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Fine <u>Wood</u>Working

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On the Cover:

A good cigar humidor is more than a handsome box. Just how well it protects its contents depends on construction detailing and the choice of materials, as Rick Allyn explains on p. 44. Drawing: Bruce Morser



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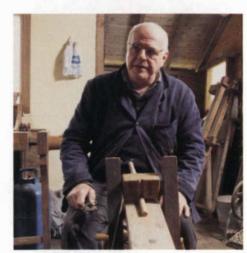
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94 Good Work

Outspoken and unapologetic, a Welsh chairmaker makes a plea for hand tools by John Brown



Mid-sized thickness planers, p. 52



Working with hand tools, p. 94

Planes can be art—The articles by James Krenov and David Welter on wooden planes were a pleasure to read (FWW #126, pp. 64-73). I find wooden planes fun to build and use and beautiful to look at. Indeed, I have several that I inherited, and some of them adorn my library as objects of art.

The reason I don't use them more often is that they are difficult to adjust. With my metal planes, I can cut shavings of 1 to 3 mils thick and have the job done before I can set a wooden plane.

But there are many woodworkers who prefer wooden planes. For example, the shipwrights at Purdy's on Long Island used wooden planes almost exclusively.

My collection of planes is extensive. I've fitted my spokeshave with a Hock blade, which because of its thickness eliminates any tendency toward chatter.

-Thomas Sharp, Sanibel, Fla.

David Welter's article on wooden planes is one of the few excellent explanations I have read about making something out of wood. He actually includes all of the steps and provides information about pitfalls.

The staff at the College of the Redwoods provides minute attention to detail of each operation during the week that a class works on planes. Making planes at the college is a great introduction to very high-quality woodworking.

By the way, Don Weber laments that books by Alexander Weygers on blacksmithing are out of print ("Reviews," FWW #126, p. 108). Ten Speed Press has reprinted all three in one volume under the title The Complete Modern Blacksmith. This has to be one of the best values in books used by woodworkers. You can get in touch with Ten Speed Press at P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707; (800) 841-2665.

Fine Woodworking provides informative articles. I've enjoyed reading the magazine for years.

-Harold Hubbard, Berkeley, Calif.

Repairing a broken tenon-For the most part, Jeff Jewitt's article on repairing failing joints (FWW #125, pp. 68-71) is a good treatment of a subject that is covered very little. But his solution to a broken tenon at the bottom of a rocking chair leg leaves something to be desired.

The diameter of the tenon is too close

to that of the leg, and a hole drilled in the bottom of the leg to accept a full-sized tenon replacement would probably break the leg. Mr. Iewitt's solution is to slice off the leg at a steep angle and scarf on new wood to replace the missing leg and tenon. But this removes good wood from the leg, something to avoid whenever possible, and the scarf joint is prone to failure. My solution to this break is to drill a deep hole smaller than the tenon into the bottom of the leg (experience and common sense will tell you what the leg can accept). On my lathe, I turn a twostep tenon to replace the original. The small diameter half of the tenon gets glued into the leg and the large into the rung. I've used this repair for more than 20 years in my shop, on hundreds of rocking chairs, and I've yet to have one come back rebroken.

-Grey Doffin, Duluth, Minn.

More on tapping wood for screws-

Pat Warner's article on threading machine screws directly into wood (FWW #126, p. 63) ignores several truisms of pullout and shear strength.

The pullout strength of such a system is simply the surface area of the edge of the threaded unit times the shear strength of the weaker of the two materials. Thus a 1/4-in. bolt will have twice the pullout strength of a 1/8-in. bolt. Inserting it 1 in. rather than 1/2 in. also will double the pullout strength from wood.

The shear strength of wood is only a small fraction of that of steel or brass inserts, so the entire failure will take place in the wood. The typical metal insert will have a diameter of three or four times that of its matching machine screw, which will be its strength advantage over his suggestion.

Also, the threads are much less likely to be damaged with repeated disassembly. Moreover, if you use T-nuts (if the back side of the piece is available), you can achieve the shear strength of steel threads,

Writing an article

Fine Woodworking is a reader-written magazine. We welcome proposals, manuscripts, photographs and ideas from our readers, amateur or professional. We'll acknowledge all submissions and return those we can't publish. Send your contributions to Fine Woodworking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

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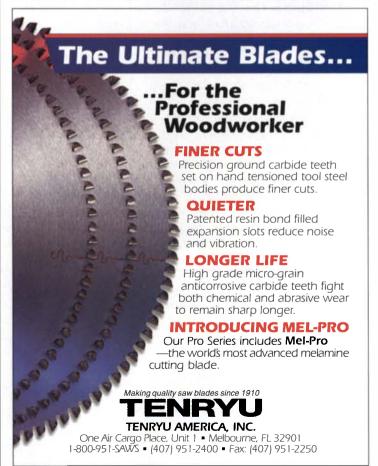


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about 15 times that of most woods.

For a piece with only rare necessity for disassembly and where you could put 2 in. of machine-bolt threads into cross grain, not end grain, tapping threads in wood might be useful.

-King Heiple, Pepper Pike, Ohio

Mr. Warner should have recommended backing the tap out every few turns to clear the wood chips from the flutes of the tap. This will prevent jamming the tap and potentially ruining the threads that already have been cut.

Also, the most common taps have a tapered end that will cut the threads less deep than the body of the tap will cut. That means you must allow for the end of the threaded hole being too small for a machine screw.

Using a somewhat smaller than recommended drill will give a greater depth of thread for more holding power. But it must not be so small that you can't start or turn the tap properly.

-Robert Delgado, Monrovia, Calif.

Woodworking in the real world—As a *Fine Woodworking* subscriber for more than eight years, I benefit most from your ongoing series of articles about comparing and tuning up tools. I also read most of the "Letters" section of each issue because there is often some benefit or insight to be realized from others' experiences and suggestions.

Every once in a while, however, a letter appears here that bears the distinct stamp of an elitist. I am referring to the letter from James Thomson (*FWW* #126, p. 10) concerning edge-jointing boards. Mr. Thomson ends the letter by saying, "No woodworker can truly call himself

a craftsman unless he can consistently edge-joint by hand."

Had Mr. Thomson's letter began the letter with that sentence, I would have dismissed it summarily. Mr. Thomson is not thinking rationally. In the real world that most of us live in, conveniences like edge jointers and dovetail jigs are a necessity, not an easy out, as Mr. Thomson implies. Perhaps *Fine Woodworking* should start a separate column for letter submissions like this. Authors could preen their feathers, and the rest of us (dare I say most?) could save some valuable time.

-Cal Arnold, Red Hook, N.Y.

Good tips on rabbets and dadoes-

You have two great articles in the October issue: one on rabbets and dadoes (*FWW* #126, pp. 74-77) by Sven Hanson and the other on basic repairs for power tools by Robert Vaughan (pp. 84-87).

The article on rabbets and dadoes is right down my alley. My father taught me those tricks long ago, and one doesn't forget how to use them. I'll use the T-square and router for some of my cuts, but most of the time, I set up my tablesaw to cut these joints. With today's undersized thicknesses in plywood, the dadoes can be fit with greater accuracy this way. It takes time, but it's worth it. I use the stack blades for my dado cuts.

A pat on the back for Mr. Hanson on two counts. First, I notice he is wearing short sleeves around his power tools, a great safety habit. Long sleeves are a no-no around any power tool.

Second, he uses wooden inserts in his tablesaw that are cut to fit the width of the cut. When I made my tablesaw purchase several years ago, those metal inserts went into the trash. I have

wooden inserts for each width cut. No metal around my sawteeth. That's another trick my father taught me.

I enjoy the magazine. Keep up the good work. —Hugh A. Vickers, Marion, Ind.

Another way of cutting staves—I was very interested in the article by Garrett Hack on coopering a door (*FWW* #126, pp. 40-45). I offer a suggestion for an alternate method to make the angled cuts on the staves. If one extends the radii at the ends of the door until they intersect (like lines meeting at the center of a pie), the total angle of the door can be measured with a protractor.

In Mr. Hack's example, the angle looks to be 90°, and he wants eight staves in the door. Thus, there will be 16 angled cuts to total 90° or 5.625° each. A well-tuned tablesaw can be set to 5.6° on the bevel scale, which should be quite acceptable. To emphasize, the number of staves and the total angle uniquely determine the cutting angle. —Gail Adams, Talent, Ore.

GARRETT HACK REPLIES: This is a good suggestion, provided that the door's curve is a section of a circle and the angles between staves are all the same. When the curve is elliptical or otherwise irregular, the angles between staves change. That calls for a different approach, like the method outlined in the article.

Cabinet looked familiar—A very

interesting folding rule cabinet designed and built by Michael Mason appears in the October issue of *Fine Woodworking* (*FWW* #126, p. 118). Although very creative, this reminded me of something I saw 20 years ago. On p. 118 (quite coincidentally) of the 1977 *Fine*



for fellow enthusiasts

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Next to the Target

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Woodworking Biennial Design Book, a picture is shown of a nearly identical cabinet built by Leroy Schuette of Durham, N.H.

The back cover prophetically states, "This unique book is a source of inspiration for today and a record for tomorrow." It would be interesting to see pictures of other cabinets built to mimic old tools, because I'm sure that there are other fine examples.

-Ken Black, Knoxville, Tenn.

EDITOR REPLIES: Mr. Mason reports that he's never seen a photo of the original cabinet, published in the first of the *Design Book* series 20 years ago. He says he originally planned to build a cabinet in the shape of a molding plane, but when that proved too difficult, he turned to another familiar tool—his folding rule. He says he'd like to try the molding plane cabinet again at a later date.

Another approach to octagonal

posts—Having just made a pencil-post bed myself, I can tell you there are two important tips that Chris Becksvoort left out in his response to Mr. Brehm's query on the best way to cut the tapered octagonal posts ("Questions and Answers," *FWW* #125, p. 16).

I used a bandsaw to rough out the tapers. Then, after handplaning them down to dimension, I used a spar maker's marking gauge to lay out the corner chamfers of the octagon. I got the idea for the marking gauge from *FWW* #41 (p. 56) in a short article by Michael Podmaniczky. It only took about 10 minutes to construct, and it worked wonderfully for laying out perfectly proportioned chambers along a tapered post (see the drawing below).

When it comes time to cut the chamfers, it is true that you could use a handplane to waste all of that stock as Mr.

Becksvoort suggested, but it will take a very long time. Instead, I reached for my draw knife and made amazingly quick work of roughing out those chamfers. A plane, a chisel and a scraper completed the job. I remember purchasing that draw knife some years before at a flea market. At the time, I had no idea what I would ever do with it, but I thought that it was kind of neat. This turned out to be exactly the type of job for which it was made. It accomplished in minutes what would

otherwise have taken hours of laborious handplaning. Plus there was a real thrill in using an antique tool to make a classic piece of furniture the same way that our colonial forebears would have.

-Keith Landin, Vernon, Conn.

Lighten up—I have noticed a disturbing trend in the "Letters" section of *Fine Woodworking*. In *FWW* #125, nine of the 12 published letters were some sort of complaint about the quality, accuracy or subject matter of the articles. To point out an error or omission that could be dangerous is one thing, but some of these commentaries are absurd.

The people who write these letters have definitely lost sight of the purpose of their craft. If there is anything I have learned it is that there is no one perfect way of accomplishing anything. The point is, you could ask 10 people for the perfect method to solve any problem, and you might get 10 different answers.

