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September Meeting Highlights

Jeff Cormier's nice shop was our meeting place in September and the meet brought a variety of Show and Tell items. They included a very fine and realistic road grader from Pie Sonnier and natural edged ash, china berry and pecan bowls from Gary Rock (along with a cotton wood vase with an ebonized base). By the way, Pie recently got a phone call from a Hollywood star (no, not Britany or Paris) and we hope he tells about this at the next meeting.

Aaron Andrepont brought something everyone needs in their shop: an OSHA publication titled "A Guide for Protecting Workers from Woodworking Hazards." You can get a copy at http://osha.gov/Publications/osha3157.pdf on the Internet. Jimmy Everett had a nice collection of carved canes for us to see.

Guest Kay Barnett spoke to request that the LCWW participate in the upcoming buildout for a new Millenium Park project to be constructed in the Lake Charles recreation complex near the Power Center off Highway 14 in Lake Charles October 16th through the 21st. Kay discussed the features of the park and Leather's and Associates (who supervised the one on the Civic Center grounds) will again be involved in the design and construction. Kay requested that the LCWW volunteer as an organization.

While the members agreed that this is a worthwhile cause, the request came so late before the buildout, that only a few members will be able to participate and it was left to those individuals who want to do this to go to the site on October 16th to participate.

There was a discussion among the members to formally extend the meeting times from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. During the discussion it was generally decided that we have this as the official time but leave it to the individual members when to leave. In other words, we'll do about what we've been doing insofar as meeting times.

Gary Rock announced that the November 10 meeting will be at Stines in Lake Charles and begin in their conference room. After meeting business is over, we will move to the Freud trailer outside to get a demonstration and presentation regarding the Freud brand of blades and bits from a factory representative.

Gary also discussed radial arm saw safety issues (which the OSHA publication above also deals with). The key to radial arm saws is to always PULL rather than push the saw through the work. That way the spinning blade is forcing the work piece away from you. This technique equally applies to compound miter saws as they work in the same way.

Aaron Andrepont won the Roy Lee LeBlanc walnut platter Bring It Back item while Jim Couvillion won the door prize this month, a package of nitrite gloves.

Our host Jeff Cormier did a very nice presentation on cabinet making. Jeff says that you should never use low cost venered plywood for cabinet making. When ever possible, use solid wood. If that is not possible, find the best quality venered plywood you can for your project then be certain to band it with the appropriate solid wood. High quality venered plywood can be used for side panels and the back of the piece. Low cost plywood is only good for interior items such as the dust frames for drawers. At the same time, plywood is very stable and with care, can be sanded and finishes to match the solid wood you use for the front of the peice.

Jeff likes exposed hinges as they have a traditional look. He also likes to modify the wood with stains such as golden oak with a final finish of polyurethane products. Jeff showed us a nearly finish display cabinet and described each of the features as he did his great presentation.

Dick Trouth has a Grizzley jointer, model G-1018 8"x76" with knife setting jig and extra set of knives for sale at $650. He also has a Craftsman belt sander 4"x24" for $40. If you are interested or want to negotiate, give him a call at 583-2683.

Coming Up . . . Wednesday, October 17, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the PPG Family Center in Westlake. Show & Tell, Magazibe Swap and great food.

10 Types of Hammers: Which One Is Right For You?

On your next project, will you be using the right hammer for the job? Save yourself some time and be sure to use the right one.

Hammers come in many different shapes and forms. Using the wrong hammer can make a project go sour real quick. It's a good idea to know what hammers are available and when to use them.

Sledgehammer: One of the big daddy's of the hammer family. This hammer is probably the biggest hammer you'll use. This hammer is mainly used on outdoor projects. These hammers are designed to deliver heavy force. To this hammer, you're going to need some strength and good aim. Toes and fast moving sledgehammers do not make a good mix! There are smaller hand sized sledgehammer's available as well.

Mason's Hammer: Great for working on brick, concrete or mortar. This hammer is often used for cutting and setting brick. It can be used as a hammer or a chisel when laying brick.

Mallets: Mallets are a great hammer to use when restraint is needed. These hammers are also a good replacement for steel hammers when concerned about marring a surface and are preferred for driving chisels and for woodworking. The heads or mallets can be made of different materials, usually wooden, rubber or plastic.

Deadblow: Another good hammer to use when concerned about marring a surface. The deadblow is designed to reduce and eliminate bouncing on contact. Most deadblows are made of plastic. Modern deadblow hammers sometime used lead shot in a viscous fluid inside the head.

Framing Hammer: A long handled hammer normally used by carpenters to frame houses. It has a milled face to reduce slipping off nails on contact. You can find smooth faced framing hammers as well which are often used for decking. A framing hammer is fairly heavy to drive nails easier.

Claw Hammer: Very similar to a framing hammer but is much lighter. This hammer is a toolbox must and is more of a general use hammer. When using a claw hammer try and grip the base of the handle rather than the head. This will give you more accuracy and leverage.

