

Repainting the Little Green Desk

<jensoriginalsembroiderydesigns.yolasite.com>

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This sad-looking relic of a child's desk perhaps looks as though it belongs in a landfill, but it has a lot of sentimental value for me, and I decided – finally -- to spruce it up with a new coat of paint.

My dad built this desk more than 70 years ago for my brother, who was then just beginning school.

Like many young families starting out after the war, my parents didn't have a lot of money then, so my dad built the desk from pieces salvaged from wooden crates and bits of cast-off furniture.

The desk passed to me when my brother and sister outgrew it, and it's been with me ever since. It was never a showpiece – in fact, given its scrounged materials, it's rather rough – but for me the little desk is an important artifact from childhood.

The desk was originally painted with a speckled enamel finish that was popular at the time it was built. Later, as a teenager, I gave it a coat of light green paint to match my bedroom. A few years later, I decided to try to strip it, but the speckled enamel proved resistant to the paint stripper, and I ended up abandoning the project for the time being.



Unfortunately, the “time being” turned into years, and the poor old desk languished on my to-do list until last week, when I finally decided to give it a long overdue makeover.

Given its humble origins, the desk will never be a piece of fine furniture. I wanted to keep its character, so I'm doing the minimum of adjustments and minor repairs, and mainly just giving it a new paint job.



I started by removing the drawer handles, which were caked with paint from my youthful efforts to refinish the desk. I briefly considered changing out the handles, but in the spirit of preserving the character of the

desk, I decided to keep the ones my dad originally installed. So instead, I scraped the chrome clean and gave the handles a bit of a polish, then set them aside while I lightly sanded and then painted.

For the new colour, I chose this dark green Behr Marquee paint: I like the colour, and I had some of the paint already on hand. It took about three coats to cover the desk satisfactorily.



Once all the surfaces had been painted, I decided to give the desktop two coats of clear satin Varathane, to help protect the surface from wear. The satin finish isn't unduly shiny, but it will harden the surface better than the paint alone.



Despite the new paint, my humble little desk still bears the imperfections of the found wood it was made from, and of the wear of 70 years. And actually, I'm glad it does, because it's a poignant reminder of home, of my dad and my big



brother, that I will keep with me for the rest of my days. I only wish I'd done this re-paint long ago, so my brother could have seen it.