I am only an amateur woodworker and nearly everything I have learned about this wonderful art comes from outstanding articles like those in *Fine Woodworking*. So to all those folks with their perfect methods, I say, "Lighten up." Somewhere along the way, you have forgotten that exploring for your own perfect method can be fun.

-Todd S. Virts, Germantown, Md.

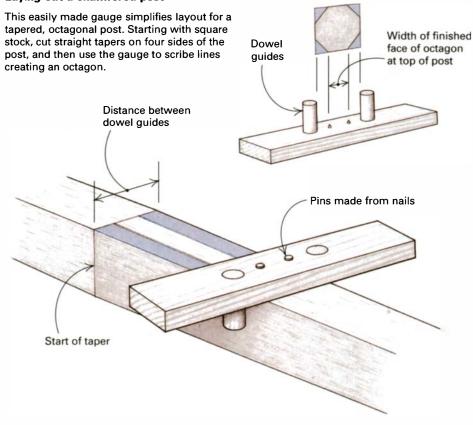
Erratum—A drawing showing parts for a door on Gary Rogowski's Arts-and-Crafts sideboard included an incorrect dimension (*FWW* #126, p. 82). The door panel should be 14½ in. tall, not the 15½ in. that's shown.

About your safety:

Working wood is inherently dangerous. Using hand or power tools improperly or ignoring standard safety practices can lead to permanent injury or even death. Don't try to perform operations you learn about here (or elsewhere) until you're certain they are safe for you. If something about an operation doesn't feel right, don't do it. Look for another way. We want you to enjoy the craft, so please keep safety foremost in your mind whenever you're in the shop.

-Scott Gibson, editor

Laying out a chamfered post



Fine Woodworking

10

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. . . from Patrick Spielman's Home Workshop News. Vol. II, issue 9, © Spielman Publishing Co.

Patrick is the author of more than 50 woodworking books and is the editor of Home Workshop News, a bi-monthly magazine Performers'

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> American Woodworker Magazine, October, 1997

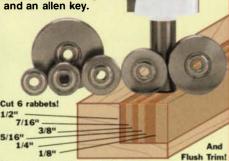
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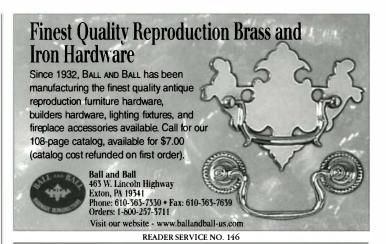
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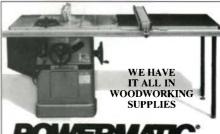


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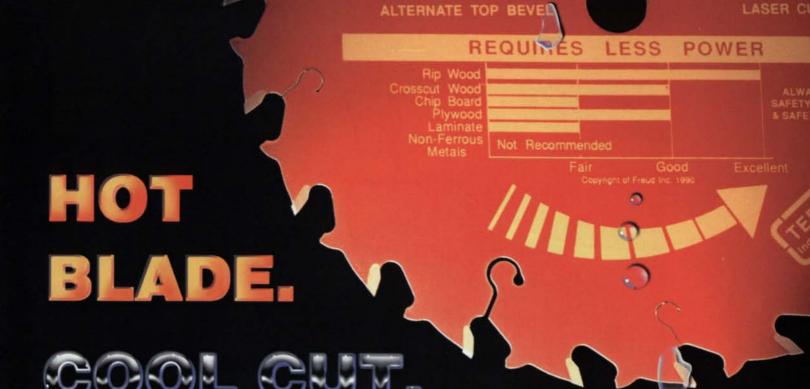
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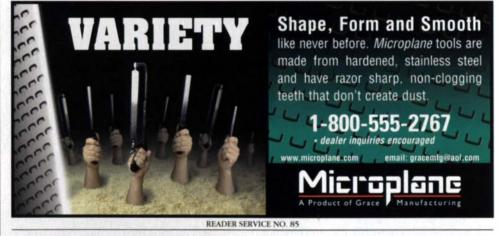
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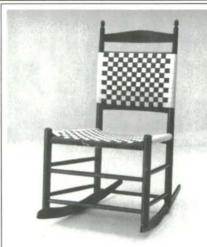
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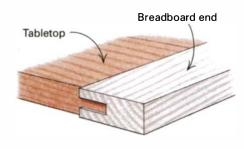
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Tabletop won't stay flush with breadboard ends





Wood expands and contracts across the grain with changes in humidity. As a result, tabletops with breadboard ends often will not line up evenly.

In recent years, our shop has built a number of tables with breadboard ends. We've had no problems with this construction—until now. Recently two tables, one of maple and one of cherry, have come back to haunt us. The wood that runs the length of the table has swollen significantly so that its edge is proud of the breadboard ends. What should we do to remedy this, and what can we do to avoid this problem in the future?

-Michael McHugh, Albuquerque, N.M.

Garrett Hack replies: The problem you describe is not really a problem at all, but is typical of

Keeping track of seasonal wood movement can help predict how breadboard ends will fit over time. A simple approach is to record changes in width on a sample board.

breadboard ends—rarely are the ends and the edges of the tabletop in exact alignment. The length of the end pieces doesn't change, but the tabletop expands and contracts with changes in humidity. A finish will slow this process but won't stop it. Considering all of the benefits of breadboard ends, this misalignment is a small price to pay. You may have to educate your clients, so they'll understand that if they want a piece of furniture made of solid wood, movement comes with it.

To minimize this movement, choose the wood for your tabletop carefully. Using a stable wood will help, as will making sure it's quartersawn (that's because wood always moves less radially than it does tangentially). Cherry is a better choice than hard maple. Here in Vermont, a 35-in.-wide cherry tabletop might move about ¼ in. in width seasonally, or ½ in. to either side of the top (the breadboard ends should be pinned at their centers).

To keep track of wood movement, I find it helpful to keep a few wide boards of different species in my shop and measure their widths over the year. Then if I am building a table in, say, March, I

can refer to my sample boards and adjust the pieces accordingly. In this case, the lumber would be close to its minimum moisture content (after the winter's heating), so I would cut the breadboard ends a bit longer than the top is wide. The tabletop will be proud of the breadboard ends part of the year and shy of the ends part of the year. [Garrett Hack farms, writes and builds furniture in Thetford Center, Vt. He is the author of *The Handplane Book*, published by The Taunton Press.]

How square is square? Comparing diagonals to square a carcase

Is there a rule of thumb for an allowable difference when comparing diagonal measurements? For example, if one diagonal is 80 in., how much variation can there be in the second diagonal? One-tenth of 1% of 80 in., for example, is 0.08 in., or a little less than 3 /₃₂ in. Is that an acceptable deviation?

-Werner Steinle, Roanoke, Va.

Peter Korn replies: The appropriate limits of precision vary according to the

nature of the project and, of course, the extent of your compulsiveness. From the front, a dresser with drawers or a cabinet with inset doors should be "exact," though this is an elusive condition. Over a diagonal of 80 in., I wouldn't want to be off more than ½6 in. There is often more leeway, however, when looking down at a carcase from the top. Picture a kitchen cabinet with doors and adjustable shelving. If its diagonals are off 3/32 in. over 80 in., who's going to notice?

The steps that follow can affect how square an assembly must be when it's being glued up. For example, a traditional drawer may be squared up when you slide the bottom panel in from the rear. Similarly, you might improve the squareness of a dresser when you attach its back or top.

When I think about appropriate levels of perfection regarding furniture, I try to remember that I'm working with wood, not metal or plastic. It moves on its own, shrinking, expanding, cupping. What makes great work is not the accuracy of a machinist, but rather the trace of the human hand and heart on the work. [Peter Korn is the director of the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine.]

Replacing damaged, delaminated veneer

I am refinishing some antique furniture that has walnut veneer on the edges and panels. Some of the veneer is in very poor shape and will have to be replaced. How do I remove this veneer? And how should I reattach it? I was planning to use the hot iron method. Also, with all the walnut available then, why would veneer have been used?

-George M. Floyd, Wynnewood, Pa. Roland Johnson replies: Removing the veneer from your antique furniture should be relatively easy. Most likely, the veneer is held on with hide glue, which is quite sensitive to heat and moisture. Simply heat the veneer using a damp cloth and a clothes iron, and lift the veneer away from the substrate with a putty knife. Do a small section at a time, and be careful not to use a soaking wet cloth or too much heat when removing the veneer from an edge. If you do, you might loosen the adjacent veneer. If the

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adjacent veneer should lift, you can reattach it by heating it and pressing it down with a block of wood. The old glue will re-adhere as it cools.

Be aware, too, of how the surface veneer meets the edge veneer. Often, the edge was veneered first, with the surface veneer overlapping it. Be careful not to tear or cut the surface veneer when removing the veneer from an edge. For this work, I've modified a thin knife with a flexible blade by rounding its corners and tip. Keep the knife clean as you work, because a buildup of glue on the knife will greatly slow your progress.

If the veneer will not loosen with the application of heat and moisture, it is held down with an adhesive other than hide glue. This calls for more drastic measures. To remove the veneer from an edge, I usually resort to a very sharp chisel, carefully paring the veneer from the substrate. Although care must be taken not to cut into the substrate, this is fairly easy to avoid because there's a glueline between the veneer and substrate that will help guide your chisel. Sharpen your chisel frequently—the glue will really do a number on the cutting edge.

Your best bet with large flat panels is to take them to a good-sized cabinet shop with a thickness sander. Many of them rent time for a reasonable fee.

Matching new veneer to old can be a challenge. Old veneer is usually quite a bit thicker than the veneer available today. There are a few specialty veneer suppliers that stock thick veneer, but it's usually available only in common species. One such company that I've bought from is Certainly Wood (11753 Big Tree Road, East Aurora, N.Y. 14052; 716-655-0206). The last time I checked, they did stock walnut veneer 1/16 in. thick. Most veneer being produced today is less than half that thick. If you can't find matching veneer that's as thick as the old veneer on vour furniture, vou'll have to sand the old veneer down to the new. Just be careful.

To attach the new veneer, I'd use a veneer press if you have access to one, or use hot hide glue and a veneer hammer. The iron technique may work, but I've not used it, and I've had no problems with the traditional techniques in 20-odd years of furniture repair and restoration.

As to why the piece was veneered in the

first place, it was most likely a cost-saving measure. Using less than premium lumber for the substrate, whether of the same species as the veneer or not, would save the manufacturer a good deal. And the veneer would ensure a piece of furniture that looked great. On wide surfaces, such as a tabletop, using narrower boards for the substrate also provided greater stability and reduced the likelihood of warpage. [Roland Johnson restores antiques and builds reproduction furniture and architectural millwork in his one-man

Eye protection when spraying lacquer

shop in St. Cloud, Minn.1

Much has been written about the need for respiratory protection during wood processing and spray finishing. I am concerned, however, about the hazard of absorbing these materials through the eyes. Even when wearing an organic vapor respirator, I occasionally notice tired, burning and red eyes and even a slight "buzz" when spray finishing. Could I be absorbing lacquer thinner through the mucous membranes of my eyes? Should I be taking greater precautions?

-David Otten, Chagrin Falls, Ohio Chris Minick replies: I'm not a medical doctor, so I don't know whether it's possible to absorb harmful quantities of volatile solvents such as lacquer thinner through the eves.

I assume that if you are using a solventbased finish like nitrocellulose lacquer. you have a spray booth. If your eyes are burning and red and you feel light-headed or disoriented while you spray, your spray booth is not working as it should.

