Lake Charles Woodworkers Club, Inc. August 2009

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 has years of experience and knowledge.

July Meeting Highlights

The shop of Jeff Cormier was our great meeting place this month and as always, Mary (perhaps it was Jeff), made great sausage biscuits for us.

Gary Rock started us out with a discussion of nail gun safety. Nail guns are obviously great for doing repetitive nailing. Too many woodworkers have long-term damage from pounding nails with a hammer. A nail gun is just so much more efficient, but needs to be used with great caution. Jeff Cormier sited Memorial Hospital stats that suggest that nail gun injuries are common injuries on weekends. Gary said that you need to be particularly careful nailing close to knots in a piece of wood as the hard knot can cause the fired nail to deflect and come out in and unexpected place.

Jeff Cormier showed and discussed safety switches from Grizzly. He had two types and are both about $10. One is a standard large on-off switch with mechanical contacts. The other uses a magnetic switch - very useful and safer as if it loses power, it stays off when power is reapplied. That way, you don't have any unexpected start-ups.

Speaking of Gary, he brought a collection of wonderful items for Show and Tell including an oval platter of oak as well as a round one, both of which were decorated with sisal. A neat sweet gum acorn, a cedar hollow form and a lidded pot of oak, purple heart and ebony rounded out his work this month. All were finished with Danish oil.

J. W. Anderson brought us several items of beech including a letter holder, napkin holder and a server. Bob Theaux built a mantel of pine with the scroll work being done by his Legacy machine. Bob discussed the critical angles needed to achieve the rope look of the work. The mantel is of pine and beech.

Host Jeff Cormier got a request from Lois Ferguson to replicate a bird feeder that one of our founders, the late Bob Ferguson, had designed. Jeff improved on the design even more. Pie Sonnier showed us photos of the finished John Deer tractor with bush hog he recently completed for a client.

Mr. Thibodeaux has done some eccentric turning - a tool handle plus showed one of his neat little wooden puzzles.

Barry Humphus brought an iPod Touch in which he had a program running that combines a two types of bubble level, plum bob, measuring tape, and protractor.

John Marcon discussed the continuing work he has done on the Rita and Ike-damaged wooden statues. He finished them with Renaissance Wax. While expensive, this finish is recommended by all the major museums.

Tom Bergstedt discussed the American Association of Wood Turners and their youth program.

We will have another BBQ this year and it will be in the second half of October at the Porter Hall facility of PPG. Jeff will make the arrangements for the place.

Coming Up . . . Saturday, August 8 at 9:00 a.m. at the shop of George Kuffel. Join us in this nice large air conditioned shop.

New Door and Threshold Project

Getting a new door to replace a sliding glass door was a real challenge. First of all, the original slider door was inside the house as the room into which it leads was once an outside patio.

The first thing I did was to ask my great, reliable general contractor Tim Meaux of Wil-Meaux Construction to price a custom door for me. He made the necessary measurements and took them to Louisiana Millworks. They quoted a price, thought about it for 24 hours and re-quoted it. The first quote was a barely acceptable $1,200. The second was $3,000. They had screwed up and neither Tim nor I were very happy with that. So I said, "Not at this time."

I figured out that there are commercially made replacement French style doors specifically built to replace sliders so I checked at Stines, Lowes and Home Depot. The Home Depot won this one with the door, installation and trim at $800.

What I didn't think through was the large ugly aluminum threshold that came with the new door. My lovely spouse didn't like it either. So with a reciprocating saw, hack saw and some prying, the nasty thing was removed.

So came the harder part – building a new threshold. What we wanted was one that more or less matched all of the existing ones in the home – golden oak – that came with the whole house oak flooring job done by Kenny Fuseiler many years ago when we moved in.

The oak I have or at least have access to is at George Kuffel's shop. Several years ago, George had a very large red oak felled and milled into a great deal of lumber and as I paid for part of this operation, I get to pull and use what I need for my limited cabinet and other flat work. George is always very gracious in helping me choose the right stock from the pile and further assisted with the surface planning of enough to do the job. This process is the reverse of going to Piccadilly where your eyes are larger than your stomach. When getting stock, my eyes are often smaller than my needs – so two trips to the Kuffel pile of oak were needed.

The new threshold had to be high and wide to accommodate the bottom of the door and thus I needed to do a two stage approach. The total height had to be about 2 inches which meant two levels. There were also some special cuts to be made as I had to cover the break and adjust the level between two floor levels. I sent an email to Jeff Cormier and Dick Trouth thinking that one of them may have a solution to cutting a very long dado (6 feet) given my limited shop space and equipment. Dick came back first (Jeff was out of town), but both said use the table saw instead of a router.

Dick reminded me that I would need a very sharp dado set and after examining my tired old one (missing shims and at least one cutter), I opted for one of the adjustable Oldham products. After some time of figuring out the tiny printed instructions and doing a sample cut, the transition work between the two room levels was accomplished.

By the way, at the top of every LCWWC Newsletter is a list of people you can call on to help you with projects, questions, advice and knowledge about woodworking and more. Always use this as these people are your best resource, have collectively hundreds of years of experience and knowledge and are always willing to help.

The thing I needed to do was to make a transition from one level to the next such that anyone crossing this threshold would not stumble over it. Plus, I have visitors who may have limited mobility and I had to consider what future owners of this home have to deal with (crutches, canes, wheel chairs and so on). My first thought was to do a simple bull-nose treatment. I did a complete sample set that showed what the finished product would be. Both of us decided that it was too steep and that we would likely stumble over it very time we went into the game room, especially in the dark.

