Lake Area Woodworkers Club, Inc. June 2012

Mentoring Program - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volenteered to help. Give them a call. Jeff Cormier: 582-3278; George Kuffel: 478-2707; John Marcon: 478-0646; Chuck Middleton: 625-3134; Gary Rock: 433-1679; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Dick Trouth: 583-2683. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

May Meeting Highlights

Jeff Cormier was our host this month at his well designed and functional shop. Jeff has put a lot of thought into his work space and work flow. We also appreciate Mary's delicious sausage biscuits.

We had two guests this month - Clinton Leger and Bobby Wescott. We understand that Steve McCorquodale is getting better after a stroke.

Jeff gave a safety reminder this month about using personal protection equipment (aka, PPE) and in particular something Norm Abrams said at least 273 times, "And remember this: there is no more important safety rule than to wear these — safety glasses." By the way, you can get a complete set of New Yankee Workshop DVDs (210 of them) for just $2,999 that cover the 21 years of the PBS program.

Jeff showed an example of the need for safety glasses - a broken shaft of a router bit. This bit died while being used with a dove tail template. Fortunately for Jeff, he found the bit in the sawdust at his feet but it could have come back at his face. That is what happened to Steve Hedleski several years ago. Steve lost an eye and was not wearing safety glasses.

Jeff said that the bit had been in the router for many years and hypothesized a couple reasons it failed. It broke near where the bit entered the chuck. According to what I've read, this is typical for a bit that has become off-axis causing excess vibration (or missing a bit of the carbide cutting surface). It can also happen as a consequence of plowing through too much material at a time with a 1/4 inch bit or from excessive speed (unlikely in Jeff's case as he had been using the same bit in the same router for years to do the same task). It might be interesting to find out what the manufacturer (Freud) would have to say. Jeff also mentioned that you can get bifocal safety glasses from Valen Safety and occasionally at Harbor Freight. Jeff has a longer discussion on page 2.

Jeff also talked about spline cutting jigs. He discussed two types - one that rides in your miter slots and the other that rides on your table saw fence. More on page 2.

Show and tell started off with Mr. Thibdeaux with a scowled plaque he did for a person about to marry titled "He said Yes." Eltee also showed a nicely done waste paper basket that could also be used as a magazine holder. It was a complex build with compounded angle edge to edge glue-ups. Eltee had to build a jig just to assemble it!

Dr. Elfert has purchased some new wood having just about run out of the luan (for his great sailboat build) and ceiling fan blades. For this child's cradle and rocker, he used craft grade plywood and painted. A commercial version of this would cost about $400. A very clever assembly as well. Don has plans that you can get by emailing him.

J.W. Anderson had a great (but heavy) two peice chair of cypress that can be disassembled. The only way he could have built this chair was using his 20 planer! Jack Stegall has been at work making military emblems - Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and the one most forget - Coast Guard.

Steve Thompson brought one of his sensational segmented bowls of walnut and the unique thing was that he included walnut shells within the body of the walls of the bowl. Ray Kebodeaux had a turned walnut and mesquite pepper grander from a Rockler kit. Ronnie Kramer brought a nice lidded box of oak.

Jeff Cormier did a small table of white oak with a drawer and tapered legs finished in a walnut stain. Joe Comeaux is still turning those seam rippers. He explained that they are all going to be gifts and we guess he has lots of relatives that sew. I ask my Linda if she wanted me to turn one and she replied with a scowl that if I did, she might feel obligated to use it (on what is the question).

Gary Rock continues to make amazing things. He did a live oak bowl with leather lacing, an elm hollow vessel with walnut and aluminum inserts and a sycamore vessel with hemp lacing and the two later with turned acrylic finials. Bob Theau showed home modified web clamps. Joe Comeaux won the S&T drawing while J.W. (again) won the Bring It Back (Jeff's table) Ray K donated a table saw and router height gage (he had a spare) for another a raffle.

Coming Up . . . Saturday, June 9 at 9:00 A.M. at the shop of Sandy and Ronnie Kramer. Great shop.