The first thing I'd do is replace the overspray arrestor filters. Chances are they're clogged, causing a decrease in airflow and subsequent buildup of vapors in the spray booth. While you're at it. vacuum out the chamber behind the filters, clean and lubricate the draft flapper doors and check the blowermotor belt tension. If spray-booth maintenance doesn't alleviate the problem, then you either need a bigger spray booth or a full-face respirator. I find full-face respirators hot and uncomfortable, especially since I wear

eyeglasses. A powered, air-purifying respirator (PAPR) may be a better alternative. PAPRs supply a constant stream of purified air to the face mask via a small, battery-powered air pump. Constant air pressure prevents solvents from entering the mask. PAPRs are not inexpensive. Expect to pay up to \$500 for a good one (for more on respirators, see the article on p. 64). Personally, I would spend the money to upgrade the exhaust fan in my spray booth instead. [Chris Minick is a finish chemist and amateur woodworker in Stillwater, Minn.]

Information on Fave & Egan hollow-chisel mortiser

I recently purchased a Faye & Egan hollow-chisel mortiser, and I need some information that the dealer was unable to supply. What lubricants should I use in the bearings and transmission? And why will it accept only 15/32-in.-dia. shank bits? -Chip Worrell, Zirconia, N.C. **Robert Vaughan replies:** The bearings in your machine, assuming they're ball bearings, can be lubricated with regular automotive wheel-bearing grease. The transmission should work fine with 90-weight gear oil.

As for your mortiser accepting only ¹⁵/₃₂-in. bits, I have to surmise that there's a bushing stuck in the machine. Some old mortising machines used conventional chucks to hold the bits; others used bushings secured by setscrews. For those that used bushings, a bushing bored to the diameter of a particular bit's shank is required to mount the bit in the mortiser. Assuming there is a bushing stuck in your mortiser, you'll need to remove it and then buy (or have machined) bushings to accept the bits you wish to use.

If the 15/32-in.-dia. hole isn't in a removable bushing, you'll need to have a bushing or bushings made to fit the bits you'll be using. Incidentally, the chisels for hollow-chisel mortisers are generally held in place with the same type of bushing and setscrew. [Robert Vaughan tunes, repairs and

restores woodworking machinery in Roanoke, Va.]

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Div. of Rockwell Home Craft." The drill-press head casting is stamped with the marking "HDP 125," and the serial number is A12507. Is there any way to tell the approximate age of this tool? Who could I contact to learn more of the history of the Delta/Rockwell/Home Craft product line?

—Neil Howard, West Chester, Pa. Robert Vaughan replies: Your drill press is an 11-in., sleeve-bearing, entry-level model made for the home workshop. Your machine was probably made in the early 1950s. Delta still has most of the parts available for this machine. For information on this line, you can call Delta (800-438-2486).

Age and value of jointer plane

I recently purchased a used No. 7 jointer plane at an auction. The word "Bailey" is cast on the upper side of the sole, forward of the hand knob. Behind the frog, the following is cast in the upper side of the sole: "Pat'd Mar-25-02 Aug-19-02 Apr-19-10." And near the heel on the top side of the sole, "No. 7" is cast. The sole is grooved. The front knob appears to be walnut, and the rear handle is made of a deep red-colored wood that I suspect is rosewood. What can you tell me about it?

—Anthony Fudge, Snow Hill, Md. Garrett Hack replies: Stanley made a line of Bailey bench planes from the smallest No. 1 to the longest No. 8. The Bailey name cast into the toe of these planes honors Leonard Bailey, the inventor of the original design, which was later acquired and manufactured by Stanley. Although Bailey didn't actually invent cast-iron planes, he did develop features such as easy adjusters for the iron (both depth and lateral) and a securely locking lever cap.

Not all Stanley bench planes have the Bailey name cast into them, but they are all basically the same design. The numbers cast into the body are patent dates for design improvements. Because the last date is April 19, 1910, your No. 7 jointer plane was made some time after this date and probably before the next improvement (a kidney shaped hole in the lever cap), which was added on July 18, 1933.

The front knob and rear tote are likely

rosewood, which is typical of a Bailey plane of this vintage. Rosewood can vary considerably in color.

The grooves machined on the underside of your plane give it what is called a corrugated sole. Stanley and others used this technique to reduce friction between the sole and the surface of the wood.

Your plane is quite common, although only about one in three is corrugated. For this reason alone, it once would have been worth more than a smooth-soled plane. Today, prices are similar for both. Your plane's value—somewhere between \$50 to \$100—depends on its condition. The closer the plane is to complete and unworn and the more of the original iron that's left, the more valuable the plane is. With an original box, such a plane could be worth well over \$100.

Using exotic woods for coffee cup lids

I've made a number of lathe-turned lids for coffee mugs, and I'm getting ready to make some more. I'm concerned, though, that some of the woods I'm using—generally tropical, exotic hardwoods—could be harmful if their oils leach into the coffee.

A search of past issues of your magazine has turned up a number of articles on toxic woods, but all these articles discuss woodworking hazards such as dust inhalation and dermatitis. And articles on finishes for food-related uses don't help, because I leave the lids unfinished. Any thoughts?

—Alan Walker, Ventura, Calif.

Jon Arno replies: Making coffee mug
lids out of exotic, tropical species might
be a risky pursuit. If a particular wood
does happen to contain a potentially toxic
compound, often an alkaloid, three factors
tend to make it all the more dangerous
when used in contact with food: heat,
moisture and time. Exposing food to a
potentially poisonous wood in the
presence of heat and moisture, especially
over a long period of time, maximizes the
amount of toxin that will leach out of the
wood and permeate the food.

At the very least, there is a good chance that many of these woods will adversely taint the flavor of the coffee. With some woods, the result could be far worse, especially if the individual consuming the coffee has an extreme sensitivity to the toxin.

Members of the rosewood genus, *Dalbergia*, and other temptingly attractive species such as mansonia, teak, Gonçalo alves, peroba rosa and imbuia would be very poor choices to use in this application. The problem is there are scores if not hundreds of other woods that could be just as dangerous. The market is loaded with woods that have not yet been thoroughly researched to determine their toxicity.

A much safer approach would be to turn the lids out of a well-known and chemically friendly wood such as maple. You can enhance the lid's appearance by applying an exotic veneer only on the top where it will be isolated from the heat and moisture inside the mug. [Jon Arno is a wood technologist and consultant in Troy, Mich.]

Tiling a tabletop

I've made a few tile-top coffee tables and end tables using ³/₄-in.-thick plywood with a bonded-paper finish on one side, standard 4-in.-sq. countertop tiles and commercially available ceramic tile adhesive. So far, no tiles have come loose, but I wonder if I'm using the best system for tiled furniture. Also, I have just acquired some handmade Mexican tiles, and would like to know the best way to set them.

—Bob Jeffreys, Pawcatuck, Conn. Tom Meehan replies: The tabletops you've already tiled will most likely be fine. In most cases (except when left outside), a tile-top table is not subject to a lot of abuse, and standard tiling procedures—using mastic or latex-modified thinset over a plywood substrate—will give you perfectly acceptable results.

Personally, I prefer having a substrate that's 1½ in. thick, either a sheet of ½-in.-thick tile backer board glued and screwed to ¾-in.-thick plywood or just 1¼ in. of plywood. At the very least, you should prime a plywood surface 24 hours before tiling, using a very good quality latex-modified thinset. This will help prevent the plywood from warping as soon as wet cement or mastic hits it.

Sealing the inside edge of the wooden

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rails will help prevent warpage. And it will prevent the rails from absorbing moisture from the grout line around the perimeter of the tiles.

As for your Mexican tiles, don't use mastic. These tiles often have large voids because of how they cup when fired, so a latex-modified thinset is a much better alternative. Handmade tiles are certainly lovely, with their subtle, uneven coloring. but they're also rather fragile.

Last but not least, you probably should seal your tabletop with a good impregnator-sealer. As always, though, test the finish on a piece of scrap tile first, and let it sit for an hour before sealing the tabletop.

[Tom Meehan owns Cape Cod Tileworks in Harwich, Mass. He's been in the tile business for 25 years.]

What is dewaxed shellac?

I read with interest Chris Minick's reply concerning finishing and gluing problems caused by antioxidants in certain tropical hardwoods (FWW #120, p. 26). Members of our woodworkers' club have also experienced some of those problems. Chris' suggestion for overcoming the problem left us with a auestion. What is dewaxed shellac?

-George Finkel, Cranbury, N.I. **Ieff Jewitt replies:** Shellac in its raw, unrefined form contains from 4% to 7% wax. This wax detracts from the durability of the dried film, particularly its resistance to heat and moisture. It can also cause adhesion problems with finishes applied over it-especially oil- and water-based urethanes. The wax is present in seedlac. buttonlac and #1 orange (the premixed stuff sold in hardware stores).

Wax is removed from the shellac flakes by dissolving them in alcohol and then filtering the solution. When the remaining solution dries, the result is shellac that is sold as dewaxed or wax-free. Most mailorder woodworking and wood finishing suppliers sell it as dewaxed. Super blond is a type of dewaxed, amber-colored shellac, but other dewaxed shellacs are available ranging from a dark, garnet

color to a bleached white. Dewaxed shellacs have a shorter shelf life than raw shellac, both dry and mixed with alcohol. They're also more prone to blocking, which is a clumping or caking together that occurs in hot, humid weather.

An alternative to purchasing dewaxed flakes is to dissolve regular, waxed shellac flakes in alcohol. After they are completely dissolved, let the solution sit for a few days. With most shellacs, the wax will settle to the bottom of the jar, and you can decant the clear solution at the top into another jar.

In case you're wondering what happens to all that shellac wax that's left after the dewaxing process, it's what you've been putting on your shoes for years. [Jeff Jewitt repairs, restores and conserves antique furniture in North Royalton, Ohio.1

Do you have a question you'd like us to consider for the column? Send it to Ouestions & Answers. Fine Woodworking. P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

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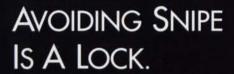
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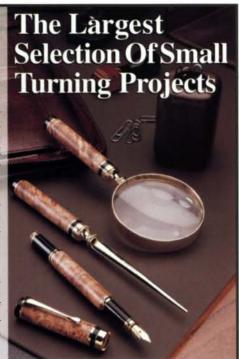


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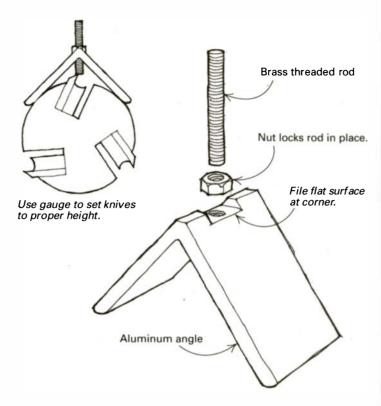
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READER SERVICE NO. 169



Knife-setting jig



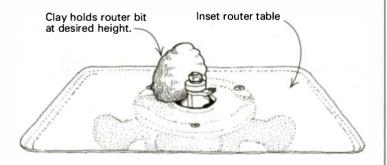
Here is a simple jig for setting planer or jointer knives. This aluminum and brass jig (both soft metals) will not damage the knives during the setting process.

To make the jig, cut a $1\frac{1}{8}$ -in.-wide section from 2-in. by 2-in. aluminum angle. File a flat surface on the corner of the angle. Using a drill press, drill through the flat spot, and tap the hole to fit the threaded brass rod. Screw a piece of the threaded brass rod in the hole, adjust the height and lock the rod in place with a jam nut, as shown in the drawing above.

