A place to practice a woodworking hobby helps fulfill this retiree's later years at Stone Oak's Independence Village Retirement Community.

Douglas Henry takes on projects from models of old-fashioned stores and vintage vehicles to figurines of all sorts.

Cross the street from Douglas Henry's house in Independence Village, an air-conditioned, garage-like studio with a security system houses his woodworking tools, carvings, and models. “I'm proud of this one,” he says, unwrapping the figures of a nativity scene with care.

Among many other projects, there's a stage coach, a vintage-style hardware store, and a boot-shaped toothpick holder—the first item he carved with the Alamo Area Wood Carvers club. Screwdrivers hang on a peg board, while electric saws and other machines stand ready for his next project. “It's kind of an escape,” Henry says.

This native Virginian started his woodworking hobby when his son was a young boy. “We took up half of the garage,” he says, remembering the tangle of tracks and wooden landscapes the pair created. Now, 85, Henry still enjoys turning raw wood into something decorative and useful—using kits and patterns, along with ideas from his club. He’s working on an old-fashioned building for his great-grandson now, while his wife, Catherine, is away playing bridge in the community club house.

Henry met Catherine 25 years ago while volunteering at a hospital gift shop, working with the Methodist Healthcare system's Blue Bird Auxiliary. He'd started working there after his first wife, Alicia, died in 1988. “I needed something to do,” he says. Henry fell for his fellow volunteer, a Louisiana native who introduced him to Cajun food. “She's always thinking about shrimp,” he says, laughing. The couple enjoys living at Independence Village, and his woodworking studio makes a nice retreat.

Henry’s always been mechanically inclined. After growing up in Abingdon, Va., he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1951, during the height of the Korean War. At basic training, an assessment revealed his aptitude for mechanics, and he was selected for aircraft and engineering training. Soon, he deployed to Korea, working to maintain F-86 aircraft during the conflict.

At his next post in Laredo, Texas, he met and married Alicia. In 1960, the couple moved to San Antonio, where they raised their only child, Douglas, Jr. It was here that Henry started his woodworking hobby and worked at Kelly Air Force base. Today, he still volunteers at the hospital gift shop where he met Catherine. He enjoys socializing with his wood-carving club, and he’s also a member of the Texas Woodcarvers Guild. “It’s good therapy for me.”

Douglas Henry, retired from the Civil Service Department of the U.S. Air Force, spends hours at a time in his workshop at Independence Village Retirement Community.

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