

BENCHMARK

Newsletter of the Vancouver Island Woodworkers' Guild
VISIT US AT - WWW.VIWG.COM

Issue: OCT-2007



President's Message

This month you will find two new items available on the guild website. The first is a list of *guild resource people* who can be contacted when you have specific questions related to your wooding projects. The concept is to foster communication about members and share information in a constructive manner. We've kept the list short; there are undoubtedly other members qualified to be on this list and we'll rotate people from time to time to distribute the load equitably. We'd certainly encourage people to get together during the meetings and discuss things fact to face; eventually we may host an email query through the web, but there are already a number of these in the public domain and they are a lot of work to establish and keep running. Thanks to all those who let the names stand for this program.

The second item is the establishment of *guild mentoring program* to assist those members who want to seek private critiques for the woodworking projects. This has been carefully worked out over the summer with help from the four mentors and Russ Franson who agreed to help me with the project. The purpose of the program is to offer constructive evaluations of people's work in a one on one environment. The details of the program are included in this month's Benchmark. I want to personally thank Karen, Ken, Cam, and Michael for their contributions to the draft program and their willingness to stand as mentors.

I suspect this program will evolve a bit over time once we get some experience with its operation. We anticipate having a guild show in the spring of 2008, but don't leave your consultations with the mentors to the last minute!

We have a couple of positions to fill on the executive, one for merchandise and a second for coordination of the monthly raffles. The raffle job just got a bit easier because we have decided to split up the task of collection the items. So we'll be looking for volunteers or failing that, we might have to conscript a few people.

J. Bryan Kemper
Pres. VIWG.

Mentoring Program

Introduction:

One of the most important functions which the guild can perform is to encourage members to improve their skills in whatever form of woodworking they chose to pursue. Learning from meetings, workshops and special clinics is one thing, but eventually you will want an honest and constructive assessment of your work, so you can see visible improvement on your next project.

Typically the only time members are provided with critiques are when furniture is submitted for a jur-

OCTOBER MEETING

Camosun College - Fine Furniture Program Building

Tuesday, October 10th. 7:15 PM

ied show; the outcome is blunt, either acceptance or rejection. This is not a constructive educational “model”!

Critiques have been attempted at meetings, but the results have been less than satisfactory, more driven by group politics and the desire not to offend than to provide meaningful assessment.

Therefore the guild will establish a mentorship program to provide instruction critique, in confidence for members who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to have their work evaluated. This opportunity need not be linked to preparing items for a competition, but can be extended to other projects.

The basic details of the program are outlined below.

Goals:

1. To provide confidential critique and constructive evaluations on a request basis, for members desiring to improve their overall skill levels.
2. To provide private one-on-one informative guidance.
3. To provide a record of areas needing improvement and constructive suggestions for improvement.

The scope of the evaluation (critique) would include design (focusing on function as well as the elements and principles of design), material selection and its appropriate use, joinery choices and technique, and finish (once again focusing on choices and technique). Marketability could also come into play if requested.

Note: This is **not** an opportunity to have one on one instruction on how to achieve the improvements suggested by the mentor. You may be provided with suggested references or directed to forums which could address the development of skills and methods needed. There are other guild programs which address the “how to” aspects of woodworking and design.

Implementation:

1. The program is available to members in good standing of the Vancouver Island Wood Workers Guild.
2. The guild will identify a small group of peers who would be available to provide critiques in specific areas of expertise.

3. Evaluation would be at the request of the member, and could be at any stage of the project (could be in the middle, for example). There should be sufficient construction to allow for a reasonable critique.

4. The evaluation should be a one on one meeting to maximize the opportunity for a frank exchange of information.

5. Evaluations could be at the members shop or taken to the mentor depending on the size of the project.

6. Because people are often aware of their shortcomings, members may wish to jot down potential problem areas. Once the evaluation is complete, have the peer review the comments and build them into the advice given. Advice would be recorded on the worksheet.

Members should keep the evaluation sheet for future reference.

Getting Started:

We have currently identified four mentors, these are:

- Cam Russell
- Ken Guenter
- Karen Trinket
- Michael Moore

A process for adding mentors to the list or replacing existing ones will be established by the guild executive.

When you are ready to have one of your pieces evaluated, select a mentor and phone them to arrange for an evaluation. Ensure that the time frame established with the mentor meets your needs. If it does not, it might be necessary to select another mentor.