These jigs are quick and inexpensive to make, so you can have one for each machine, fixed at the proper setting.

-Ronald E. Young, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Holding router bits with clay



With my router mounted upside down in a router table, I use a golf-ball size blob of children's clay or modeling compound to temporarily hold a router bit in place while I tighten the collet nut.

The material has just the right consistency to do this job, and it will not leave a residue on the router bit or the table. Pressed onto the router table and against the bit, the clay acts as a third hand to keep the bit from dropping too far into the collet.

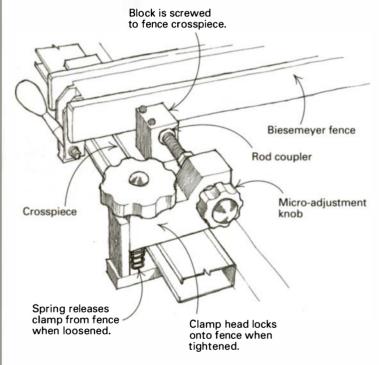
This method gives me better control over making fine adjustments to the bit height than I get by dialing the router up and down. I store the material in a plastic bag to keep it from drying out.

-Bob Kelland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

Quick tip: My shop is heated only when I'm using it. So to keep my paints and stains from freezing, I use an old junk refrigerator heated by a 40-watt bulb. Even when the outside temperature is in the teens, the heat from the bulb keeps the inside of the "defrigerator" around 70°F. I guess the old question "will the light go off when the door is closed?" doesn't apply in this case.

-Jeff Householder, Vincent, Ohio

A micro-adjustment for the saw fence



This micro-adjustment fixture enables you to fine-tune the settings on a Biesemeyer-style tablesaw rip fence. The fixture consists of two main parts: a block that attaches to the cross piece of the rip fence and a clamp head that locks onto the front rail of the fence.

The adjusting device itself is a 6-in.-long, ½-in. carriage bolt with a wooden knob glued to its head with epoxy. The bolt runs through a slightly oversized hole in the clamp head and into a rod coupler that has been press-fit into the block. The length of the rod coupler, as opposed to a standard hex nut, helps prevent the adjusting bolt from binding as it is turned. The range of adjustment is about 1 in., more than enough for most applications.

To use the device, leave the fence-locking lever up, and then clamp the head to the fence. Twist the micro-adjustment knob as necessary to locate the fence where you want it. Then lock the

THE FIRST THING IT CUTS IS VIBRATION.



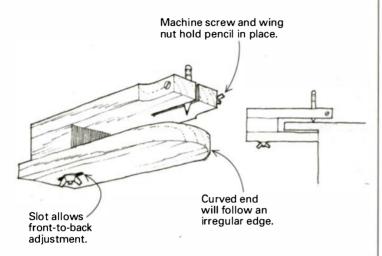
smoother and quieter operation. This design also keeps the blade perpendicular to the work, eliminating under or over cutting. To make following a line easier, the DW788 has a fixed-position blade clamp to decrease deflection, while blade changing is made easy with the DEWALT tool-free blade change system. Conveniently, the on-off switch, electronic variable speed, flexible dust blower and blade tensioning lever are all located on the front upper arm so there is no need to reach around the saw for adjustments. An oversized cast iron table provides extensive material support and bevels 45° left and right for shadow boxes or inlays. It's not just a scroll saw. It's a DEWALT. For more information, call 1-800-4-DEWALT.



fence in place with the regular locking lever. The whole setup works smoothly and is a pleasure to use.

-Timothy D. Anderson, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

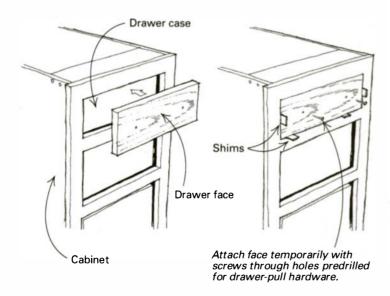
Overhang marking gauge



Originally, I made this jig to mark some laminate slightly oversized for trimming. Then I realized how handy the jig would be for other tasks, like marking a cutting line on the edges of an irregular deck. For a one-time job, it's easy to make up a jig with a few scraps held together with a C-clamp. Or you can make a more permanent adjustable version, as shown in the drawing above.

-Leon G. Wilde, Andover, Mass.

Foolproof drawer face installation



Here's a method for accurately installing applied drawer faces. It replaces the normal method that requires three hands, vigorous cursing and a lot of luck.

The method works as long as you are using drawer-pull hardware that is mounted with screws through the face into the drawer case. Install the drawer case in the cabinet. Drill two holes for

the hardware through the drawer face, and place it against the drawer case, shimming as necessary. (I use strips of plastic laminate for shims.) With the face in position, drive screws through the hardware holes, temporarily attaching the face to the drawer case in the correct location.

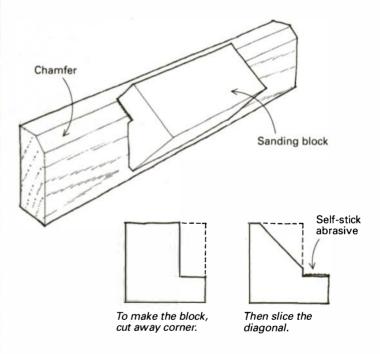
Pull out the drawer, and permanently attach the face with screws through the inside of the drawer case. It's a good idea to clamp the face to the drawer case to prevent any slight movement when you drive the screws. After removing the two holding screws, you can use the predrilled hardware holes as guides to drill through the case for screws that secure the drawer pulls.

-Peter Rippon, New York, N.Y.

Quick tip: Keeping the threads of clamps and woodworking machinery clean and greased is not always practical. Another alternative is to clean the threads with a wire wheel and then spray them sparingly with Sandaro's TopCote product. This is a spray lubricant that leaves a dry, waxy film that stays cleaner than greased threads.

—Robert Vaughan, Roanoke, Va.

Sanding block for small chamfers



Here's how to sand a small chamfer without rounding it over. Make a sanding block by first cutting away one corner of a hardwood block. Then cut through the body of the block at 45°. Add self-stick abrasive paper along the edge of the block, as shown.

-Paul Davis, Renton, Wash.

Rubber mats in the shop

My dairy farm friends contributed a rubber mat to my new workshop. These pads are about 3/4 in. thick. They are made from shredded car tires and are used in dairy barns to protect cows' legs from injury on cold and wet floors. I find that the pads work equally

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Fine Woodworking Magazine test, Oct. 96, page 43

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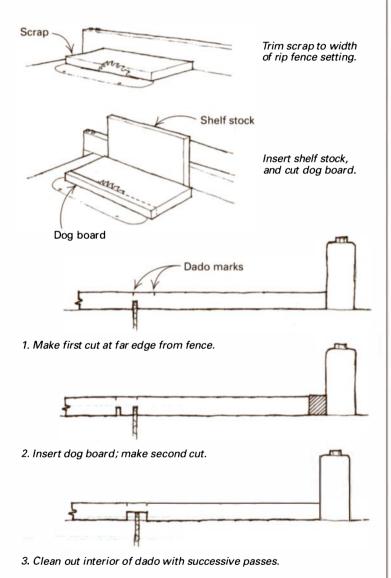
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well for human legs: They provide relief for tired leg muscles and increase the length of time you can stand on your feet. Another benefit is that a cast-iron plane or a spokeshave dropped on the floor will bounce harmlessly, rather than shatter.

If you live in dairy country, the mats are commonly available at farm supply and co-op stores. Elsewhere, call Global Rubber (610-640-4292). They can ship you a mat directly or direct you to a distributor in your area. The mats cost \$25 to \$50 and weigh up to 100 lbs. each, depending on size.

-Richard Bird, Belleville, Ont., Canada

Making dadoes with a dog board



I devised this method so that I could cut a few dadoes quickly and accurately without having to adjust a set of dado cutters to an exact width with paper shims. The key to this method is a strip of

act width with paper shims. The key to this method is a strip of scrap, which I call a dog board, that shifts the workpiece the exact distance needed to cut both sides of the dado.

distance needed to cut both sides of the dado.

To make the dog board, trim a piece of scrap to a random width with the rip fence so that the sawblade cuts a clean surface along

the edge of the scrap. Insert a piece of the shelf stock between the scrap and the fence. Run the scrap through the saw, and save the cutoff. You now have the strip—the dog board—that will move a workpiece over the thickness of the shelf stock, minus a sawkerf.

To use the dog board, mark the dado locations on the workpiece, and set the rip fence and blade height for the first cut, the one farthest from the rip fence. Make the cut. Now insert the dog board between the workpiece and the fence, and make the second cut. Nibble out the waste between the two cuts with successive passes. The dado will fit the shelf stock perfectly.

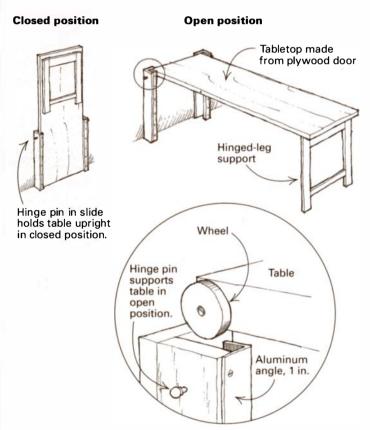
I wouldn't recommend this technique for long production runs. But when you need to cut only three or four dadoes, it will definitely save you time.

—James Kimbriel, Batavia, N.Y.

Quick tip: I have several 10-in. sections of railroad track in my shop that I use as anchors for all sorts of chores. They are especially useful at the radial-arm saw, where I use a section to hold down a row of identical pieces of wood for cutting dadoes. They serve like another pair of hands, and they're more predictable than a shop assistant.

—Ted Welchert, Tucson, Ariz.

Retracting shop table



I've been using a retractable table in my small shop. It serves as an assembly platform for cabinets and furniture and as a drawing table. It is large enough to accommodate the full-sized drawings that I use with my projects.

The tabletop is an old flush door (32 in. by 84 in.) fitted into a slide that holds it upright against the wall when not in use. The

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table swings down to a comfortable working height that is the same height as my radial-arm saw table. I use the table for additional support when I'm cutting long boards.

I made the slide by attaching aluminum angle to the front edge of two wooden wall brackets. The slide captures 2-in. wheels that are screwed to the back corners of the door, so the door opens from a stowed position smoothly and safely. When stowed in an upright position, the door is locked in place with some pins I borrowed from a pair of door hinges. The hinge pins slide under the wheels to hold the door at the right height when it's in an open position.

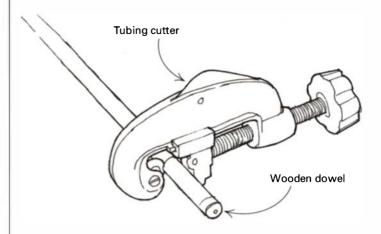
-Dave Gillis, Milwaukee, Wis.

Positioning laminate over contact cement

When you apply contact cement to a large piece of plastic laminate and a substrate, it's a challenge to position the laminate accurately, especially if you work alone. I've found that using metal shelf standards work well. Spaced about 16 in. apart, they keep the laminate from coming into premature contact with the cementcovered substrate (after which it won't move). Yet they are thin enough to allow very accurate positioning.

When the laminate is positioned correctly, press the center down first to keep the piece from shifting. Then lift one end at a time, remove the standards and press the laminate from the center out. Any glue residue on the standards will wipe off easily with lacquer thinner or acetone. -Daniel Silverman, Wellfleet, Mass.