Tack Hammer: Designed mainly to use on nailing tacks. This hammer is usually small in size and fairly light, about 5 Oz. Most tack hammers are magnetized to pick up tacks that have fallen.

Ball Peen Hammer: This hammer is mainly used for cold chisels and forming metal. As it's name describes, it has one side with a ball on it and one side with a smooth face. There are many different sizes of ball peen hammers to choose from.

Roofing Hammer: This hammer is really a job specific tool. The face is always milled, often square, and the peen will be either a standard sharp hatchet for trimming cedar shingles or equipped with a tiny razor blade for cutting asphalt shingles.

Drywall Hammer: Used to install drywall. It has a pronounced mushroom shape to the face and an odd, dull hatchet-shaped peen. The peen's flat shape helps somewhat when beating nails inside corners. The head of the drywall hammer is angled upward for extra reach. The face is lightly milled and sometimes also truncated across the very top of the head for driving nails near the ceiling.

Always wear safety glasses when hammering as broken pieces of nails can become dangerous shrapnel. It also may not be a bad idea to wear gloves on the first day you work with a new hammer. It can really help prevent getting blisters.

Using a hammer correctly is also very important. Keep the wrist straight and do not bend it as you hammer, i.e., use your elbow as the fulcrum to deliver the blow and not your wrist. Not only will you deliver more precision when striking, you'll also save a trip to the surgeon to correct tunnel carpel syndrome in a few years. *Christian Krohn, woodworkingresources.info, edited by Barry Humphus.*

Ten Hand Tools We All Need

1. Hammers. Every woodworker should have at least one claw hammer in their tool chest. While it isn't used in the workshop nearly as often as it would be on a construction site, the claw hammer is still a very necessary tool. I would add a small ball peen hammer as they come in handy for those light and controlled taps.

A 20-ounce model is usually considered to be the most versatile, heavy enough to drive large nails and yet limber enough to be able to extract bent and broken fasteners with relative ease. Because pulling nails puts a lot of strain on the handle, if you expect to need to extract a lot of nails, look for a hammer with a fiberglass or steel handle. Make sure it includes a comfortable vinyl or rubber grip that feels good in your hand.

If you don't anticipate the need to pull a lot of nails, a traditional adze-eye hammer with a hickory handle should be sufficient. The hickory will absorb a lot of vibration from driving nails, reducing the stress on the hand and wrist.

There are typically two types of heads, either a finish-head or a "waffle-head." A finish-head hammer is the most common, with a smooth, slightly rounded striking surface on the head of the hammer, whereas a waffle-head has cross-hatch grooves on the head. This type of hammer is usually much heavier and is used for driving a lot of nails in framing situations where the finished-look of the wood is not a concern. A waffle-head hammer will leave a very distinct mark on the stock.

2. 6" Speed Square. A speed square is a triangular-shaped measuring tool designed for making square marks or angles on stock. Speed squares are usually available in 6 and 12-inch models, but the six-inch model is far more common.

The speed square has three major functions. Most often, it is used for making square marks on a piece of stock. They work well when one needs to make a square cut on something like a 2x4.

Second, a speed square has markings making it easy to determine an approximate angle of a mark or cut. Simply place the square corner of the speed square at the point where the angle meets the long axis of the stock and check the angle based on the marks on the speed square. The instruction booklet that comes with the square shows precisely how to do this.

Finally, a speed square allows the user to mark angles in a similar manner to the method for determining an existing angle. One final bit of advice: Speed squares are typically available in either aluminum or plastic models. Choose the aluminum, as they're practically indestructible. The plastic ones are a bit cheaper, but they won't last nearly as long.

3. 25' Retractable Tape Measure. A retractable tape measure is the one measuring tool that every woodworker should have. There are certain features that you should look for when choosing a tape measure.

The most popular length is 25-foot, although 16-foot and 30-foot are popular size, and includes both standard (imperial) and metric markings. The unit you choose should have a locking mechanism that will allow you to pull out the length of tape you need and then lock the unit so that it won't retract until unlocked.

Also notice that the hook at the end of the tape should be slightly loose on its rivets, which is by design. This allows the

woodworker to accurately take both inside measurements (when measuring the distance between two walls, for instance) and outside measurements (e.g., when determining a length of stock to be cut).

The amount of looseness should be the same as the thickness of the hook.

4. Utility Knife. A utility knife is an invaluable tool in the wood shop. Not only can this razor-sharp knife be used for cutting almost any thin material, but it can be used for things like cleaning out hinge mortises or scoring before making a cut with a power tool. Look for a model that has a retractable cutter and uses reversible, disposable razor blades.

5. Chisels. No matter how many power tools you have at your disposal, one hand tool you'll always want to keep around (in varying shapes and sizes) is the chisel. It can likely trace its origins back to the sharp rocks used to carve wood in prehistoric times, yet the chisel still remains one of the most versatile tools in the shop today.