Review: Woodworking FAQ

The first woodworking book I owned was John Feirer's "Cabinetmaking and Millwork," which I purchased in 1970 or so. I had no idea how to do woodworking other than a basic shop class in high school in the early 1960's. But the book taught me a great deal, and I built many projects based on this volume. The book was designed for professional woodworkers or students going to that profession. At the time, I was neither.

Spike Carlsen's latest book on woodworking is for the rest of us (his first two are as well). These are the folks who spend their weekends, spare time or retirement doing a craft that is both rewarding and can be complex at the same time. Mr. Carlsen has nailed this down well, even for the professionals out there.

First comes the content that covers setting up a shop, choosing wood, hand tools, portable power tools, stationary tools, glue and fasteners and joints. Then he goes on to teach us about furniture making, casework, windows and doors, plus other projects. There are extensive well-done illustrations throughout.

The content is arranged like a Frequently Asked Question series of topics with good basic questions complete with thorough answers to each. Some are more basic than a really experienced woodworker would want, but there is a terrific index of all topics plus an exceptionally well-done resources section by books and magazines as well as for each chapter. So you can find almost anything you may need.

The second best thing (actually tied for first) is the layout and design. It was designed for a shop. It is small enough to lie on top of your table saw or bench and sit wide open with a spiral binding. So many other woodworking books I own are hard or soft bound such that if you want to refer back to the content, you are always having to mark the page somehow, close it and then when you need a detail or two, find where you were.

The only change I would suggest is to put the sanding and finishing chapter after the joints and special techniques one, but that is a minor issue and perhaps that was even an editor's choice.

This book was built for woodworkers, not readers of woodworking books. Cynthia McFarland, the book designer, needs to get a metal for understanding what woodworkers in their shops really need in terms of woodworking books. If every woodworking book did this design, I'd own more.

While beginning woodworkers absolutely must have this book, experienced folks need it as well, as it is a thoroughly well researched, complete and useful resource for all woodworkers. *Barry Humphus, reprinted from my latest review at Amazon.com.*

One more thing. The book will be the rafle item at the June meeting - Spike sent me two - one for me and one for the LCWWs.

Expect the Unexpected

As a process operator, I was told to expect the unexpected. If I could forsee a specific occurrence or event, it really is not unexpected.

An event in my shop a couple of weeks ago brought this back home. I was cutting dovetails with my jig when the dovetail bit failed. I have always known that carbide tips were only brazed onto the bit body and was a failure I always expected. As a consequence I always use appropriate personal protective equipment when routing, and any other power tool operation. I also try to place my vision where I cannot actually see the routing operation, further shielding my eyes.

I noticed that the bit was no longer cutting and shut off the router to check out why. I was rather surprised that the bit shaft had actually failed. This was probably caused by metal fatigue from flexing of the high-speed bit, and was sped along by my never having changed the position of that bit in that router for over ten years.

While I don't feel I was ever at risk, it did remind me of the unexpected. PPE is your last line of defense against the unexpected. Keep it handy, in good shape, inspect it often and use it. It may be all that protects you. *Jeff Cormier.*

The Corner Splin Jig

Joe Comeaux and I both talked about this type of jig before. I saw one at Jack Stegal's shop last month and decided that I would talk about it this month. I brought two examples. Both are table saw jigs. The first rides on the fence much like the tenoning jig I showed last month.

I like to use it with a full-width (1/8" blade) as I can make a 1/8" spline. It is for re-enforcing narrow frame joints where a biscuit jointer is not such a good solution. I have also used it on small boxes and cut upper and lower spline slots. It is easy to make and very effective. The other is similar to Jack's jig. It rides in both slots of the table saw. By leaving the front and back open, the workpiece can more easily be clamped to the jig. It is crude, but I am certain it will work well even though I have yet to use it. I made a single track one years ago that worked quite well, but it's location today is unknown. *Jeff Cormier.*

Band Saw Resaw

Over the years I've had a lot of frustration with resawing on my band saw. In general you have three options for thinner stock: go out and purchase it, use a thickness planer and waste a lot of wood or resaw.