Cutting dowels with a tubing cutter



I use a tubing cutter (the kind plumbers and electricians use) to cut wooden dowels. Roll the cutter around the dowel a few turns, and snap off the dowel. For cutting just a few dowels, this is faster and more accurate than using a saw. —Howard Moody, Upper Jay, N.Y.

Methods of Work buys readers' tips, jigs and tricks. Send details, sketches (we'll redraw them) and photos to Methods of Work, Fine Woodworking, P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. We will return only those contributions that include an SASE.















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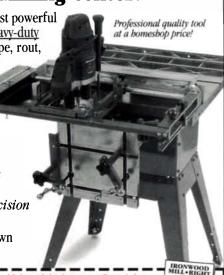
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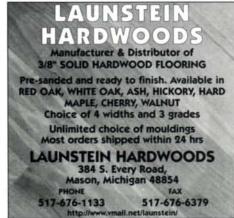
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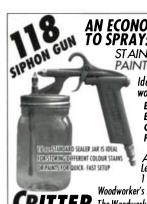
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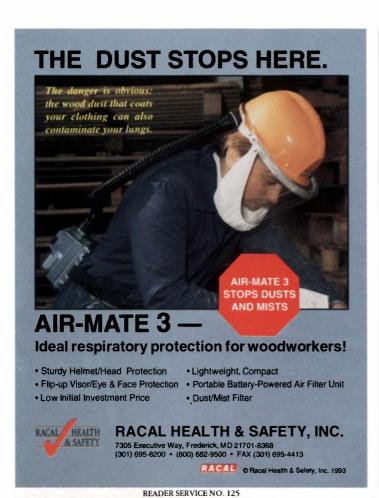
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Not just pretty boxes—Humidors need to be carefully constructed if they are to maintain the right humidity for cigars.

ou can smoke a dry cigar, but you won't enjoy it. It will burn too hot, making the smoke acrid and unpleasant. Most of the flavor and all the subtleties of the tobacco will be lost. Cigars are made in the tropics where the relative humidity is a constant 70%, and they should be kept at that level. The relative humidity in Southern Idaho, where I live, is about 30% in the summer, and lower in the winter—a really hostile environment for cigars.

I have had cigars dry up, even unwrap, four hours after I bought them.

A properly functioning humidor is a necessity for enjoying good cigars anywhere outside of the tropics. With only monthly upkeep, a well-made humidor will preserve cigars indefinitely. Very fine cigars even improve when aged in a humidor.

Building a humidor that works is not as simple as making a nice box and fitting a humidification device in it. This is often how they're made, and the results are cigars ruined from too little or too much moisture. Maintaining 70% humidity is a balancing act that depends in large part on the wood you use and the tightness of the lid's seal. It's not rocket science, but making a good humidor takes some care in design and execution.

Why use Spanish cedar?

The wood you choose to make and line the humidor is particularly important. It should not have an unpleasant smell or taste because the cigars will pick it up. The wood also should be porous so it will first absorb, then release moisture evenly, while remaining dimensionally stable. The wood will reach 70% moisture content on the inside, while the humidity on the outside could be as low as 20%. For many woods, this is a recipe for severe cupping.

Spanish cedar is the traditional and best choice for a humidor. When kiln dried, it is very stable and will not warp or grow much when it reaches 70% moisture content. Its oils inhibit the growth of molds and mildew that destroy cigars. Spanish cedar has a delicate aroma that is complementary, enhancing the cigar's taste.

Spanish cedar does have one serious problem: bleeding sap. It will ooze out of the wood, stick to your cigars and ruin them. Pieces that look sap-free can bleed many months after the humidor is finished. Common advice is that South American cedar (Cedrela fissilis) has a sap problem, and the Central American varieties (Cedrela odorata and C. mexicana) do not. However. I have found little difference between them. There are ways to reduce the problem with sap. The thinner you slice the cedar, the less sap the piece will bleed later. Kiln drying, if well done, will set the sap. And if you do get some sap on the surface, acetone or lacquer thinner will take it off.

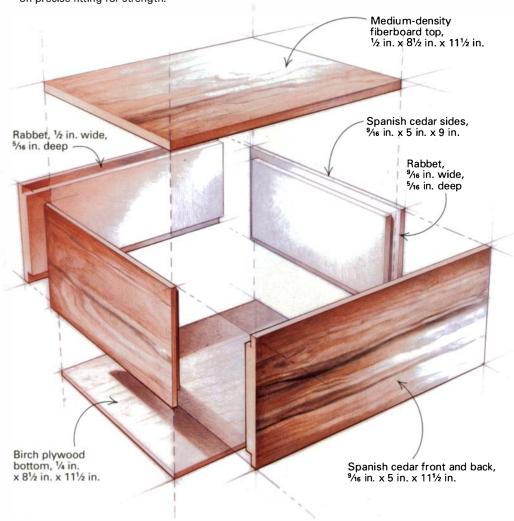
One-sided veneering for the basic box

Because I build humidors professionally, I make a variety of designs. But they're all simple and easy to build. The only joints are rabbets and grooves. I use Spanish cedar for the sides and the top, veneering only the outside. I glue up the whole box at once, and put a solid-wood edge-band along every side. Then I cut the box into top and bottom halves on a bandsaw. One of my favorite styles uses pau ferro (Machaerium spp.) veneer with wenge edge-banding and holly and mahogany inlay (see the photo on the facing page).

The most common box size I make is 12 in. by 9 in. by 5 in. with internal dimensions of $10\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $3\frac{5}{8}$ in. It will store about two boxes of cigars, 50 in all. Cigars range from 4½ in. to 8 in. long and 35 to 52 ring size (about ½ in. to just over 3/4 in. dia.). Most commonly, however, they

Simple joinery makes a sturdy box

The front, back and sides of the box are cut from one long piece of veneered Spanish cedar. The top is veneered MDF; the bottom is plywood. All the joints are rabbets and depend on precise fitting for strength.





Rabbet the four sides at once, while they're still one piece. A dado blade will make the cut in one pass.

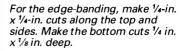


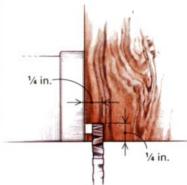
Cut the rabbeted sides apart and to length on the tablesaw. Use a stop block to ensure consistent lengths.

Tablesaw makes the edge-banding and inlay joints a cinch. Four cuts along each edge create the necessary joints.

Rabbets for edge-band and inlay

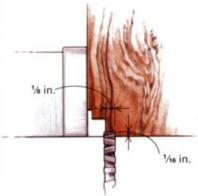








For the inlay, make 1/8-in. x 1/16-in.deep cuts along the edge-banding rabbets.



are about 6 in. long by 42 ring. If you buy a much longer cigar, it can go in sideways.

For the front, back and two sides, I mill a single piece % in. thick, 5 in. wide and about 48 in. long. For the top, I use a piece of 81/2-in. by 111/2-in. medium-density fiberboard (MDF), 1/2 in. thick. The MDF adds weight to help keep the lid closed. I veneer all the Spanish cedar on one side, but for the bottom, I use 1/4-in. birch plywood without any veneer.

Now, I know we all have been taught to veneer both sides of anything, but this is an exception. Perhaps it is a combination of things that makes it work: the stability of the cedar, the stability of the box construction, the constant humidity on the inside, the lacquer finish on the outside. Anyway, it works. I have never had a box come apart using this technique.

With a dado head, I cut 1/2-in.-wide rabbets 5/16 in. deep along both long edges of the piece of cedar. Next I cut it to the lengths necessary for the front, back and

side pieces. On the side pieces only, I cut %16-in.-wide rabbets 5/16 in. deep on the ends to form the corner joints (see the drawing on p. 45).

I dry-clamp the front, back and sides together with several band clamps. Only at this point do I carefully trim the top and bottom to size in a crosscut box for an exact fit. The joints of the top and bottom provide a great deal of strength to the humidor and should be right on.

After the dry-fitting, I glue the box together. I use a reactive polyurethane glue from Custom-Pak Adhesives (11047 Lamb's Lane, Newark, OH 43055; 800-454-4583) because it is waterproof, sets slowly enough to make clamping up a stress-free job and has a clamp time of just over an hour.

Waterproof glue is a necessity on the corner joints because they will eventually live in a high moisture environment. Even the waterproof type II polyvinyl acetate (PVA) glues will eventually let go if exposed to so much water for long. At the same time, I

have used regular PVA glue for the veneering, edge-banding and inlay without a problem. Because the polyurethane glue is activated by moisture, I spray a little water on the joints before gluing up the box.

Edge-banding to resist wear

Spanish cedar is a soft, lightweight wood, and the veneer isn't much more durable. I use a hard, solid wood edging for protection against the dings and dents that come with everyday handling. I add inlay along the edge-banding for contrast. The result is visually pleasing and reasonably durable.

After the box has been glued together, I cut rabbets along each edge of the box for the edge-banding (see the photos and drawings above). I make the rabbets 1/4 in. by 1/4 in. along the top and sides. And I make them 1/4 in. by 1/8 in. deep on the bottom because the edge is thinner.

Along the cuts for the edge-banding, I make a second series of cuts for the inlay, 1/8 in. wide and 1/16 in. deep. The veneer on the edge of these cuts cannot have any breakout. I use an alternate-bevel, 80-tooth blade to cut the cross-grain rabbets and a 24-tooth flat-top blade to cut the longgrain rabbets.

Next I cut the pieces of 5/16-in.-sq. wenge edge-banding to length, fit and glue one piece at a time. Each piece simply butts against the other because the wenge end grain is difficult to discern from the long grain. First I apply the banding along the bottom edge, then around the top and, finally, along the sides. I use yellow glue and 3M long masking tape to clamp each piece (see the photo at right). This tape stretches for a stronger grip but won't pick up the grain when I pull it off.

When the edge-banding sets, I remove any squeeze-out from the inlay grooves with a small chisel. I cut the one-piece inlay to length and miter each corner. Then I run a bead of yellow glue down the groove and press in the inlay with the back of a chisel (see the bottom photos). Don't bother trying to clamp it in; the press-fit should hold it in place. When it dries, I plane the edge-banding level with the inlay and veneer, round the edges and file down the end grain on the corners. Then I use a cabinet scraper to smooth the whole box.

Bandsawing the box open and fitting the hardware

Building the box in one piece and then slicing it open is the best way to ensure a perfectly matching top and bottom. I perform this delicate operation on a bandsaw with a ½-in., 3 teeth-per-inch (tpi) blade with very little set. It make this cut quickly and removes a minimum of wood.

I use a tall fence and set it so the top will be 15% in. thick. Then I cover the cut line with masking tape to prevent breakout. With a careful push through the saw, it's done (see the top left photo on p. 49). I use a cabinet scraper to smooth the edges and make them perfectly flat. Ideally, the joint should be hard to distinguish when the box is closed. I use Brusso quadrant hinges (available from Whitechapel Ltd., P.O. Box 136, Wilson, WY 83014; 800-468-5534) because they are well made, look nice and are strong enough to keep the heavy lid from going anywhere. I install a box lock with a flush escutcheon on the outside.

