

Saturday morning, my oldest daughter lost her last baby tooth. I'd been considering how to commemorate the milestone for months but, of course, the big event caught me totally unprepared. I visited Sheree, a favorite jewelry artist at the Farmers Market. And lo, there in her display, was a sweet freshwater pearl bracelet accented with garnets, Zoe's birthstone. I could hardly believe my luck!

I really shouldn't have been so surprised though. Looking back over a year of celebrations, I realize that almost every gift exchanged in my family has come from the talents of an Island Craftsman. Each gift made it to the top of the wish list not because "all the other kids had one" nor because slick advertising compelled us to buy. Rather, my family had the great benefit of seeing the products through the craftsman's eyes, to hear the story behind the materials, the motivation for the design.

Being craftsmen ourselves definitely shifts how we perceive products. In addition to farming the leased garden property at Faerie Hill Farm, Jeff and I create heirloom toys. Both the one-of-a-kind pieces like our wool-stuffed dragons and our copyrighted doll Treehouses demand a participation with the raw materials. Each begins with the same pattern but must yield to the unique stretch and knap of different fabric, the grain and knot placement of wood, until finally a completely unique gift has been born. The joy in setting out a row of dragons, knowing each will inspire wildly different stories, far exceeds the income potential of pallet upon pallet of identically manufactured, branded, and packaged items from across the sea.

The dragons are a part of my family's story. Similarly, Ralph Moore's cutting boards have provided an enjoyable outlet for his creativity. Over the past three years at the Farmers Market, he has sold a line of constantly changing and evolving series of beautiful and practical cutting boards.

Ralph's Tahlequah Woodworks cutting boards are a perfect example of how true craftsmanship transforms everyday utensils into the tools which reshape mundane tasks into beautiful life moments. It is such a sensory luxury to scrub the farm dirt away with Sherri Mask's Rainy Day Garden Eucalyptus Mint soap. How incredible it was to watch gardeners on the opening day of the Farmers Market tucking vibrant plant starts into Dragonfly's recycled wood baskets. What a perfect complement!

Perhaps that's what I value most about the Island craftsmen: our individual skills build upon and enhance each other's lives. Further, much like the recognition in last week's Beachcomber for Island business owner and craftsman Jake Johnson, pride in work is obvious in every endeavor. You quickly learn to trust these practical artists to provide just the right item at just the right time. My thanks to you all.