The guild does not monitor the results and the program does not have fees attached to it; it is a donation of time by the mentor.

Please do not have the same piece evaluated by more than one mentor.

Volunteer mentors are professionals and/or experienced amateurs who have spent years developing their skills. Their time is valuable so use it sparingly and wisely.

The guild executive will review the progress of the program from time to time and make changes as

needed. These will be discussed with the membership at a meeting prior to implementation.

Guild Resource People-2007

This is really two things, first a list of specialties (for lack of a better term) and then the people to fill the role. So here's a stab, which is intended more to prompt you, than to be a definitive list.

Finishing:	Mike Kattler/Russ Franson
Furniture:	Hikmet (Chico) Sakman
Joinery:	Keith Battersby
Wooden Boxes:	Scott Reid
Turning:	Ray Franklin/Christine Davidson
Equipment:	Jim Barker
Hand Tools, Planes:	Gordon Thompson, Russ Franson
Sharpening:	Brent Beach
Veneering/Marquetry:	Phil Smith/Hikmet (Chico) Sakman / Ted Rowley
Carving:	Bill Morley/Scott Reid

TOOL SHOW THIS WEEKEND...!

In case you did not hear!

Talking about tools....

We need tool reviews by the users whom we know!
Any takers? Somebody must have bought a tool
within the last couple of months... C'mon!

Editor

The Art of Buying Lumber

(excerpts)

One of my woodworking specialties is the art of cajoling lumberyard workers into letting me sort through their lumber piles, looking for that perfect board for my next project. Sometimes I have to pout and threaten to take my big-time business elsewhere. Usually, though, I get permission simply by promising to restack everything when I'm done. And so, I've spent many a morning working in another guy's business, lining up about a quarter ton of lumber just to get a few boards that suit me.

Finding Diamonds in the Rough

The first thing you need to do is rid yourself of the idea that you have to use top-grade lumber or a perfectly clear board for everything you make. Most furniture makers don't. They use fairly short or narrow pieces that can be cut from even the lower grades of lumber. You can, too. Just take the time to analyze the size and type of parts you need before you start...

Another thing to consider when buying wood is what you want to build. This might sound exceptionally long, clear board, something like a clear 14-ft. 1 x 10, to build a coffee table with no component longer than 36 in. Many apparently just total up all the needed components and specify that size board. This strategy is expensive and wasteful and can be aesthetically unwise, too. Often, better boards don't display as much beautiful figure and character as lower-grade ones...

Looking Beyond Wood Grades

The question of lumber grades can be confusing, so it's best not to get too hung up on them when picking stock. Grades give you an indication of the number of defects in a board, not the board's total quality. Instead of grade, concentrate on the yield, which tells you the grader's estimate of how much clear wood a board contains....But, how do you figure the amount of wood you need when you have to work around all those knots? The easiest thing to do is buy 20 to 25 percent more wood than you think you'll actually need. "Working wood is not like slicing loaf bread," says Hil Peel, manager of Wall's lumberyard. Waste is inevitable even if the board is free of defects because you lose to saw kerfs, jointing, and other milling operations. Don't underestimate the waste from kerfs; some carbide blades take nearly 1/4 in. per pass. And, stay away from the elaborate cutting diagrams sometimes found in project articles. These diagrams are supposed to show you how to cut lots of little parts out of a board, but they can become very restrictive. Peel tells of one woodworker who spent hours making four pages of diagrams and then had to spend another couple of hours searching for boards to fit the diagrams. "I think it's better to buy about 100 bd. ft. and get the stock you need without worrying about cutting diagrams," Peel advises.

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CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

Shopsmith DC 3300 Dust collector 330 CFM - \$190
 Shopsmith 12" Planer on stand with casters \$290
 Incra Miter3000SE miter gauge new in box - \$190
 Call Harvey Brooks 920-0636

FOR SALE

Benchtop drillpress \$30
 Call Kory Larsen @ 888-5256

Wood Recovery - Sale

We still have lots of wood in inventory. If you would like to purchase some garry oak, red oak, london plane or maple, please contact me, Wayne Holmes, at wgholmes@shaw.ca or, if you just want to enquire about the wood, call 479 4694 and talk to me about it.

I do not plan on taking more trees until we can reduce our inventory of about 1400 to 1500 board feet.