The lining creates the seal

For the lining, I use pieces of Spanish cedar 3/16 in. thick. The cedar covers all six sides inside the box and is fitted to create a seal



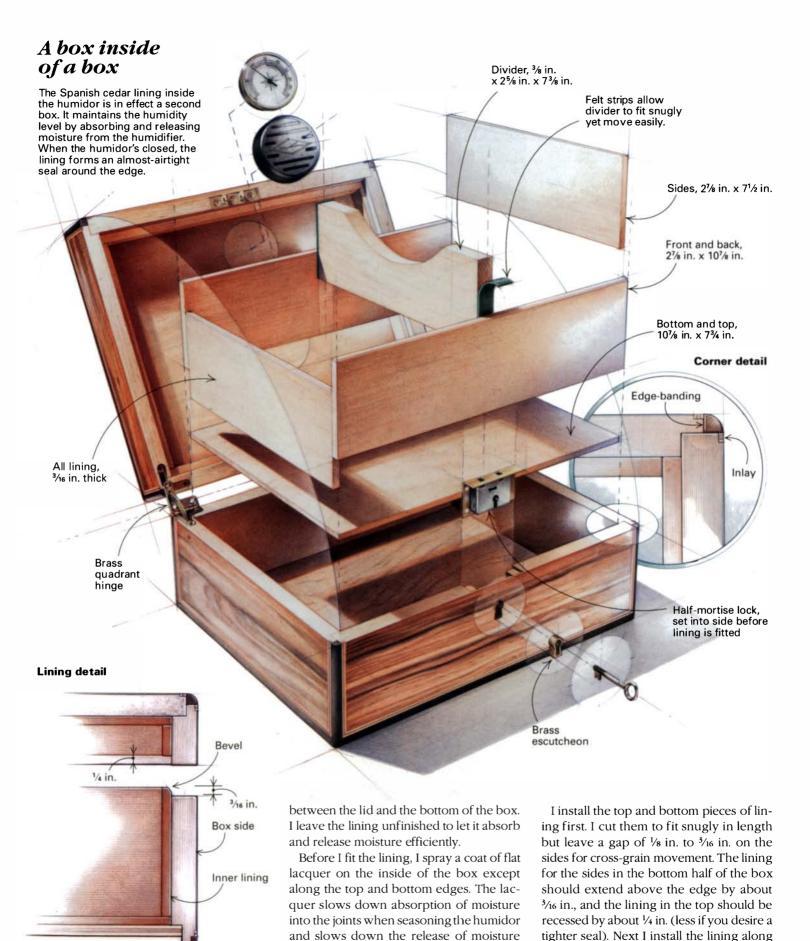


Yellow glue and tape attach the edge-banding. Wenge edge-banding is butted at the corners, not mitered, because end grain is not conspicuous.

Press the inlay into the groove with the back of a chisel (left). It should not need clamping or taping. Fine-tune the miter if necessary (below).



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when the cigars are in it. The corner joints

will appreciate the reduction in stress.

the sides of the top and the bottom: front

and back pieces first, then the shorter sides



Saw the top off the box on a bandsaw. Tape the entire saw line, and use a ¹/₂-in., 3-tpi blade to avoid breakout.

(see the top right photo). One thin bead of yellow glue down the middle of each piece will keep them centered during assembly.

The joint between the edge of the lid and the lining around the bottom will establish how well your humidor holds its humidity (see the drawing at left). If the joint's too tight, not only will the box be difficult to open and close, it also will force the humidity level beyond 70%, making the air musty from poor circulation and increasing the chance of mold. A damp cigar will not burn well, and it will produce smoke too thick and pungent to be enjoyable. Like wood, a cigar that absorbs too much moisture may split. And if left soggy for too long, a cigar will begin to rot. But too loose a joint will let in drafts and make it difficult for the humidor to reach 70% relative humidity and remain there.

If you will be opening the humidor every few days, make the seal tight so that a dropped lid will float closed on a cushion of trapped air. If you won't be opening the humidor very often, make the seal less tight to help keep the air from becoming too damp.

Opening and closing should be easy, and you should just feel the lining touching on the lid as it shuts. For a tight seal, cut a steep bevel on the lining in the bottom of the box, and for a loose seal, make the bevel lower. The front needs more of a bevel than the sides and back so the lid opens and closes properly. I bevel all sides for even breathing and to maintain a continuity of style (see the photo at right).

Finishing the humidor and installing a humidifier

I finish the outside with several coats of lacquer. I apply two or three coats of sanding sealer and then about 10 coats of gloss lacquer, sanding after every three coats. Af-



Gently press-fit lining around interior. When you season the humidor, the lining will swell and lock itself in place.

ter the last coat, I let the finish cure for at least a week and then sand with 1,000-grit and water and power buff with automotive glazing compounds. Let the finish cure for as long as you can before waxing.

The humidifier provides a source of moisture in the box. Most humidifiers are extremely simple. A sponge-like material, often florist's foam, is contained in a plastic or metal vented case. Because moisture from the humidifier falls, I attach the humidifier to the center of the lid for the most even distribution.

To help the humidifier stay put, I seal the cedar right behind it with lacquer. Even with the humidifier at the top of the box, the bottom will be more humid. If you leave cigars in your humidor for a long

time, rotate their position once a month.

The humidifier I prefer to use is the Non-pareil (available from Beall Tool Co., 541 Swans Road N.E., Newark, Ohio 43055; 800-331-4718). It is made of anodized aluminum and uses a removable and easy-to-clean urethane foam pad. This eliminates the need to mess with distilled water because mineral deposits that would otherwise clog the humidifier can be washed out. Many humidifiers do not come apart for cleaning.

Before you put any cigars in your humidor, it's essential to season it first. After I fill the humidifier, I put a cup filled with wet paper towels in the closed humidor. It will take a few days for the box to reach 70% moisture content.

To monitor the humidity level of your humidor, you can attach a hygrometer (available from Woodcraft Supply, P.O. Box 1686, Parkersburg, WV 26102; 800-225-1153) to the bottom of the lid in the same way that you did with the humidifier. Remember that dial hygrometers are rarely accurate. The feel of the cigar is always the best measure of a properly functioning humidor. A good cigar should feel soft but not spongy or crunchy.

Rick Allyn used to make guitars, but now designs and builds studio furniture and humidors. He attended the College of the Redwoods. He lives in Twin Falls, Idaho.



Careful with that bevel angle. It determines the rate the humidor loses humidity and receives fresh air. A humidor that is opened frequently should have a tighter fitting lid.

More than one way to store a stogie

Last year, the United States imported 293 million cigars from its southern neighbors, an all-time record. This year, that number will probably double. Like the recent stock market, this cigar boom may be the result of irrational exuberance. But in its wake, a huge demand for fine humidors has followed-a boom in its own right and a windfall to woodworkers. Though there are thousands of plain, manufactured boxes on sale everywhere, a few woodworkers have been making humidors that display the finest craftsmanship and imagination. A few that we've found are shown on these two pages.

Strother Purdy is an assistant editor of Fine Woodworking.







1. Humidor table by James Gray-Eastern walnut, wenge, tagua nut, red gum eucalyptus and Spanish cedar; 36 in. high by 20 in. wide by 44 in. long. Photo: Lee Fatherree

- 2. Ruhlmann-style humidor by Frank Pollaro-Amboyna burl, ivory and Spanish cedar; 63/8 in. high by 10 in. wide by 15 in. long.
- 3 & 4. Forbidden by Wendell Castle—Jelutong, lacewood and Spanish cedar; 58 in. high by 72 in. wide by 20 in. deep. Photos: David Mohney
- 5. Humidor by Ken Frye-Pearwood, madrone burl and Spanish cedar; 6 in. high by 9 in. wide by 12 in. long. Photo: Craig Cook
- 6. Newporter by John Goff— Cuban mahogany and Spanish cedar; 5³/₄ in. high by 9³/₄ in. wide by 17 in. long. Photo: Kevin Halle







Mid-Sized Thickness Planers

Fine Woodworking editors try 14 machines from Taiwan, Japan and Canada

by Anatole Burkin



ou can get a great workout planing roughsawn lumber with hand tools, but the exercise is more quaint than efficient. Many of us resort to benchtop thickness planers, which keep getting bigger. But if you routinely plane large amounts of lumber or boards wider than 12½ in., the maximum capacity of benchtop machines, you're better off with a bigger planer.

We were surprised to discover how many companies sell 14-in. to 16-in. planers, what we consider mid-sized machines for the small shop. We invited 15 companies to participate in our review. Thirteen responded, and we ended up with 14 planers. Despite the many labels, the majority of the machines came from the same Taiwanese assembly plant, Chiu Ting Machinery, also known as Geetech (although the individual components of these machines

may come from different sources). Not surprisingly, all the 15-in. machines from Chiu Ting-AMT, Bridgewood, Grizzly, Jet, Powermatic, Reliant, Sears, Star Tools, Sunhill and Woodtek-are similar in many respects (see the box on pp. 54-55). The 15-in. Delta planer is also made in Taiwan, but at a different plant. It's somewhat different from the Chiu Ting machines but not drastically so. Actually, it looks a lot like its predecessor, the Rockwell 13-in. planer, which is the machine the Taiwanese used as inspiration when they designed their 15-in. planers.

Makita sent us its 155/8-in. planer, the only Japanese entry. We also looked at a few industrial-duty machines, a 16-in. Bridgewood planer made by Chang Iron Works in Taiwan, and a 14-in. planer made by General in Canada. The American-made RBI 816 Woodplaner, made by RBIndustries in Harrisonville, Mo., wasn't included in our review because it has the capability of being converted into a molder or sander. This review is limited to dedicated planers.

Prices range from \$765 for the Grizzly (without a stand) to about \$3,200 for the General. But most of the 15-in. Chiu Ting models cost between \$800 and \$1,300. The price range among these is substantial considering there are so few significant differences in design. The General and 16-in. Bridgewood, which costs \$2,795, are in a class all their own. They are heavy, industrial-duty machines.

In our review, we looked closely at the surface quality of lumber after planing. We also considered the ease of assembly, instruction manuals, warranties, knife changing and, of course, price. We wish we could tell you how these machines will perform over time, but that's not possible in this kind of review. We do want to find out how well a machine that costs about \$1,000 holds up, so we're buying one of the Taiwanese models. After using it for a year, we'll do a follow-up report.

All the machines do a good job of planing

A planer is a dimensioning tool, not a finishing tool. Before running a rough board through a planer, you need to flatten one face on a jointer. A thickness planer flattens the other face, parallel to the first. A good planer will give you a board that is smooth and flat, nearly free of machining marks, and with virtually no snipe, a slight dishing out of the board at either end. All planers leave some tool marks from the spinning cutterhead, and to get a furnituregrade board, handplaning, scraping or sanding is required.

We were pleasantly surprised after running a pile of hickory, a



Some assembly required-Mid-sized planers are heavy tools, and all of them were delivered in wooden crates. Most required some assembly.

Ten planers, a single Taiwanese factory: Can there really be much of a difference?



AMT

The Taiwanese company Chiu Ting, located in Taichung, cranks out thousands of 15-in. planers every year. The machines are sold under a dozen different names, and they come in more colors than a bag of M&M's candy. The basic 15-in. Chiu Ting planer is a medium-duty, two-speed machine with a four-post, three-knife cutterhead design. It owes some of its heritage to the original four-post Brazilianmade Rockwell 13-in. planer. Chiu Ting made several changes, such as increasing the cutting width by 2 in., putting the motor below the machine (except on the planer made for Grizzly, which has the motor on top) and designing it so the table, not the cutterhead portion, moves when adjusting the height. The Taiwanese know how to modify a good existing design and produce a machine economically.

