

Ukulele

The Ukulele Project

On March 10th my wife Patty and I headed off to Maui to attend a dear friend's 65th birthday party. At the time the covid 19 pandemic was in the news but social isolation and quarantine rules were still in their infancy here on the island. When we first arrived in Maui there was very little talk of the pandemic and life continued on there as if what was happening was in another world.

How things changed in a week. Maui was now being affected and the restaurants and bars were all closing down. Flights home were becoming more urgent and those of our group who had planned on a longer stay spent days trying to get earlier flights home. Anyway, all said Maui was wonderful, but there was a sense of relief when we returned home.

Having been on an international flight meant two weeks of quarantine in our home. Dear friends brought us groceries and the weather gave us a lovely respite from staying indoors. Being a walker and I needed some exercise, so I began a daily ritual of walking around the perimeter of our property around 12-14 times. Time spent in my studio was and is also an important part of my day.

Whenever I go to Hawaii I am always intrigued by the ukulele. I see them in music stores, and I am always tempted to buy one. Knowing I was going to be in quarantine for a couple of weeks I decided that the making of a ukulele was going to be my quarantine project. So, the day after returning from Maui I embarked upon my musical instrument project and at the end of the two-week quarantine period the ukulele was complete.

The project as posted on Instagram (@kenguenter) is a document of how I built a ukulele as opposed to a lesson on how one should build said instrument. Since I could not go shopping it had to be built with materials already in my studio. I have built a couple of banjos in the past and I had a box of spare parts in my storage cabinet. I am not a hoarder of wood, so my supply is always a bit light, but I had a lovely piece of sapele and some makori veneers for the body, a piece of walnut for the neck and just enough wenge for the fretboard and bridge. The day after the project was complete I was allowed out of my yard again, so while shopping for various supplies I took advantage of Long and Mcquades curbside service and picked up some strings.

Now I have to learn how to play it!

-Ken Guenter