

ANDY THIEL Woodworker

Most people at 70 are ready to retire — if they haven't already done so. But not Andy Thiel.

Despite the fact that he went blind in 1950 after several unsuccessful operations for detached retinas, he embarked on a woodworking hobby four years later which has now turned into a business.

In his workshop (a garage behind his home at 120 Church St., Victor) he uses his sensitive and skilled hands to make cutting boards, marble runs, knife racks and picture frames.

A former auto mechanic, his interest in woodworking began when his living room floor and stairway needed replacing and he found he couldn't afford outside help.

He finished those projects and a short time later the Victor Lion's Club, of which he's a member, helped him get started on making bushel crates for apples, potatoes, etc.

At the same time he began experimenting with other wooden odds and ends.

"After several years of that, I had a friend who brought me an old marble run," he said, "and I figured out how to build it."

Since then he has made and sold several hundred.

"They're popular with the kids," he says happily. And he explains that a marble run is nothing more than two end boards with slanting troughs in the center for the marbles to run down.

His talent for woodworking got him away from "twiddling my thumbs" and now he's back to a regular schedule like the rest of the world. He works six days a week, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with time out for lunches and breaks.

Thiel sells his wares out of his home with the help of his wife, Tina, and the Lion's Club.

"I could market them through the stores, but I enjoy the company of the people that come to buy my things," he adds.

One of the objects that require a little extra help from his wife are the cutting boards he makes.

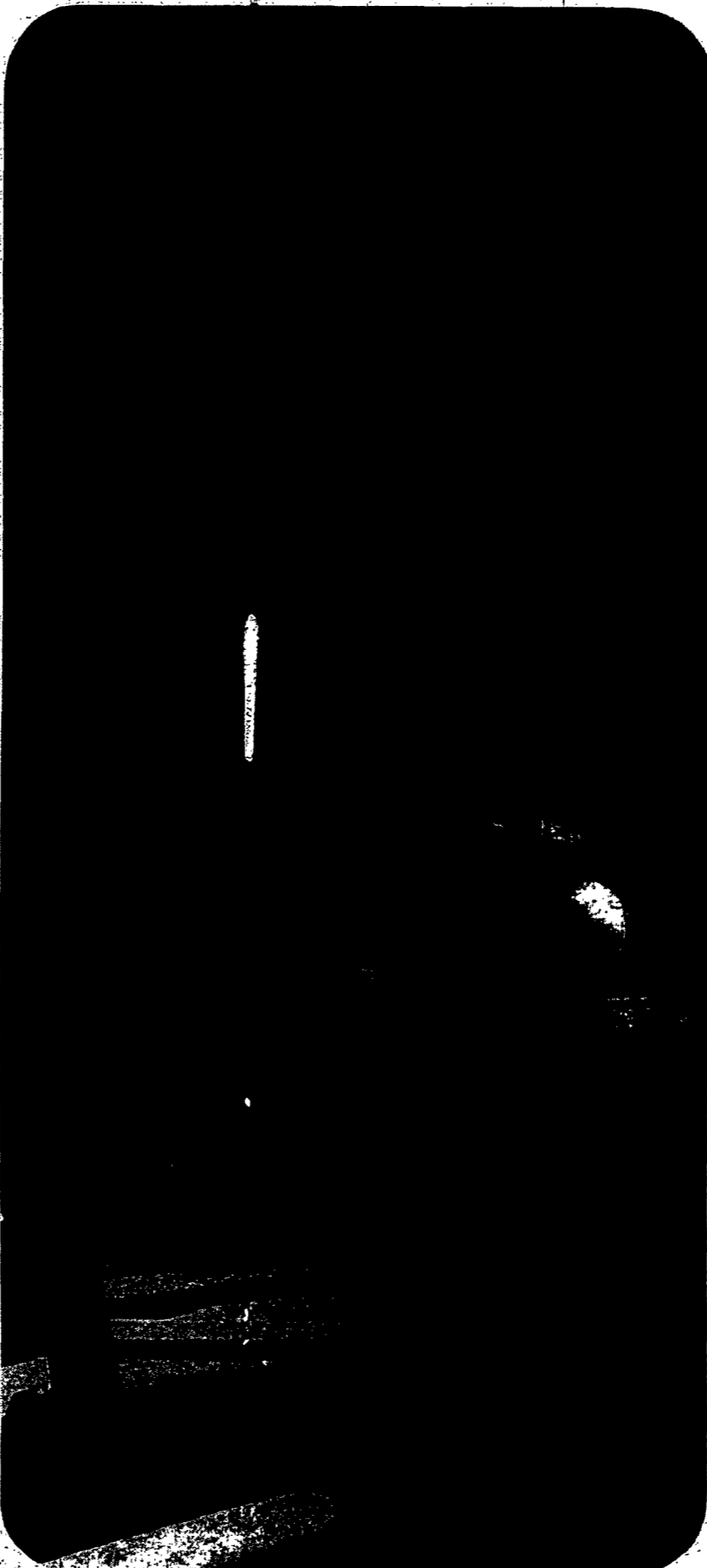
She selects the pieces of wood, lays them out to get the best patterns from the wood grain, and lets her husband take over.

After he glues them together, he saws them to size, sands and planes them and adds the finish.

Thiel is proud of his work, as any good craftsman would be and said he enjoys his second "career" far more than being a mechanic.



His sense of touch



enables Thiel to produce beautiful exampl