AMT, Bridgewood, Grizzly, Jet, Powermatic, Reliant, Sears, Star Tools, Sunhill and Woodtek all import their machines from Chiu Ting. It's hard to get a straight answer about whether some or most of the parts are identical, but many components look the same, and many parts are interchangeable. Chiu Ting

Common features Magnetic switch Three-knife cutterhead Adjustable bed rollers Sturdy four-post design Cast-iron body contracts with many other smaller shops, which actually make these parts. Some machines have American-made motors. but most are Taiwanese. Stated horsepower ratings differences in stated horsepower. range from 2 hp to 3 hp. All of the 15-in. Chiu Ting machines have The iron castings are infeed and outfeed extension rollers, and substantial and effectively dampen some of them, when bolted tight, ended vibration. Most of the machines weigh up too high, no matter how we fiddled about 475 lbs. Once the drive belts with the adjusting setscrews. Keeping the were broken in, all machines ran bolts slightly loose corrected the problem. smoothly. We hogged off maximum cuts A better solution would be to enlarge the (a hair shy of 1/8 in.), and none of the already oversized extension-arm mounting machines bogged down, despite the holes or slots with a file, which would

very hard wood, through the machines: All produced good-quality boards. We examined and measured boards for snipe, taper and quality of finish. There was about ½4 in. or less of snipe on every board, which we considered acceptable. All the machines planed lumber to a uniform thickness of better than ½4 in. The knife marks, at slow feed rates, were minor. We also tried bogging the machines down by taking the maximum recommended cuts, a hair shy of ½ in. Again, no problem with any of them.

With the exception of the General, all the machines came out of

their crates with sharp knives and the critical internal parts (chipbreakers, infeed and outfeed rollers) accurately adjusted. After removing a set of poorly sharpened knives from the General planer and honing them, that machine also performed well. All the planers have three-knife cutterheads except the Makita, which has two.

The 15-in. machines have two feed-rate speeds, 16 feet per minute (fpm) or 20 fpm, except the Delta, which operates at 16 fpm or 30 fpm. Speed is changed by moving a lever connected to the gearbox. Faster feed rates are fine for initial planing; for a final cut,

allow them to be positioned lower on the machine. Or you could gently bend the soft-iron bar the rollers are mounted on. Extension arms help support long stock, so alignment isn't critical as long as the rollers are even.

So why would you pick, say, Powermatic's \$1,250 planer over the \$1,080 Jet? Both have stands with wheels: Powermatic's stand is enclosed. Both have 3-hp, 230v motors. Both planed boards flat with minimal snipe. The Jet's knives are easier to set because of the cutterhead design. Powermatic's warranty runs one year, Jet's two years. Between the two, we'd pick the Jet. But we'd be comfortable recommending the others too, if planing performance was the only criterion. If instruction-manual clarity is a consideration, we'd point you toward the Bridgewood, Grizzly and Powermatic.

Delta's machine is assembled at Delta's Taiwanese partner factory, Shin Hou, but it appeared to share some parts (or parts of similar design) with the Chiu Ting machines. For example, the chipbreakers, chipbreaker springs and chip deflectors looked the same. The height-adjusting handle looked like Grizzly's. Delta's infeed roller seemed better machined, with sharper edges for grabbing stock. Delta's castings differ from the others in design too. When you turn the height-adjusting crank on the Delta, the cutterhead and motor move, and the table remains stationary. Raising the cutterhead takes some effort because of all the mass. Internally, many parts, such as infeed/outfeed rollers, are attached to the castings in the same way that Chiu Ting assembles them.

Who copied whom? Does it really matter anymore? –*A.B.*



Bridgewood



Grizzly



Jet



Powermatic



Reliant



Sears/Craftsman



Star Tools



Sunhill



Woodtek

you'll get a better finish by slowing down the feed rate. The General runs at one speed, 15 fpm, the slowest of the bunch, but it produces the best finish—less snipe and finer knife marks. The Makita has only one speed, 29.5 fpm. (The cutterhead moves faster too, and the surface quality of boards are comparable to the other 15-in. planers. But with one less knife, we assume that the blades will need sharpening more frequently.) The 16-in. Bridgewood is a variable-speed rate machine, 20 to 30 fpm. With the exception of the Makita, which has a 110v universal motor, the planers have

230v induction motors. Stated power ranged from 2 hp to 3 hp.

The General has the look and feel of a top-notch tool. When you turn the wheel to adjust the table height, the action is smooth and precise. The bolts for adjusting the infeed and outfeed rollers are large and easy to reach. Each knife is held in place with nine gib bolts—more than on any of the other machines. It takes longer to perform a knife change, but you feel confident that the cutters will stay put under the most severe load.

The Bridgewood is a solid machine too, but with a few rough

Photos except where noted: author November/December 1997 55

Delta 15 in.

Delta's planer can be operated at a faster feed rate than the other 15-in. planers and is available with retractable, laminate-coated extension wings.



Bridgewood 16 in.

Of the Taiwanese planers reviewed, this was by far the heaviest duty model. It comes with infinitely variable-speed control and several safety features.



General 14 in.

The Canadians make a solid one-speed planer with excellent fit and finish. And it has a price to match.



Makita 155/8 in.

Because of its lighter weight, the Makita is a good choice if you need a portable planer.



edges. The table casting is very solid, the stand itself is cast iron, the belt-drive system is beefy and the variable speed gives you a lot of options. Some of the castings and welds aren't as neat as those on the General, and the dust chute, though it works just fine, looks like it was shaped by hand on an anvil.

Problems surfaced during assembly

For many years, instruction manuals that came with Taiwanese tools were difficult to understand. The good news is that many importers have corrected that oversight. The bad news is that not all have done so. The manuals that come with the AMT, Reliant, Star Tools, Sunhill and Woodtek machines are identical. They share an unappreciation for clarity, and they contain errors. For example, in the section that tells you how to set the chipbreaker, the manuals equate 1mm with 0.40 in, when the conversion should be 0.04 in. The section on adjusting table rollers is incomplete, although we were able to figure out how to do it after some fiddling.

Among the companies that import Taiwanese machines, Bridgewood, Grizzly, Jet, Powermatic and Sears corrected the errors in the generic manuals. The Sears manual doesn't provide clear instructions on wiring the motor, a U.S.-made Marathon. When we first hooked it up, it ran backward. We got it right on the second try. The Grizzly and Bridgewood manuals include good troubleshooting sections. Delta's manual has exceptionally clear photos, which is a help when trying to figure out an unfamiliar tool. General's is sparse and lacks any photos but does include good line drawings with all the parts labeled. Makita's manual is concise and easy to follow.

Although assembly is a one-time headache, it can tell you a lot about a machine, the genius or lack of it in the engineering behind it, and the attention to detail, such as paint, fit of components and the clarity of the instruction manual. The assembly required varied depending on the model and took between a few minutes to a few hours. Most of the planers required assembly of stands, motor mountings, wiring and miscellaneous rollers and hand cranks. The bodies of most of these machines weigh about 400 lbs. To lift the planer's main body onto a stand requires the aid of at least two strong people or an engine hoist. All the 15-in, machines made in Taiwan had one nice feature: four retractable iron bars that can be used for lifting the machine.

Delta's sturdy sheet-metal stand was by far the most pleasant to assemble because there were no sharp edges. That's because Delta's U.S.-made stands are cut by a laser, which leaves a softer edge. The stands on the other 15-in. Taiwanese machines are cut by a punch press, which leaves a burr, and those aren't always removed at the factory. This is a minor point, but sometimes little things like this make you appreciate a machine over the long haul, especially if you have to move it. Having a heavy tool on wheels is also a nice touch, and Powermatic and Jet thought to include wheels as standard equipment on their well-made stands.

Sooner or later, you'll have to sharpen the blades

Changing blades on a thickness planer is about as much fun as rotating the tires on your car, but it has to be done regularly. The worst part of the job is setting the blade height accurately. Some manufacturers have made this task easier.

On all the machines we evaluated, planer blades are held fast to the cylindrical cutterheads by a row of gib screws or bolts. Details vary (see the drawings on p. 58), but to remove a blade, you loosen the gib screws and lift out the blade. Putting sharp blades

Thickness planers			
Model	Cost	Warranty	Accessories
AMT 15 in.	\$890	1 year on motor; 10 years on machine	Stand included
Bridgewood 15 in.	\$949	1 year	Stand included; Esta disposable knife system: \$335
Bridgewood 16 in.	\$2,795	1 year	Esta disposable knife system: \$350
Delta 15 in.	\$1,199	2 years	Stand included; dust hood: \$65; mobile base: \$95
Grizzly 15 in.	\$765	1 year	Stand: \$60
Jet 15 in.	\$1,090	2 years	Stand with wheels included
Powermatic 15 in.	\$1,250	1 year	Stand with wheels included
Reliant 15 in.	\$845	1 year	Stand included
Sears/Craftsman 15 in.	\$1,299	1 year	Stand included
Star Tools 15 in.	\$875	1 year	Stand included
Sunhill 15 in.	\$879	2 years	Stand included
Woodtek 15 in.	\$1,085	1 year	Stand and extra set of knives included
General 14 in.	\$3,200	2 years	Dust hood: \$85
Makita 15⁵⁄s in.	\$1,680	1 year	Stand and dust hood: about \$70 each

All from Chiu Ting assembly plant in Taiwan

back in place is trickier because you have to realign the blades parallel to the table and make sure they're all at the same height. With the exception of the General, the machines come with a simple knife-setting jig (see the photo below). Makita's jig consists of two small blocks of wood. It's worth noting that aftermarket knifesetting jigs are available, and they are an improvement over the ones supplied with these tools.

Setting the blades on most of the 15-in. Chiu Ting machines is a trial-and-error exercise. First you insert a knife into a spring-loaded slot in the cutterhead. Then you place the jig on top of the knife and press down until the arms of the jig contact the cutterhead. While holding the jig in place, the gib screws are tightened (see the top photo on p. 58). Sometimes the knife will move a bit, either due to the torque on a gib screw or because you wiggled the jig. Then you have to loosen the screws and try again. This has to be done for each knife.

Four machines—Delta, General, Jet and Sears—have cutterheads with a helpful feature, a pair of jack screws for each knife. Knives on these machines rest on the jack screws, whose height is adjusted with a hex wrench (see the center photo on p. 58). You still feel like you need three hands to set the knives, but the chance of a knife moving out of position while tightening the gib screws is reduced, at least in one direction.

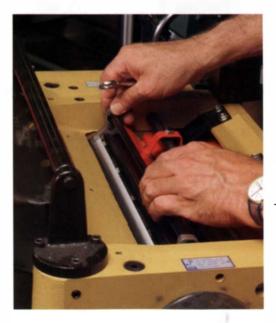
Bridgewood offers an optional Esta disposable knife system for its planers. This system, imported from West Germany, simplifies blade changes. The knives fit into holders, which rest upon a pair of height-adjusting screws installed in the cutterhead slots (see the bottom photo on p. 58). Once set, these screws ensure an accurate height setting when installing replacement knives. The knife/holder assembly is held fast to the cutterhead by the stock gib screws. An Esta system costs \$335 for the 15-in. planer and \$350 for the 16-in. planer, installed. Twelve replacement knives are included. Stock Bridgewood cutterheads used to be similar to the basic Chiu Ting models, but the company has switched to jack-screw cutterheads. Powermatic will also offer Esta cutterheads as an option.

Adjusting the Makita knives is a trial-and-error process, much as it is with the Taiwanese machines. A disadvantage is that there are no springs in the cutterhead behind the knives. But there is a plus. By turning a lever, the Makita's cutterhead locks in position.

