



# WITH THESE HANDS

## THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN FURNITURE FACTORY

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For immediate release

### **NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM HONORS HOOKER FURNITURE COMPANY AND ITS WORKERS**

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On March 19, 2007, the last load of wood entered the Hooker Furniture Case Goods Plant in Martinsville, Virginia, to make the trip from saw to router, from assembly to the stain room, finally emerging as the last pieces of wood furniture built in the United States by the venerable 83-year-old-company. Filmmaker Matthew Barr has captured the final days of the factory in a new documentary, *WITH THESE HANDS: THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN FURNITURE FACTORY*.

On November 17, 2008, at 7 p.m., Hooker employees, former employees and retirees are invited to a screening of *WITH THESE HANDS* at the Walker Fine Arts/Student Center Theatre on the main campus of Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville. Seating is limited and reservations are required. Hooker employees and retirees can reserve seats on first-come, first-serve basis by calling 276-666-3962 and leaving a message with their name, phone number and number of attendees.

*WITH THESE HANDS* takes us into the factory in the last days and weeks of production. Retired CEO Clyde Hooker, Jr., the son of Hooker Furniture's founder, tells of how, as a five-year-old boy, he blew the whistle on the first day of operation in 1924.

Later, he headed the company through years of expansion and innovation, implementing employee participation and reward policies that made Hooker one of the best companies to work for in the Southeast. His successor, Paul Toms, tells of the tough decisions that the company had to make in the face of globalization and heightened competition.

Perhaps the most compelling part of WITH THESE HANDS is the interviews with ten factory workers. Although they are losing their jobs, rather than harbor bitterness, they understand that the company did everything it could in the face of globalization. Their words share their pride in their work:

- Lane Nunley builds prototypes for chests and tables before they move into production. A furniture builder for his entire career, he can operate every piece of machinery in the plant.
- William Stanley is one of 50 people in the world who know how to run a mechanical tenon machine - "and if anyone can do it faster, I haven't met him."
- Toni Jamieson, who worked at Hooker for 18 years, remembers when she first started work there: "After a year, they issued us stock in the company. That meant I wasn't just an employee, I had part-ownership in the company."

Barr, a professor of filmmaking at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, says, "It has been inspiring to witness the dedication, skill and pride of the workers at the Hooker plant. Even as they made the last pieces of furniture, they kept their focus on making the best furniture they could. I learned that a factory is far more than work – it's a gathering place, it provides community and meaning to people in tangible ways. I've met people in the plant who will be friends for life."

A second screening for the general public is scheduled for Saturday, January 17, 2009.

For directions to Patrick Henry Community College, call 276-656-0259 or visit the Patrick Henry Community College Web site, [www.ph.vccs.edu](http://www.ph.vccs.edu).

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