

## INTERIOR MOTIVES

# These furnishings came from surprising starts



NAOMI STONE  
LEVY

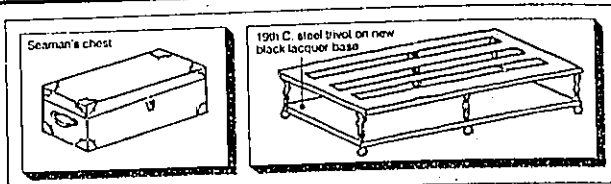
I have been known to fashion some significant pieces of furniture that evolved in a surprising manner.

One of my personal favorites is a fantastic coffee table, made from an antique polished steel trivet that was on six very short steel legs. In its original configuration it was so low it was almost useless. I employed a cabinet maker who made a shelf base using six "bun" feet in the William and Mary style. I lacquered the entire base in black. When contrasted to the steel it is handsome. It is now more usable because the lower shelf houses stacks of magazines and a few books, while the top provides space for a plant and/or other accessory bits. (See drawing.)

Other prodigious coffee tables can be contrived by you, using an exceptionally marked piece of marble or granite or slate, supported on square legs or panel ends. Phone a marble yard and make an appointment to view some of their choices. This will open up your mind.

Another endeavor produced a new/old seaman's chest, with typical brass corner hardware, a stunning key plate, and heavy brass bail carrying handles. An admirable coffee table, size to be determined by need. If you are unable to find an old trunk or chest, why not make your own? (See illustration.) You can find these exceptional corner mounts, key plates and handles at Russell Hardware in Birmingham. This chest can be made to open from the top, affording you storage space. The type of wood involved should be either highly polished mahogany or open-pored oak. The stain should be dark brown, never reddish-brown. The polished one will look slick in contemporary surroundings.

Ignoring the seaman's chest hardware, the same cabinetry, this time executed in knotty pine, affords a country look. On this chest several small mouldings will be appropriate. In this venue the hardware is best if it is wrought iron, with strap hinges. The knots in the pine are lovely when the trunk is stained a very light natural color, and endows the chest with an Early American aura.



Carry it to yet another level. Is there a special painted look in your choice of colors: mustard yellow, blue, barn yard red? Knowledge of an exceptional technique for this paint job is essential to success. The paint is done in many layers, and a lot of sandpaper is used. The first coat should be a light wash of white, allowing quite a bit of the raw wood to show through. The next coat should be the main color, also in a thin wash, again allowing some of the original white, and more of the raw wood to bleed through. And on and on; more of the color, (though never the first shade); more wipe off, more sandpaper. The corners and edges should look "worn." You will need to experiment. Practice on loose raw board.

Try to find a disreputable end table that fits your needs. It could be a broken-down misfit, but amenable to a transformation. It could be a pair to function as nightstands. Painting in the aforementioned manner is one option. Lacquering in one bright and shiny color

or is another.

Cylinders. They are one of the classic shapes in furniture. You are home free if you only use a metal or wood or lacquer form. Top it with a piece of marble and it enlarges the table surface. Be astute. Don't make the top too large or it will tip dangerously. I have even resorted to using a bronze metal wastebasket as a base, and weighted it with sand. A frosted thick glass top will be an asset. You have just created your own individual table.

You need a desk? You soon learn to your dismay, that other than typical office furniture, there is almost no selection. I have created a number of pleasing personal desks by assembling parts in the following way. At an office supply store, locate a pair of pedestal bases with file drawers that are no higher than 28 inches. Again, order a 1-inch thick glass or a marble top in any size that functions well in the room. If the

See LEVY, 4D

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