

Furniture Maker's Shop Destroyed by Fire



By **Stephen Scott** Feb 09, 2009



The early-morning fire that destroyed Mark Levin's shop also claimed more than a dozen furniture pieces.

Mark Levin, a studio furniture maker well known for his sculptural leaf-edge tables and other naturalistic forms, has been forced to stop working temporarily after a fire destroyed his shop.

The blaze on Jan. 30 burned the shop to the ground and destroyed nine finished pieces and six others on which Levin was working, he said. The works in progress included one of his signature “leaf” tables – demilune tables with slender, curved legs and sculpted, leaf-edge tops.

Levin built the 2,500-square-foot shop behind his home east of Santa Fe shortly after moving to New Mexico in the late 1990s. The building's contents represented three decades as a studio furniture maker, during which he has developed a machine-intensive process for making studio furniture with sculptural elements.

As to how the early morning blaze might have started, Levin said he had no idea. He said he closed up the shop about 3:30 p.m. the previous day, and that he had not been doing any finishing or other work that might create a fire hazard. He said he was out for an early walk with his dog when he

noticed smoke pouring from under the shop door. He called firefighters after making a “foolish” attempt to enter the building and being overwhelmed by the smoke, he said.

Insurance adjusters are still poking at the ashes, but Levin anticipates the shop, and its contents will be a total loss. Among the equipment he’ll be looking to replace is an industrial hoist, a 36-in. bandsaw, three tablesaws, and an arsenal of power grinders and sanders.

Levin said he may rent shop space so he can resume work in the months it will take to rebuild. In the meantime, he’s had to bow out of several upcoming shows, including the Palm Beach Fine Arts Show.

His shop’s destruction is the second major setback for Levin in recent years. In 2006, health reasons forced him to stop working temporarily, a hiatus that lasted nearly 18 months. He said he is not discouraged, and that he hopes to be back at work in a rebuilt shop before the year is out. “I’m not down, I’m not distraught,” he said. “I look at it as another chance to do things better.”

– Steve Scott