

Try This: Organic concentrate helps clean without noxious fumes. Page 3E.

Comics ..... 8E  
 Movie listings ..... 7E  
 Puzzles ..... 2E  
 Television ..... 6E

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# Home & Garden

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**WHO&WARE** LOCAL HANDCRAFTED WORKS FOR YOUR HOME AND GARDEN.

## Creator's hands turn barn stock to brainstorm

BY DIANE DANIEL  
 CORRESPONDENT

Barns have been a part of Roger Dinger's life since his childhood in Waynesboro, Va., where the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive meet in the Shenandoah Valley.

"There were barns all over the place," said Dinger, 55. "As a child, I used to explore them."

After a few years teaching at a wilderness school and then working at an outdoors store, Dinger became a professional land surveyor in Greensboro.

"Being a land surveyor, we worked with developers pretty frequently, and I'd noticed quite a few barns that were going to be bulldozed," he recalled. "In 1992, there was this one particular barn



Dinger crafts furniture and artwork.

with some old oak boards, and I just decided it would be a terrible waste to destroy it, so I got permission from the owners to take the wood." Eventually, he turned the oak boards into an entertainment center.

"From that point on, I had a new hobby," said Dinger, who with his wife moved onto a 5.5-acre property outside of Siler City in 2003.

At the time, Dinger wasn't seriously considering turning his hobby into a business, but if he ever did he had the perfect name, Reinbarnation. "It really sums up everything I do in one word."

**Reinventing himself, too:** For years after reclaiming his first barn of what would become many, Dinger spent a lot of his free time building things for himself and friends. "A lot of friends started coming to me quite frequently, especially for frames." After almost two decades of land surveying, Dinger decided in early 2007 to start Reinbarnation. "Something just clicked in 2007, and it dawned on me that this is the perfect time if I'm going to take the risk. I'm still pinching myself and saying, 'Am I really doing this?'"

**Incubating his plans:** Small-business classes through Central Carolina Community College introduced Dinger to the N.C. Arts Incubator in Siler City, a program to assist artists with studio space and business skills. "The people there have been incredibly helpful. It's a great networking hub." He remains connected to that artistic community but does all his work at his home workshop — inside a barn, of course.

**Timeworn wood:** Most wood



Woodworker Roger Dinger puts away one of the poplar wood benches from reclaimed barn wood as he rearranges his shop/outbuilding recently. Dinger owns and operates Reinbarnation.

STAFF PHOTOS  
 BY HARRY LYNCH

Dinger reclaims is pine or oak. "The older the wood, the more challenging it is to work with," he said. "There's a lot of cleaning involved. But there's a look you can get from weathered wood that cannot be faked." Finding wood hasn't been a problem. "One thing that's good and bad is the changing land use. Developers are buying old farms and turning them into subdivisions ... Also people call me to say they have a barn or someone else has a barn they're taking down. Normally they don't

charge me because I'm doing them a favor by removing it. I offer to make them a frame or something from it. People like having something from their barns."

**Preserving memories:** "One of the things that has drawn me to what I do is the sense of the past being present," Dinger said. "When I first visit these abandoned buildings I usually spend a good deal of time before I start pulling off the boards. I take photographs, talk to the owner, explore the grounds. I get a real

sense of how it was used. In some small way, I'm recycling history. This was a tree and then it was a barn and who would have ever thought that in 100 years it would be a birdhouse or a table in someone's living room?"

**Living-room showpiece:** A popular request is a coffee table. "It's a very useful thing, and you can customize the shape and size," he said. "It's a wonderful way to appreciate the barn's weathered wood. I'll smooth out the top and oil it, but I never use polyure-



Dinger rubs boiled linseed oil on a piece of reclaimed oak board for a small table.

thane." Dinger likes to incorporate original hardware, such as rusty hinges, into his pieces. Other popular items are picture frames, mirrors framed with barn wood, birdhouses and feeders, and planter boxes. He has also made bed frames and headboards, desks, shelves, dining room tables and entertainment centers.

**No stopping him:** Dinger sells his work at craft festivals and in area stores. Last year, his first showing at the Festival for the Eno in Durham, he won best in show. "I didn't even know they were judging the artists' work," he said. "I about fell down."

### ARTISAN AT A GLANCE

**Who:** Roger Dinger, Reinbarnation

**Ware:** Home and garden furniture and accessories from reclaimed wood

**Location:** Siler City

**Contact:** 542-4937, [reinbarnation@msn.com](mailto:reinbarnation@msn.com), [www.reinbarnation.com](http://www.reinbarnation.com)

**Price:** Smaller accessories \$15 to \$95, mirror frames \$75 to \$200, furniture \$300 to \$2,000 and up

**Where to buy:** N.C. Crafts Gallery, 212 W. Main St., Carrboro, 942-4048, [www.nccraftsgallery.com](http://www.nccraftsgallery.com); Twig, Village Plaza, 99 S. Elliott Road, Chapel Hill, 929-8944, [www.twigliving.com](http://www.twigliving.com); Niche Gardens, 1111 Dawson Road, Chapel Hill, 967-0078, [www.nichegardens.com](http://www.nichegardens.com); Side Street Gallery, 18 E. Salisbury St., Pittsboro, 545-3033, [www.sidestreet-gallery.com](http://www.sidestreet-gallery.com); and directly through Reinbarnation.

Also at these upcoming shows: Southern Pines Springfest, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. today, (910) 315-6508, [www.southernpines.biz](http://www.southernpines.biz); Art in the Garden, May 30-31, 6500 Siler City-