Lake Charles Woodworkers Club, Inc. February 2003

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MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

This month, we met at Jeff Cormier's fine shop and he was our host. Coming into Iowa, many of us saw the destruction caused by a tornado that skipped through town a few weeks ago, Jeff and his family were very lucky as the twister skipped over his house while coming down in the next block and destroying or severly damaging some homes.

Jeff enjoys building cabinets–pretty large ones. And so he needs lots of dried wood. He wants to make certain that the wood he uses will remain stable not only during construction, but long after he has completed the work.

The shop is not heated and we were all greatful when he opened his kiln and let some of the heat escape.

The kiln is located along one wall in part of his shop and doubles as a work bench. Under the bench top is his kiln. This unit uses a combination of designs he picked up from two sources: Fine Woodworking on Drying Wood, (Tauton Press, 1986) and the June, 2002 issue of "American Woodworker" (Reader's Digest Publishing, 2002) magazine. The Finewoodworking book contains 41 articles on building various types of kilns and drying wood. The American Woodworker issue was devoted almost entirely to wood drying techniques. Jeff said that the American Woodworker articles were ones he wished he had read first.

The kiln is basically an insulated box built under a work bench. The front of the box detaches so he can get to the mechanism as well as load the wood. In the kiln today, he had cypress that had been "cooked" for about five weeks, so it was actually about ready to use. In fact, if he stores wood for a long time, he'll put it in the kiln for a few days to bring down the water content to 6-8% before begining a project.

He said he was suprised with the amount of water he extracted from this load of fresh cut cypress—a little more than two gallons from a couple hundred board feet of wood.

The system uses a combination of a small dehumidifyer, a fan to circulate air and a couple of standard 100 Watt light bulbs.

The dehumidifyer does not work at tempetures below about 65 degrees. So in the cooler months, he turns on one or more of the lights. In the warmer months, the lights are not used. To circulate air, Jeff used a small, low cost consumer fan.

Some show and tell items found their way to the meeting. Eltee Thibodeaux brought a little rotating toy. He said precision cuts are a necessity. Cindy Sutherlin and her son Kendall brought a bird house they built together plus a neat little tool kit Kendall got recently. Dick Trouth showed photos of a maple medicine chest and lighting system he recently produced.

Jeff's shop had lots of innovations including an under drill press cabinet on wheels. This makes very good use of the space and of course, the cabinet can be wheeled out of the way as needed.

Dean Cryar dries lots of hardwood himself so gets to see plenty examples of strangle or exotic peices. Included in one of these was a red oak burl of unusual shape that he engraved into a series of figures on its face. You can see all of these and much more on the LC Woodworkers web site in the Gallery.

Comming Up . . . February 8, 9:00 a.m. Shop of Leonard and Theresa Wilfret. Come see their new shop and power tools

FINISHING GREEN

While the fun of turning green wood can give you alot of satisfaction, finishing takes time. In fact many of our members who turn, never turn wet wood for several good reasons. First, it can crack as it drys, thus wasting the time spent doing the work. It can also warp, sometimes dramatically and in interesting ways (which may add to the uniqueness of the peice). And there's the finishing — you can't just slap on varnish onto wet wood and expect the results to be something satisfactory.

So why does it crack? What needs to be understood are the characteristics of the material. The tension set up by the end grain drying before the side grain in the walls can cause a bowl to crack. The simple remedy is to slow down the drying of the end grain to about the same rate as that of the side grain. This can be acheived using an oil finish and a controled environment.

An oil finish combined with a few plastic grocery bags is all you need to control drying. Among lots of choices are tung oil, WATCO, boiled linseed oil, olive oil and sunflower oil. The later two are readily available at your local grocer. If you use sunflower or olive oil, never use the same oil container for cooking as the contents can become contaminated. Except for WATCO and boiled lindseed oil, the others take a long time to dry. WATCO and other so-called Danish oils, contain drying agents and will produce a reasonably shiny finish. Also take care to keep any printing on the bag on the outside.

If you use a Danish oil, apply a heavy coat while the bowl is on the lathe and leave it for 15 minutes, then wipe it off, running the lathe and buffing to a shine. Remove the bowl immediately and apply the oil to the chuck ring and place it and seal it in a bag.

For the other oils, start by removing your bowl from the lathe and apply two or three coats of oil, paying close attention to the end grain. The wood's end grain will suck up the oil like a sponge. Then place your bowl in a plastic bag.

Over the next week, open the bag daily and give the work another heavy coat, again, paying attention to the end grain and any dry-looking patches. Reseal the bag after each application. The sealed bag is used to prevent moisture escaping and allowing the the bowl's tension to be released for the wood's movement to take place. The second movement of the wood (and to prevent cracking), takes place over the following week.

Just poke a hole in the bag after a couple of days. Then increase the size at two day intervals until the hole is about the size of your fist. This works for bowls of up to 14". Larger bowls should stay in the bag an extra week while increasing the size of the hole as above.

All drying in the bag must take place in a moderate tempurature. If its too hot, the bag will sweat or if too cold, the drying will not work. Once removed from the bag, leave the bowl in the same room for another two weeks or so. At the end of the period, it can be moved to a warmer environment to continue drying. Thicker walls will need longe drying time and thinner walls less.

