



# Blocks

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when it will go on sale. The third set will be a Greek temple.

Hurd, 43, credits his mother-in-law, Anzolette Cheatham of Hot Springs, with getting him started in the block-building business.

She would tell him how her father, a Chicago architect and friend of Mies van der Rohe, had built castles and cathedrals from blocks for her as a child.

"She was lamenting over the fact that there are no [readily available] unique sets of blocks out there," recalled Hurd.

So in 1989, she bought him some Playskool blocks. They weren't ideal, but "we sat on the floor and we played with them all day," he said in an interview Friday.

Nowadays, Hurd's blocks aren't just ordinary shapes. There are flying buttresses and even clerestories, the upper part of a wall containing windows to light the central part of a building.

Hurd eventually hired a woodworker to take his cathedral design and make the blocks, solely for his

own enjoyment. "After 15 years of people saying, 'You ought to sell these,'" he finally did, he said.

Cathedral Blocks are not designed to scale but include such parts as the nave and tower parts.

"I wasn't trying to be historically accurate to the nth degree because then it would become a model rather than a toy," he said.

Many people buy the blocks for children, but Hurd said "I've had adults buy them for themselves."

Buyers include Conway Mayor Tab Townsell, who told Hurd he put the set together in 43 minutes. "He was just like a little kid," Hurd said.

Thea Spatz, Hurd's neighbor, bought four sets. She introduced the blocks to others, she said, at "a block party."

Hurd's creations are for sale at That Bookstore at Mountbanq Place in Conway. He said FAO Schwarz, the high-end toy store, also wants to sell them.

Blocks are a good developmental toy, but Hurd also knows they're fun. "I've not seen a kid that's not wanted to jump in the middle of these things," he said. "Adults, too."