

HICO

the little town that still can

by Joel Horton of Texas Co-op Power Magazine
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Perhaps one of the most unique businesses in Hico is that of craftsman Dalton Tankersley who creates beautiful violins using only the most basic tools. He starts with a solid block of wood 2 1/2 x 6 x 16 inches, a regular knife, finger plane and sandpaper and carves violins with edges of that taper to 45/1,000th of an inch thick -- all by hand. The instruments sell for \$1,000 to \$1,500 and have been played by musicians with Reba McIntyre and Mell Tillis. Thump the bottom of the violin and the note is E, thump the top, and it's F. But Tankersley says he doesn't know that for sure because, "I can't play a note." He has been making violins for almost twenty years and has a good stock on hand.

Since it takes about three months to handcraft a violin, he figures he gets paid about a dime an hour. Why does he work for ten cents an hour three months at the time carving violins by hand?

"Because, one time someone told me I couldn't do it. Now I can," he says.

Maybe that should be Hico's new motto.



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Crafting wood into music Violin maker puts heart into instrument he doesn't play

HICO - Dalton Tankersley has been a violin maker for the past 20 years, though he can't play a note on one of his own handcrafted instruments. The 66-year-old artisan didn't grow up with an interest in music. He never particularly dreamed of working with wood. It is just that the thought of building a fiddle once occurred to him, and when he asked about the possibility, he was told flat out that he couldn't do it. That was all the incentive he...

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