Another suggested way to do this is to use two brown paper bags. Put your work inside two bags and roll them up. every couple of days unroll the bag. This is not as complicated and will likely result in more cracking, but I've not tried this method.

To remove the chucking ring and make the base flat, you can use a belt sander or other sanding machine. On larger bowls, you can use a block plane, but remember for small or large bowls to re-oil the base with the oil you use.

The nice thing about most surface finishes is that they will go over an oil finish. So now is the time to do your final finish with shellack or poly.

Finishing this way is not only cheap, but easy. If followed carefully and patiently, you should be able to produce successful green wood bowls with minimum distortion or cracking. The main thing is to have some fun with green wood. *Barry Humphus*

2003 LCWW DUES

There is no time like now to make it possible for the Lake Charles Woodworkers to continue our programs, meetings, events and newsletter. Without your support, we cannot continue to bring this woodworking forum to the Lake Area. Now is the time of the year to pay your $20 dues to make certain that we can offer programs in the future. Please send your $20 to Dick Hopes, Treasurer, 1139 Green Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611.

EXTENDING YOUR REACH

The pleasure and satisfaction of plate and bowl turning is enhanced when you have (or can find) the right tools—the right chucks, gouges, faceplates, etc. One of the nice things about my Delta 46-701 lathe (as well as later models and many other brands) is its swivel head. This means you can swing the head around at least 90 degrees and more easily access the piece for hollowing. sanding and finishing. The problem is that you also need to support your tools.

Support can be either a modified machine stand which can get in the way in many shops, or a banjo extension. Delta makes the later (an Offset Tool Rest Extension, part # 46-430) but I simply could not find one either through dealers or on the Internet. In fact, it took a lot of work just to find a price.

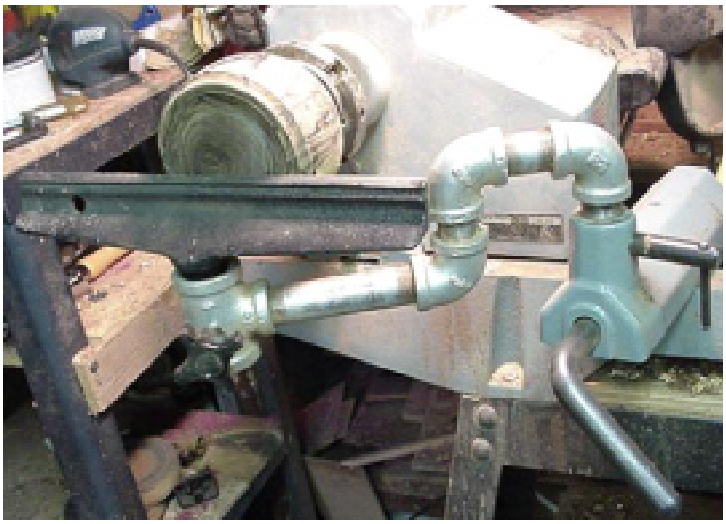
But as necessity is the mother of invention, all of my jig-making stills (and some plumbing experience) came into play. The Delta extension fits into the banjo on one end and has the same holder for the tool rest at the other. When the drive head is rotated, the extension can be manuvered so that you are facing the bowl instead on leaning over and turning yourself sideways to do the hollowing. After a couple of hours, this brent-over position becomes awkward and tiring.

My first thought was to have an extension custom made but I figured that the cost of a special

one would likely exceed the one from Delta, presuming I could find one. Of course, I could have waited until one became available for sale through a dealer or maybe on eBay, but I had bowls to turn.

The design I came up with works very well and is more adjustable than the Delta product while using the same basic configuration. The key is that the extension must deliver the tool rest in the same relative position as the banjo as well as be steady, secure and safe. The first thing I had to do was find the right parts, so the plumbing section at the local hardware store was my first stop.

The parts consist of a 4" 2-1/2", 2", and 5" 3/4 inch water pipe, three 3/4" right angle couplers, a 1-1-3/4 T coupler and a 3/8" knob. The T coupler needs a 19/64" hole drilled into both the sides and



these holes are tapped to 3/8".

I carefully assembled the parts, making certain that everything was aligned. The only machining I had to do (beside the hole and tap) was to reduce the size of the 4" pipe's external diameter to 1 inch. The fact is that 3/4" water pipe does not have a 1 inch outside diameter. It is 1/16" larger than one inch. This means that it won't fit into a standard 1 inch banjo. I mounted the 4" pipe on the lathe between two centers and used a bastard file to reduce the diameter by about 1/16". It takes about 15-20 minutes to do this.

The other minor issue is the 1-1-3/4" T coupler's hole is a bit more than 1 inch. This does not effect the security of the tool rest when the locking knob is tightened. In fact, you could insert a brass spacer inside the hole if desired. The total cost was $11.46 with tax plus about 30-40 minutes of my time.

The assembled rig is stout, safe and flexible in use. Hollowing, scraping and sanding faceplate work is no more a neck bending, back acking chore.
Barry Humphus