The solution was to bevel the transition. Starting with about a 1/4 inch rise, the bevel would go up, level off to 1 inch, do another bevel up with a 1/4 inch rise and onto a flat area and do the same on the way down. That way, even a wheel chair could go across the threshold without too much difficulty. I studied various ways of doing this to the cut stock and tested using the table saw to cut these angles in the stock.

A table saw can cut this sort of bevel easily using a raised panel jig arrangement. The idea is to pass the stock over the blade where the blade is at the angle needed. This works great for a relatively short piece of stock using this type of jig. However if the stock is 6 feet long, you have a problem. After testing this with a shorter piece of stock and getting sever kickback, I decided that this approach was way too dangerous. In fact I considered using a hand plane, belt sander and other hand tools to solve this issue.

OK – there are router bits that you can use to do raised panels and I explored this for a while. The good ones (1/2 inch necks) require the use of a router table and at $100 to $150 seemed way too expensive. I have a small router table from Sears I bought 30 years ago and have rarely used as it is hard to set up and marginal at best in terms of accuracy and repeatability.

I then went to Youtube.com and searched for raised panel construction videos to see if it could be done. BTW – there are only 29,000 videos on raised panels on youtube.com, so you may want to refine your search. What I ran across was a video from MLCS Woodworking Products that showed using their horizontal router table. Wait a minute – I have a horizontal router table already – a ShopSmith JointMatic unit that I have rarely used.

The key is that MLCS has vertical router table (and this is confusing – a horizontal router table means that the

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Threshold continues . . .
router is mounted horizontally rather than vertically, i.e., the router is mounted on the side rather than under the table). MLCS also sells horizontal bits specifically designed to be used with horizontal router tables.

I bought the 18 degree bit I needed for $30 and ran the work piece safely through my ShopSmith unit. It was a breeze to do and most important, a safe cut to do.

By the way, the MLCS Horizontal router table is not too expensive at $190, provides 1/64 inch accuracy and is mountable. MLCS also supplies the bits you may need to do molding and other work not possible (safely) with a conventional router table.

The final step in this project was to finish all of the wood to match what I already have installed at various thresholds in the house. That became a rather long quest. I made up samples using various combinations of stains and poly. I finally settled on using MinWax PolyShades - a product not easily found these days for some reason. But I did find the one color I needed at the Home Depot in Galveston. *Barry Humphus*

Light Lubricants for the Shop

As I know, you don't want any oils or grease on your woodworking project, but what we do with tools often needs lubes of various types to make the machinery run smoother and last longer.

Basically, there are three types of lubricants and they are used for different purposes depending on the conditions, the environments and the need. They are wet lubricants, dry lubricants and drying lubricants. Each have their place and purpose and each is good for some things but not all. Different lubricants call for different products and we'll start with the later.

Let's begin with the popular WD-40 product (LPS is a variation on WD-40 as is MolyCoat). All of us have a can of this somewhere in the house, garage or shop and unfortunately, we tend to use it way too much. I've certainly used WD-40 all of my adult life for far too many lube needs. WD-40, for all of you U.S. Navy vets out there stands for Water Displacement Formula 40. That is what WD-40 was designed to do: displace water and provide a coating surface that, when it is cured, will protect the surface of a metal object from being damaged by sea water. WD-40 is a drying lubricant. In other words, it dries and leaves a coating on the surface. Spray a bit on a piece of glass and leave it for a day and you'll see what I mean.

WD-40 is a product that displaces water (and the possible corrosives it could contain) and coats the surfaces with a wax-like product after drying. Note that common kerosene will perform almost the same function and is much cheaper – but you generally can't get kerosene in a convenient spray can. WD-40 is designed to go in easily and then dry, leaving a waxy buildup so that it keeps out the nasty. It was never meant as a lubricant and is in fact, the antithesis of a lubricant. Yes, it is greasy when it goes in but it does not stay that way. WD-40 should never be used on precision parts because it leaves a coating that actually attracts dirt, grime, particles of metal, etc. WD-40 also has a flash point of only 131 deg F, so do not use it near flames or sparks.

Let me give you and example. Suppose you go to the old shed in the back that you haven't entered in years. There is a padlock on the door that won't turn with the key as you haven't been in there since 1984. You get a can of WD-40, soak it on and in the lock and then the lock may open. Then you need to throw the lock away and purchase a new one. In another week or month, that lock will once more be frozen because of the gunk it will contain that is a combination of the wax in WD-40 and accumulated environmental grime. This product should only be used when the mechanism is jammed up and you don't care about the mechanism. Don't use it on the door lock you normally enter into your home. WD-40 is for getting stuff loose enough to break apart. It is not a lubricant.

Dry lubricants almost always are graphite based. Graphite (most of the stuff in pencil lead) is a mineral that when finely ground, provides a slick surface that does not attract grime. It is one of the best products for high precision surfaces, such a locks and very fine threaded items. Most so-called lock lubricants contain graphite with a drying carrier (typically acetone) that will not leave a residue. In normal environments that are not too harsh, graphite is almost always a great lubricant. For example, if you lived in Phoenix, you could lubricate almost everything with graphite. In Southwest Louisiana, it is a different story. In general, what we need here is both a protective coating and a lubricant and that means a wet lube.

Wet lubricants are basically oils that do not contain any acid. Those include so-called gun oil, motor oil and transmission fluid. Wet lubes stay wet, that is, they retain their viscosity over time and for most applications this is sufficient. However, they also evaporate over time and can leave you with a sticky residue that should be removed prior to a reapplication. Therefore, an excellent wet lubricant for your machines should be light in weight and acid free. The best of these is automatic transmission fluid. It is safe for any metal, even so-called "blueing" treatments for guns. *Barry Humphus*