equipment is going to be a must in the lab. Just more work. The table saw restoration went perfectly, which was amazing, even pour moi. I am now using it to do the long board sizing for shelves and cabinets.

Have you ever heard of the H. O. Studly tool chest? It is worth looking up and embodies the approach I am taking with the lab for spatial organizational beauty and function.



Image via [reddit](#)

“This beauty is 20×40 inches when closed (40×40 inches when open) and contains 300 tools within its carefully crafted mahogany rosewood, ebony, and mother-of-pearl case. As interesting as the piece itself is, it has a long history, which at one point saw it displayed in the Smithsonian.” (Quote from Jessica Stewart)

I just won't have as much mother of pearl in the lab.

I intend to have a dedicated designated space for every item of working microscopy kit I have, Custom fitted shelves, cabinets racks, accessory boxes with ease of access only deviating from the tool chest by not having to disturb one piece of kit to retrieve another, like a cased set of dueling pistols.

FULL disclosure: I know more about microscopy than I have actually done. As described in my earlier Pulitzer worthy series “The Novitiate’s Odyssey” (available only at Micscape), due to the

rigorous pace and other demands of my employment, my pre-retirement years dealt with acquiring (mostly) vintage microscopes and associated accessories with precious little time left over to actually use them. I can't even take a decent picture thru the scopes yet. Purchases were made with an eye to what I thought they could do. Just like buying a woodworking hand plane tool but not having the experience/practice to proficiently use it for the task for which it was designed. So, as I prattle on, if you see a flaw in my engineering logic, or a better approach, *please* enlighten me!! You have my permission to be as condescending as you like, I'm used to it and I can always ignore you.

Dissecting & Slide Preparation Station

I am currently unpacking the specimen dissecting and slide preparation station paraphernalia to properly size its new home. As per above paragraph, I have never used about 98% of the kit I have. The Left third of the space above the bench will be reserved for these tasks and equipment.



The entire area within the frame is the space allocated. This machinist's chest will set on the shelf described below, making the bench space available.

Running the entire width of the back (West) wall will be the bottom 1" thick shelf 12" wide by 9-1/2 ft, approximately 12" above the bench. Attaching the shelf to the wall with supports that do not encroach upon the open bench space below or the upper surface of the shelf to maximize the entire bench and shelf space. The open area under the shelf will be used for power outlets, variable power voltage for both AC and DC light sources etc.

The Gerstner style wood toolbox will be placed above the shelf. The drawers behind the front panel contain the dissecting implements i.e. forceps (including hemostats and tweezers), picks of all types, scalpels, scissors, bone cutters, syringes and pins.



Unpacking. It's like Christmas!! I haven't seen this stull for three years.

Under the lid we have slides, cover slips, ringing table, ringing paints and mounting mediums including a half pound of Canada balsam in its solid state.



Obviously, this is not the final presentation and the chest will be stained and refinished to match the bench.



Canada balsam raw resin. One third the amount I have. Just needs to be mixed with xylene and filtered (That should last me forever!). That's a 58mm lens cap for size. The pieces on the right are washed and ready for crushing

Cabinets above the tool box will house the scales, a nice set of graduated cylinders, test tubes, other working glassware, centrifuge, microtome, and alcohol lamps. A lot of this is still new in the box.

The rain is more frequent now but we still have the summer to endure and my drabble will continue until morale improves..

Correspondence cheerfully received at: gjw8844@gmail.com

That's all folks!

Joseph

Published in the July 2024 issue of Micscape magazine.

The earlier episodes can be found here.