I also have anchor seal for sale. Anchor seal is an excellent wood sealer for sealing the ends of logs or coating green turnings for further drying.

HAVE YOU DREAMED OF OWNING A STANLEY MODEL 45 OR 55? HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO OWN A USER PLANE THAT HAS ALL OR MOST OF THE CUTTERS AND IS IN GOOD SHAPE FOR \$100 FOR A 45 OR \$125 FOR A 55 WHILE THEY LAST . THERE ARE 20 AVAILABLE AT THIS PRICE BUT WE MUST BUY THEM ALL AS IT IS PART OF AN ESTATE. RECENTLY SOME SOLD FOR AS MUCH AS 450 DOLLARS. E MAIL ME AT STARITA@SHAW.CA

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The Guild is a non-profit organization of woodworkers, professional and amateur, dedicated to the promotion of woodworking and appreciation of fine craftsmanship. A one-year membership is \$45.

And, stay away from the elaborate cutting diagrams sometimes found in project articles. These diagrams are supposed to show you how to cut lots of little parts out of a board, but they can become very restrictive. Peel tells of one woodworker who spent hours making four pages of diagrams and then had to spend another couple of hours searching for boards to fit the diagrams. "I think it's better to buy about 100 bd. ft. and get the stock you need without worrying about cutting diagrams," Peel advises. "Plus, if you buy at least 100 bd. ft., you usually get a quantity discount and can use what's left on the next project." **Wood Movement**

Once you've chosen your wood, consider how the new environment of your shop will affect it. I like to buy wood at least a week or two before I need it so it can adjust to my shop's humidity level. This generally reduces problems with wood movement from differences in humidity between the shop and the lumberyard. To minimize chances that kiln-dried stock will pick up moisture after it leaves the lumberyard, keep the wood inside in a dry, perfectly flat area. Lumber dealer Wall also advises against putting stickers between layers of kiln-dried wood, saying they promote air circulation and moisture changes.

Moisture can wreak havoc on surfaced stock, and that's a good reason not to buy lumber that way. Wall said some of his customers have been especially discouraged with surfaced stock after seeing how much a species like oak moves and twists shortly after they get the lumber to their shops.

Here's another tip: It's often more economical and easier to mill part of a rough-cut board to produce a project than to process the whole board. If you only need a 3-ft. long piece, it doesn't pay to joint, flatten, and thickness-plane an entire 8-ft. board. Besides, cutting the board into shorter segments can significantly reduce warp in the leftover piece and make subsequent milling operations easier.

Processing your own wood gives you an opportunity to learn more about the material and how it

changes with the seasons, says Wayne Raab, head of the woodworking program at Haywood Community College in Clyde, North Carolina.

Raab encourages people to use moisture meters, although the actual moisture level of a piece of wood is not as much of a problem as mixing stock with divergent moisture levels in the same project. "If you mix a piece at 12 percent with pieces at 8 percent, there's a good chance that you're going to have popping joints," he says.

Once you learn to deal with wood movement and to work with the random widths in which hardwood comes, you can build anything. Gluing up narrow stock to make wider boards produces components that are stronger and more stable than many wider boards. For Raab's students, "Working with narrow stock makes them more appreciative of wide, exceptionally beautiful boards and convinces them to hold these special pieces for more decorative work. It helps build an appreciation for material," he says.

Grading Wood

Wood grading is part art, part science for the pros, but mostly confusion for novices. Not only is the grading system complex, but also the rules applied to hardwoods differ from those applied to softwoods. Plus, each species is likely to be eligible for several exceptions to the general guidelines.

Fortunately, you can take advantage of the grading system without actually knowing much about how a lumber grader does his work. You just have to understand a few basic terms.

When a grader evaluates a board, in a way he is actually doing some of the preliminary work for you by gauging the number of defect-free areas, how large they are, and what percentage of the board they make up. Of course, he's not evaluating beauty, figure, and other design variables.

Graders judge hardwoods using standards the National Hardwood Lumber Association (NHLA) has administered since 1897. The grader checks each board with a lumber rule to gauge the number of board feet, then uses several fairly complicated systems to determine how many clear cutting units the sawyer can obtain.

Typical diagrams for firsts and seconds (FAS) and No. 1 common boards are shown in Fig. 2. The fewer the defects, the higher the grade and value of the board. Wide boards are much more expensive than those less than 9 in. but are more prone to cupping and cracking in the drying process, so the sawyer must rip them apart for the maximum yield of high-quality lumber. This is one reason hardwoods are sold in varying lengths and widths.

