



*Phil Faircloth's
rustic furnishings
"speak" in the
almost-forgotten
language
of nature.*



Phil Faircloth (in the Atlanta Braves cap) sits at the center of his family and crew at Appalachian Rustic Furnishings. They include (clockwise) son Ryan, wife Kathy, employees Jose Rocha, Michael Kenimer, Antonio Rocha, brother Steve, and sister Julie.

Phil's *Forest*

A majestic maple, centuries old, spreads its limbs like a powerful, ancient spirit. It gracefully rests in front of the 140-year-old log cabin where Phil Faircloth, his wife, Kathy, their son, Ryan, and other employees create sought-after rustic furniture.

"If that maple was to go, that would be a major disaster in my life, almost like a parent dying," says Phil, owner of Appalachian Rustic Furnishings in Rising Fawn, Georgia. Guileless blue eyes, a bushy, blond beard, and a ready

chortle that starts in his chest and bubbles its way out, make this 6-foot, 1-inch, 280-pound bear of a man look and sound like an old-time Santa Claus.

Phil grew up in Orlando on a 37-acre orchard with a lake. "There was this tree across the lake," he smiles. "We'd swim across to get to it and use it for diving." The craftsman reveres trees—though he harvests them to make his chairs, tables, porch swings, rockers, cabinets, beds, ottomans, and settees.

"But," he explains, "we use only the little hickory trees that grow under the big trees. The trees we use aren't getting any light, so they're real long, straight, and dense." When he needs cedar he searches in logging areas.

On the front porch comfortable settees and rockers, even a sturdy bed and a table, invite folks to rest a spell. Stray chickens *pawk-pawk-paaaawk* in front of the shop. A Rising Fawn sign, slightly scorched from the fire that claimed its former grocery residence, proclaims the poetic Indian name of this town of 100 citizens.

The stained-glass front door leads to the hall, papered with a collage of clippings, old photographs, and thank-you notes from customers. Dust covers it all, a by-product of the backroom work, where sawing, hammering, and sanding play a loud song. Projects in progress cram the building. In the back, stacks and stacks of hickory woodpiles suggest a cold, hard winter coming on. A kiln kills bugs and dries moisture in the wood destined to become furniture.

"The thing about rustic furniture, you can't go out and buy tools," Phil says. "We made this steam box here." He points to an invention rigged together with plywood, tin, and a butane tank. The steam readies the poles for bending, then handmade forms hold the curves in place until the molded hickory or cedar piece becomes the back of a granny rocker, a headboard,

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