While there are literally hundreds of different types, shapes and uses for chisels, they all operate on the same basic premise: a sharp cutting edge that can be guided through the stock with a handle that is built specifically to aid the chisel's intended cut task.

Different types of chisels include gouges designed to be used with a lathe, as hooks, and with square, round-nosed or curved cutting edges. The most common chisels have a blade that is typically 4 to 7 inches in length, with about a 20-25 degree bevel on three edges, but only on the top side of the chisel (the bottom side of the chisel is flat).

The blade of a bevel-edged chisel narrows at the top to connect to the handle, which is typically made of either hardwood or plastic. Chisel handles come in various shapes and sizes, but in the case of the bevel-edged chisel, the choice of handle is a matter of preference rather than function. The butt, or back end of the chisel is sometimes reinforced for strength, as certain circumstances call for the chisel to be tapped with a mallet to guide the blade through the stock.

The term for cutting with a chisel is "paring". To pare with a chisel horizontally, you should place the flat side of the chisel against the stock. Hold the handle of the chisel firmly with one hand with your index finger steadying the blade. Use your off hand to steady the chisel by holding the blade between your thumb and index finger.

Stand in front of the work piece with your weight evenly distributed and the chisel parallel to the floor. Use your body weight to ease the chisel through the stock. If extra force is needed, use the heel of your main hand to strike the butt of the chisel.

When paring vertically, hold the handle of the chisel with your thumb on the butt, steadying the blade with your off hand. As before, use your body weight to ease the chisel through the stock, this time in a downward manner.

Should extra force be needed, you can always use a wooden mallet to tap the butt of the chisel.

Avoid storing your chisels loosely in a drawer, where they can bang into one another, thus dulling the cutting edge. A better option is to hang your chisels on a rack or in a drawer with individual dividers.

Proper use of a chisel requires that the cutting edge remain sharp. To properly sharpen a chisel, use sharpening stones of progressive grades. You may need to touch up your chisels regularly by honing the flat side to keep them at their best.

The number one rule of chisel safety is to keep them sharp. A dull chisel is a dangerous chisel, as it will require more effort to push the chisel through the stock.

However, if keeping the chisel sharp is safety rule #1, then rule #1a is to always pare away from your body and keep your hands behind the cutting edge.

6. Level. A level is used to determine whether an object is level (perfectly horizontal) or plumb (perfectly vertical). There are many types of levels, but two are predominantly used in woodworking.

The first is a full-length level, typically 48-inches in length and made of hardwood with brass edges. There are two glass-encased bubbles on each end of the level. To use, place the level flat against a horizontal object, and if the bubble settles directly in-between the two lines on the glass tube, the object is level. Similarly, if placed against a vertical object, checking to see if the bubble lies between the lines will determine if the object is plumb.

The second type of level is a torpedo level, which is typically between eight and ten-inches in length. They work the same way as a full-length level, but are ideal for checking level and plumb on small objects.

7. Screwdrivers. Screwdrivers have one singular task: to drive screws. They come in numerous styles (flathead, Phillips, square head, Torx and star driver, to name a few) and sizes. You should have quite a few of all styles and sizes in your tool chest.

Phillips screwdrivers are probably the most common, and look like an "X" at the tip. Phillips screw heads are used for machine screws, drywall screws, deck screws and more. Common sizes for woodworking are #1, #2 and #3, with #2 being the most common.

Flathead screwdrivers are also quite common, with a flat, spade-like tip. Flathead screws also come in #1, #2 and #3 sizes. Wood screws are often flatheads.

Other useful types will drive square head screws (some deck screws use square head, as they're less likely to strip than Phillips), or six-pointed star shaped Torx headed screws.

8. T-Bevel. A sliding bevel is a simple hand tool made up of a stainless steel blade, a plastic or wooden handle and a locking mechanism. The blade can be adjusted to any acute or obtuse angle and locked in place, so that the angle can be repeatedly marked on other pieces of stock.

9. A nail set is a type of chisel used exclusively for driving nails either flush or beneath the surface of the wood stock. When driving nails with a hammer into their woodworking projects, woodworkers will take care not to drive the nail so far as to strike the wood with the head of the hammer, causing a dent, or "bruise" to occur. To prevent this, the woodworker will drive the nail to a point just short of the surface, and then tap the nail the rest of the way using a nail set. Nail sets come in various sizes, based upon the size of the nails being driven.

10. Block Plane. The last absolute necessity every woodworker should have is a small block plane. This device is used for shaving thin amounts of wood away from the stock, and is invaluable for cleaning up edges during assembly. *From About.com edited by Barry Humphus.*

Time To Renew

With the cool weather as we get to the end of the year and it's now time to start thinking about (if not actually doing) the renewal of your membership in the Lake Charles Woodworkers. It just takes a few minutes and costs only $20. See Dick Hopes at the next meeting and renew your Lake Charles Woodworkers annual membership. Not only do you get this fine Newsletter, you get much more.