Pine is graded and processed differently because softwoods are used primarily for construction. Rather than expect the builder or manufacturer to process the lumber, the mill does it and produce stock in standard widths and lengths.

"Whatever you do in hardwood grading, do the opposite in pine and you'll probably be doing the right thing," says William O. O'Kelley, chairman of the Haywood Community College wood products department, which runs a sawmill and kiln. "With hardwoods, you try to put a defect on the edge so it can be ripped off. On framing lumber, you put the biggest defect in the middle where it will have least effect on strength."

Hardwood grades generally are based on the poorest quality face. With pine, the best face sets the grade for boards likely to be used by furniture makers. Many defects are prohibited in some grades of hardwoods, but you can have a little of everything in pine, although the grade drops with the increased number of defects.

Pine graded for construction follows rules that would sound very familiar to a builder. There are bans on defects that would destroy the nailing edge, limits on how much pieces can be out of square, and standards that permit crooking to the degree that it can be removed with the pulling force of a nail.

For additional information, check Rules for Measurement of Hardwood and Cypress, (\$6, NHLA, Box 34518, Memphis, TN 38184, 901-377-1818), Standard Grading Rules for Southern Pine Lumber (\$5.25), and Grader's Manual for Boards and Two-in. Dimension (\$5) (both available from Southern Pine Inspection Bureau, 4709 Scenic Highway, Pensacola, FL 32504, 904-434-2611).

These technical manuals won't make anyone's top 10 list for exciting reading, but they do contain a lot of interesting information on various species as well as concise definitions for defects and other woodworking terms. The pine manuals offer a rundown on types of knots and how they affect the strength and appearance of boards. -D.B.

BUYING WOOD BY MAIL

I used to shy away from mail-order lumber, figuring I just wouldn't be satisfied with anything I hadn't personally picked. Then, one day a co-worker asked me to go in with him on mail-order purchase; he wanted to meet the minimum for free delivery. The price was good, so I took a chance.

The selection I received was pretty good. The boards had defects, but there was plenty of clear stock, lots of interesting color and figure. What's more, working the stuff and finding the parts I needed was fun.

Since then, I've had good luck with purchases from the five or six companies I've dealt with. If the company offers free shipping for a minimum order, I always buy enough to take advantage of that. If I have to pay the freight, I shop around until I find a deal where the cost of the lumber plus the freight is competitive with local sources. Now and then, I get a board that is unusually difficult to work, but that can happen even if I select each board personally. I chalk it up to the witchcraft of wood, not really a problem worth complaining about.

One way I've found to assure a successful purchase is to study the company's catalogue and call the customer-service department to discuss any concerns or questions before ordering. If the dealer seems too busy to bother with questions, I assume that's my hint to do business elsewhere.

When you decide to buy by mail, begin by telling the dealer what you are building. "Speak in English, and don't try to be Mr. Professional Lumber Buyer," says James Heusinger of Berea Hardwoods, Berea, Ohio. Talk about grades might sound good, but it can actually make it difficult for the dealer to provide what you want. If he knows what you are planning, Heusinger says he has a better chance of providing wood that best matches your project.

The two most common ordering problems Heusinger encounters stem from customers too precise about the sizes they need and customers who don't provide enough information about the wood's use. He says his company will try to provide exact sizes if possible. Most of the time, he tells customers that it's best to concentrate on stock that's suited to their project and to size it themselves rather than order specific sizes and end up with lumber unsuited for the planned project.

Once the dealer understands what wood is needed, the customer should ask what it will cost. Sometimes, the dealer can't provide the stock at a price that suits the customer, Heusinger also recommends customers ask up front about how to handle problems: Can the wood be returned? Under what circumstances? What about reimbursement? Does the buyer get a product credit or a refund? Who covers shipping costs, which can be considerable because of the weight of the material?

To help buyers get used to mail order purchases, dealers often have specials that allow customers to try various hardwoods. One dealer I know offers a 30-pound box of mixed hardwood shorts delivered prepaid in the continental U.S. for \$29.

Heusinger advises hesitant customers to "place a small order and see what happens without taking a great risk." If the first order works out, he advises to order more and start building a good relationship with the company.-D.B.