One of the things to ask if you resaw is what type of blade to use and how wide should it be. One approace is that the wider the better. Most consumer band saws can hanndle a 3/4 in blade. Wider, however, isn't necessarily better. Almost all U.S. woodcutting bandsaw blades over 1/2" wide are made of coil stock .035" thick and this size, while strong, puts a lot of stress on your saw. The higher beam strength is good as it can maintain straightness. Most 3/4" blades are set very coarse. They more than double the load on your saw, and they cut so roughly that on medium-sized bandsaws (14" and smaller), they're clearly a step in the wrong direction. (Consider a 3/4" wide blade only if your bandsaw is an 18" model or larger).

The best blade I've seen (and been successful with) is the Wood Slicer from Highland Hardware (and other places). It's got 3 teeth per inch which means that the gullets won't get bogged down given the proper feed rate. It has a very thin kerf and results in a very smooth finish cut.

Adequate blade tension helps keep stock centered even if your control isn't flawless, and it reduces the blade's tendency to flutter under thrust. It's easy to set a satisfactory amount of tension. Install a Wood Slicer blade on your saw with lateral guides and thrust bearings OPENED UP AND BACKED OFF both above and below the table so they do not contact the blade.

With the saw unplugged, crank on some tension and then carefully give the blade a sharp sideways poke with your index finger about halfway between the upper and lower wheels. The blade will deflect a short distance and then seem to hit a wall; if you push a lot harder it will bend farther, but there's a fairly distinct point where it quits deflecting easily. This is somewhat less tension than you are generally used to

Now add tension until this sideways movement is just 1/4" to 5/16" on saws with 6" depth of cut, or about 3/8" to 1/2" on saws with 12" depth. By the way, don't look at the saw's built-in tension gauge until you're finished; there's no need to confuse yourself with arbitrary numbers. After you've gotten the hang of tensioning by feel, check the gauge and use its reading as a setup guide when tensioning the blade in the future. Now adjust the tracking knob so the teeth run consistently just off the edge of the wheel as you rotate the upper bandsaw wheel by hand.

Once the blade is tensioned and tracking properly, there's still some tuning you can do that can make a real difference in performance. So before you bring the lateral guides and thrust bearings up close to the blade, close the wheel covers, plug in the saw and turn it on. First make sure the blade tracks well at full speed, adjusting the tracking setting as necessary.

Now observe the blade. If vibration blurs the blade, try increasing or decreasing the tension very slightly until the blade runs smoothly in a straight, quiet line from wheel to wheel. Cuts will be smoother when you eliminate this source of fluttering in the kerf, and the saw will run quieter and more efficiently as well.

Now you're ready to bring your lateral blade guides and rear thrust bearings close to the blade. By the way, does your saw use traditional steel blade guides, or the more modern roller guides? If it uses traditional steel guides, do yourself a favor and replace them with Cool Blocks, which are blade guides made of graphite-impregnated phenolic resin. Unlike metal blade guides, they can be snugged right up against the blade and give you a far more stable and accurately guided cut. Cool Blocks eliminate friction and heat caused by metal to metal contact so the blade runs smoother, cooler and far quieter than with metal guides. Best of all, Cool Blocks will pay for themselves quickly by extending the life of your bandsaw blades.

Cutting straight lines is easy: you just need to find out how the saw wants to do it, and do it that way. Every bandsaw blade, unless there's something seriously wrong, can cut straight lines, but each will do so in its own way. A particular blade has its own "lead angle," which may be different from "straight ahead." For this reason, if you're resawing just one or two pieces, it may be easiest to use a point block fence, a curved fence tall enough to hold your stock upright while leaving feed direction manually up to you.

Mark the cut line full length on the stock (leaving a generous margin for error), set the point block to your target width and freehand the cut, adjusting feed direction as you go. It's an imperfect technique; you'll waste more wood and spend more time at the thickness planer than ideal, but overall you'll get the job done quickly.

When you need to resaw more than a couple of pieces, however, it will probably be more productive to set up a straight fence and make the cuts with predictable, repeatable accuracy, minimizing waste and finishing time. However it doesn't necessarily help to set your rip fence parallel to your miter slot or perpendicular to the front edge of your table. You want to be able to adjust your fence to skew right or left at least 1/2" out of parallel to the miter slot. If becauseof its design, your fence cannot be adjusted to skew right or left, you can make your own, or upgrade. *Barry Humphus*