



MEMPHIS
CRIME/TRACKER
» Arm Yourself with Knowledge.

[Login](#) | [Manage Account](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Contact](#) | [e-Appeal](#) | [Archives](#) | [Place Ad](#) | [Subscribe](#)

GO

Web Search powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Memphis, Tennessee



[News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Media](#) [Jobs](#) [Homes](#) [Cars](#) [Classified](#)

[Today](#) [Local](#) [State](#) [Nation](#) [World](#) [Weather](#) [Obituaries](#) [Politics](#) [Education](#) [Columnists](#) [Data](#) [Topics](#) [Projects](#)

Memphis Plywood reinvents itself with new tech, growing market

By Wayne Risher

Posted February 21, 2010 at 12:04 a.m.

[Email](#) [Discuss](#) [Share »](#) [Print](#) [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

Even after 90 years, it's not too late for an old company to learn new tricks.

[Memphis Plywood Corp.](#), planted firmly in South Memphis since 1920, has reinvented itself by investing in new technology and tapping a growing market for precision-built cabinets and casing.



PHOTO BY MIKE MAPLE
[BUY THIS PHOTO »](#)

"We've had to adapt over time," says Memphis Plywood owner Hunter Mitchell as Gary Sanders shows a completed cabinet.

Purchased by lumberman Hunter Mitchell and his stepfather, Dr. Bob Richardson, a dozen years ago, the company got out of the plywood manufacturing business in 2001.

It switched to crafting wood components for products that include ammunition boxes, golf cart and school bus seats and big-screen TVs, and more recently, building cabinets to order for business and institutional customers.

"We've had to adapt over time," Mitchell said.

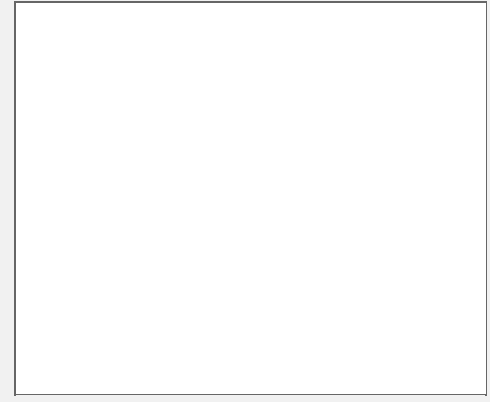
It also has become greener, safer and less labor-intensive as the owners incorporated technology like a computer-driven panel saw, acquired last year, that doubled the capacity for making cabinets.

Mike Mattingly, co-owner of The Court Company, a Memphis-based producer of racquetball courts, said Mitchell has gone the extra mile to respond to customers.



PHOTO BY MIKE MAPLE
[BUY THIS PHOTO »](#)

Danny Kirkland works with the Holzma computer-driven panel saw that doubled the capacity of Memphis Plywood for making cabinets.



Most Popular

[Viewed](#) [Commented](#) [Emailed](#)

- **Female officer wounded in stabbing**
Updated 2/21/2010 at 9:15 p.m. ● 43 comments
- **Feds search for lost marijuana delivery sent from Memphis to Kentucky**
Published 2/21/2010 at 12:00 a.m. ● 61 comments
- **Red-hot Tigers hold back SMU, 76-63, reach 20 wins**
Updated 2/21/2010 at 12:33 a.m. ● 92 comments
- **Geoff Calkins: On nights like this, it's nice to be right here**
Published 2/21/2010 at 12:00 a.m. ● 47 comments
- **Cost of fixing flats on Memphis city vehicles has ballooned**
Published 2/21/2010 at 12:00 a.m. ● 52 comments

"He's willing to pay to have better technology for better products and faster turnaround times, which has been remarkable in this industry," Mattingly said.

Inside the cabinet shop, there's no sawdust in the air or underfoot. It's automatically vacuumed away to a silo that feeds a furnace that supplies the plant's heat.

A stack of particle board is cordoned off by green stripes on the floor, rather than yellow. Green signifies company participation in the Forest Stewardship Council's chain of custody certification, guaranteeing the wood came from responsibly managed forests.

Mitchell, 46, worked for Weyerhaeuser before he and Richardson, 74, a retired heart surgeon, bought the business.

The latest equipment and software acquisition, a Stiles Holzma HPP-380 front-loading panel saw, boosted capacity so the company could fill orders for cabinets for medical facilities.

In the production shop, computer monitors at workstations give technicians step-by-step visuals for carving up 4-by-8-foot sheets of laminated particle board into cabinet components.

"I don't want to be a true woodworker," said Mitchell. "I want to be a factory."

Among those singing Memphis Plywood's praises is University of Memphis baseball coach Daron Schoenrock.

Because Richardson is a Tigers booster, the company donated 37 players' lockers for an overhaul of Nat Buring Stadium into FedExPark.

"We are very, very grateful to Dr. Bob for what they've done," said Schoenrock. "They're very nice, and our players really like them."

-- Wayne Risher: 529-2874

Memphis Plywood Corp.

Owner: Hunter Mitchell, president; Dr. Bob Richardson, chairman and secretary-treasurer

Location: 337 E. Mallory

Product: Custom commercial casework

Employees: 21

More information: memphisplywood.com

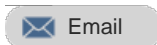
 Email
  Discuss
  Share »
  Print
  Buzz up!

Photo Galleries



Most Wanted Fugitives



Editorial Cartoons



Memphis Tigers vs SMU, February 20, 2010

Weather

Currently 36-Hour Your Photos



Currently **41°**
Overcast
Wind: NW 12mph

Today **47°**
31°

[More Weather »](#)

Calendar

FEB	FEB	FEB	BROWSE
22	23	24	
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	MORE
Dark Tranquillity New Daisy		7 p.m.	
Rhodes College Celebrates Black History Month 2010 Rhodes College		7 p.m.	
David Davis and the Warrior River Boys Atkins Celebration Hall		7 p.m.	
Ayrton Benck, trumpet University of Memphis - Harris Concert Hall		7:30 p.m.	
Steve Selvidge & Luke White		9 p.m.	
		The Hi-Tone Cafe	

[More Events »](#)

Business Directory

Search Browse

Business: e.g. salon

Location: e.g. Memphis, TN