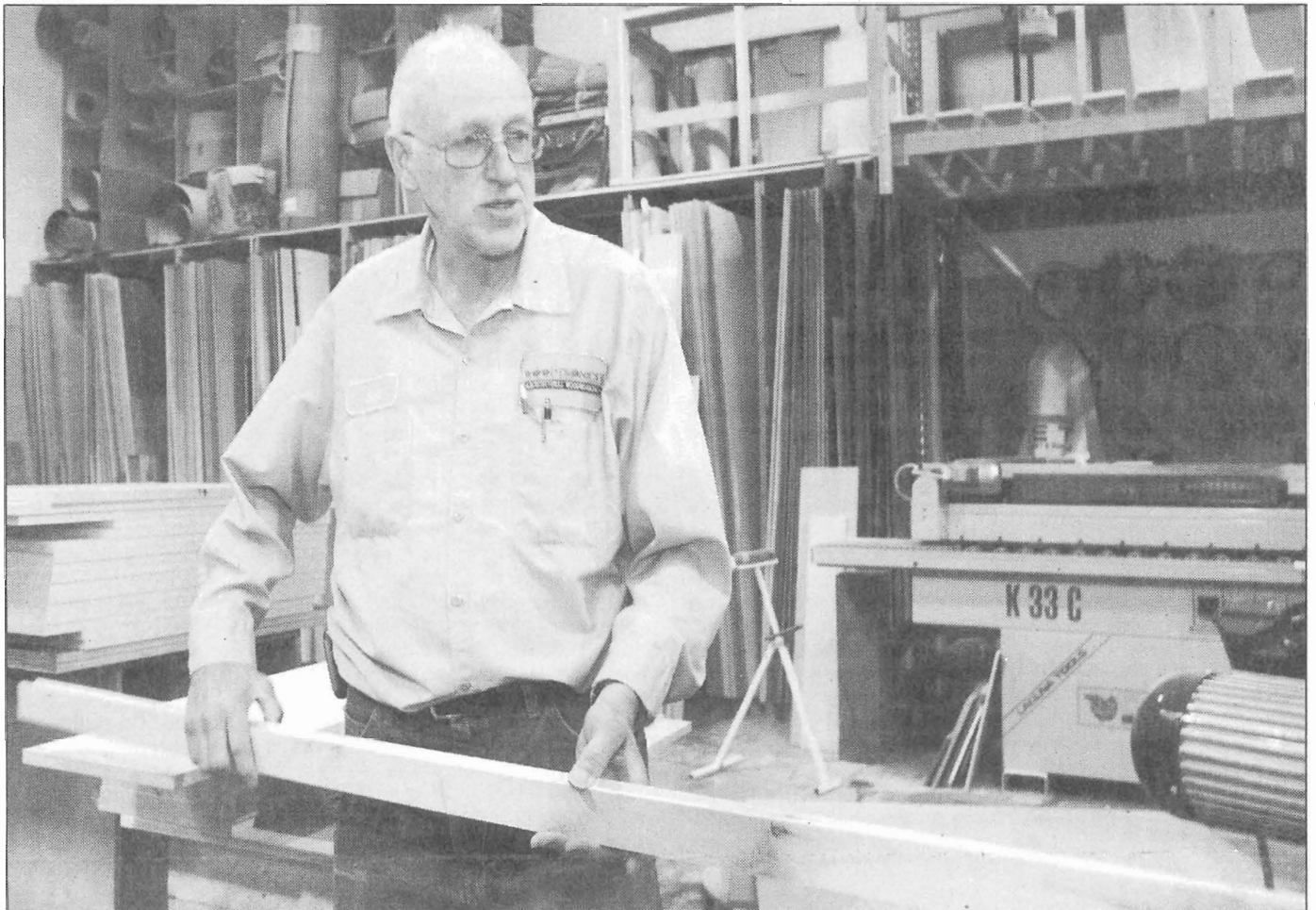




Hobby turns to livelihood



Photos by Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

Jan E. Efraimsen prepares to cut a piece of wood at Woodtronics in Yorktown Heights. A native of Norway, Efraimsen started the business in a garage and now has a factory on Front Street.

Engineer finds success with woodworking shop in Yorktown Heights

Jay Loomis
The Journal News

YORKTOWN HEIGHTS — In the end, misfortune led to new opportunities for Jan E. Efraimsen.

The misfortune was a layoff from his engineering job at Tandberg, a Norwegian electronics company that was scaling back its offices in Armonk in the mid-1980s. The opportunities came when Efraimsen decided that the job loss gave him enough time to start a

business that revolved around a hobby that he loved — woodworking. In 1986, Efraimsen and a friend began making wooden jewelry boxes in the basement of his home in Yorktown Heights.

"It wasn't easy in the beginning, but we made it," Efraimsen recalled. "We didn't have many referrals then. We got some business by driving to places where they were building houses. We showed pictures of the woodwork we did. Some of those guys tried us out. It grew little by little."

The company, now known as Woodtronics Inc., long ago outgrew Efraimsen's basement.

It now operates with five employees from a 5,000-square-foot factory at 1661 Front St. in Yorktown Heights that is lined with saws, sanding machines and other equipment to

craft large planks of wood.

The days of Efraimsen, 61, having to scramble around construction sites searching for business also are over. The company is currently booked heavily with more than 20 jobs outlined in magic marker on a board in Efraimsen's office, much of them referrals from other customers.

The custom woodworking manufactured at the plant includes bookshelves, kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities, wine cellars and closets. In addition to home owners, customers have ranged from churches to restaurants to offices. Most of the work takes place in the New York metropolitan region. But Woodtronics has also done work as far away

Please see **WOODTRONICS, 10C**



Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

Jan Efraimsen cuts a piece of wood with Lukasz Mul at Woodtronics in Yorktown Heights on Tuesday.

Yorktown Heights woodworking business catches on across nation

WOODTRONICS, from 7C

as Las Vegas, Denver and Palm Beach, Fla. In 2004, Woodtronics was named one of the top 30 growth companies by Wood & Wood Products magazine.

Efraimsen, a native of Norway, still speaks with an accent from his native country. He recently discussed his work in an interview with The Journal News.

Q: It looks like you are booked with jobs.

A: We are generally busy. Some are smaller jobs, while others are bigger jobs. We do a little of everything. People walk in here and

want to repair a chair or drawer. Others want us to do a major project at a restaurant.

Q: What do you like about your work?

A: I enjoy it because you are creating something, producing something that lasts. I am here nearly every day — often 10 to 12 hours a day. I was here even on Thanksgiving.

Q: How did you learn the woodworking craft?

A: Just reading magazines and books. I am technically oriented, so this kind of work is a natural fit for me.

Q: What do like about being an entrepreneur?

A: If you own your own business, you are independent. I have been able to make a living at this. I really don't want to do anything else.

Q: How has the recent slowdown in the housing market affected your business?

A: It hasn't been that bad in this area. ... We have never been in a slow period. We have always been busy.

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