Many of the differences are in the details

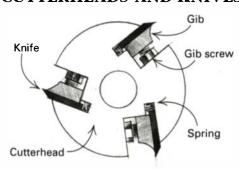
Tools sometimes act like magnets for small children who may want to emulate a parent in the shop. The switches on the Sears and Makita planers can be locked with a key. Delta's switch has a hole predrilled for a padlock, sold as an accessory.

The General, Sears and Powermatic machines have large stop buttons that have to be reset before turning on the machine. We didn't like where the switches are located on the Sears planer. You



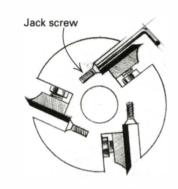
Setting knives can be fussy. Positioning knives accurately is crucial for top performance. A knifesetting jig helps, but cutterhead designs on some planers in this group make knife changes easier.

CUTTERHEADS AND KNIVES



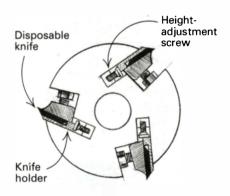
Typical cutterhead—Knives rest on springs and are held in place by gibs and gib screws.





Cutterhead with jackscrews—Knives rest on adjustable jack screws; gib and gib screws keep knives in place.





Esta disposable knives—Double-edged knives fit into a holder that rests on height-adjustment screws. Same gib and gib screw setup.

have to reach under the long outfeed table rollers to get to them.

The 16-in. Bridgewood has a lot of safety features, including more warning stickers than you'd find on a nuclear reactor. There's an emergency power cutoff lever within easy reach. If you've ever had an uneven board jam in a planer, you'll appreciate this feature. This machine has additional cutoff switches that prevent the motor from running if the top or sides of the machine are opened.

A planer is one of the noisiest tools in the shop, and these were no exception. Under load, with a dust collector hooked up, most of the machines ran at about 100dB. They're also one of the messiest tools. Most come with dust chutes, but Delta, General and Makita make you pay extra to own one.

Unlike benchtop planers, many internal components of these mid-sized machines can be adjusted to account for wear and tear. For example, if the table gets out of whack and isn't parallel with the cutterhead, you can readjust it. Infeed and outfeed rollers can be set for depth and pressure. Table rollers can also be adjusted. The 16-in. Bridgewood is the only machine we evaluated that has a lever for quick table-roller adjustments. For rough stock, you raise table rollers to reduce friction; the downside is that there's more snipe. For smooth stock, the rollers are set just a few thousandths of an inch above the tabletop and snipe is minimized. Adjusting the table rollers on the other machines is a time-consuming procedure that requires an Allen wrench, an open-ended wrench, a straightedge and a feeler gauge. You're better off finding a setting that works for both rough and smooth stock. We found that if the rollers are about 0.003 in. to 0.004 in. above the tabletop, the machines performed well for all types of lumber.

Most of the machines are built with solid-metal infeed and outfeed rollers. There were a few exceptions. The 15-in. Bridgewood, Delta and Woodtek have polyurethane outfeed rollers. The Makita has neoprene infeed and outfeed rollers. Manufacturers claim that softer outfeed rollers help reduce marring of lumber. We found that if you use a dust collector, which removes chips before they get trapped between the outfeed roller and the stock, either type of roller works fine.

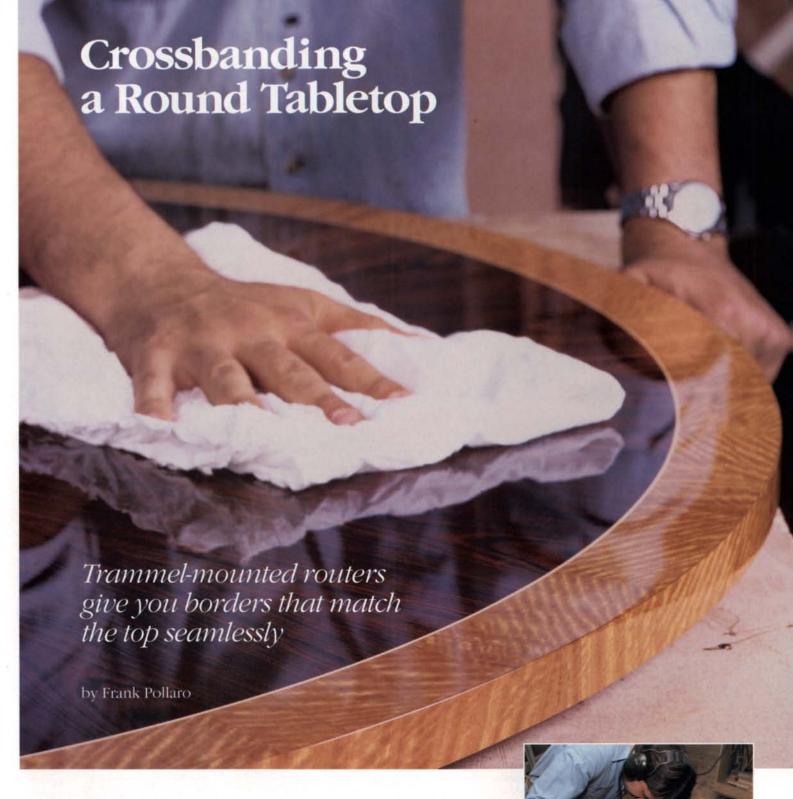
The 16-in. Bridgewood has a segmented infeed roller and segmented cast-iron chippers. Those features allow you to feed stock of slightly different thicknesses through a planer at the same time.

Machines that stood out

The General is a fine machine: sturdy and smooth to operate. With the 16-in. Bridgewood, you get a lot of features not found on the other machines, including sheer mass. Either machine seems fit to handle the needs of a busy shop.

Among the 15-in. machines, we had a hard time finding major differences. You could safely pick one based on price alone. However, we liked the Delta and Jet for a number of reasons: improved cutterhead design that makes knife-adjusting easier, sturdy stands and two-year warranties. We liked the optional Esta disposable knife system that's offered on the Bridgewood planers. The Makita is a solid machine too, yet at 254 lbs., the lightest in weight. For someone who needs to take a mid-sized planer to the job site, the Makita is a good choice.

Fine Woodworking editors William Duckworth, Scott Gibson, Vincent Laurence, Strother Purdy and shop technician Anthony Bezok also contributed to this article.

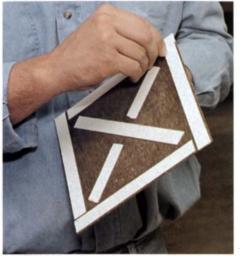


fter we built a large library of Macassar ebony several years ago, my shop was left with a huge stack of veneer offcuts—none more than a foot long. I couldn't just throw them away, but I couldn't think of any good use for them either. So the veneer sat on a shelf. A year later, I figured out what to do with them. I'd just finished veneering a round table with a crotch mahogany sunburst pattern. It looked great, but it didn't feel finished. I

decided to try crossbanding the top with some of the ebony scraps—that is, running a narrow border of ebony around the perimeter of the table. It was just what the table needed.

Crossbanding that first table was a little hair-raising for me. It takes a fair amount of nerve to plunge a router into a beautifully veneered tabletop. But with each table I have worked on, my confidence has grown and my technique has improved. These

Set the center-point fixture precisely





Trammel center must be positioned precisely. The author lines up the corners of the laminate on seams of the sunburst pattern, automatically centering the fixture.

days, the whole process is efficient, predictable and, as a result, a lot of fun.

Fixed center point is key to routing a round rabbet

I rout the rabbet for the inlay around the perimeter of the tabletop with a trammel-mounted plunge router. What makes this technique work is establishing a fixed pivot point at the center of the table for the trammel (see the photos above). I make a center-point fixture by driving a finish nail through the center of a piece of ½-in.-thick plywood about 6 in. sq. The size isn't critical, but it's essential that the piece of plywood be perfectly square. To locate the center point, I draw lines diagonally from corner to corner and nail through the inter-

section. I epoxy a piece of plastic laminate about 8 in. sq. to the bottom of the plywood. The plastic laminate prevents the nail head from damaging the veneered top. Again, the dimensions of the laminate aren't critical, but the laminate must be perfectly square, and the plywood must be glued to the laminate at dead-center.

Centering the plywood on the laminate is easy. I just draw diagonal lines from corner to corner across one side of the laminate and then place the plywood down so its corners are on the diagonal lines on the laminate. This centers the plywood automatically. I pencil mark the perimeter of the plywood on the laminate to make sure I glue it down in the right spot.

I use double-faced tape to attach the cen-

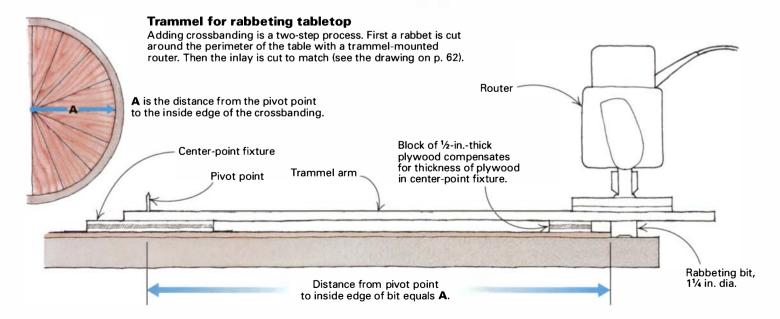
ter-point fixture to the center of the table. I like the kind that has a thin foam core. It's about ½6 in. thick and very sticky (don't worry about removing it later; it's easy). To keep the fixture in place, I sand off the veneer tape where the fixture is to be attached and blast the area clean with compressed air before pressing the fixture into place. I use the sunburst pattern itself to center the fixture on the table, aligning the corners of the fixture with seams of the sunburst. Be sure the fixture is well-seated. If the jig is removed or comes loose during the operation, it will be impossible to relocate it to the same spot.

Before routing the rabbet for the crossbanding, I determine the outside dimension of the table, mount a trammel on the center-point fixture and swing it around with a lumber crayon or grease pencil at the end. I follow this line with a jigsaw, cutting the corners off the table blank, turning a square into a round. Later, I'll use a router to trim the top to its finished size.

Correct depth of cut is critical

The trammel arm for the plunge router is made of ½-in.-thick birch plywood (see the drawing below). I generally make these about as wide as the router and 6 in. to 8 in. longer than the radius of the finished table. I screw the router base to this trammel arm and plunge a hole through it so the 1¼-in.-dia. rabbeting bit is exposed. A ½-in.-thick block glued and screwed to the underside of the trammel arm, just behind the router bit, compensates for the thickness of the plywood block on the center-point fixture. The laminate thickness is insignificant.

Setting the bit depth for the rabbet is the



60 Fine Woodworking Drawings: Jim Richey

Rabbeting the tabletop



Veneer crossbanding is used to set plunge depth. The thickness of the veneer is added to the thickness of a plywood spacer when setting plunge depth. Check the setting in scrap.

most critical step in the whole process. The crossbanding should be dead flush with the rest of the top when you're done. After zeroing the bit on the tabletop, I use a sample of the crossbanding as a spacer to set the depth stop on my plunge router (see the photo above). I make a test cut in a piece of scrap to check the accuracy of this setting.

The distance between the bit and pivot point is determined by the radius of the tabletop and how wide I want the crossbanding to be. I use crossbanding that's anywhere from 1 in. to 3 in. wide, depending on the size of the table. I always rout the rabbet wider than it needs to be, making two passes, and routing right to the edge of the tabletop. This lets me run the crossbanding off the edge, rather than fitting it in a groove. I rout the inner pass first because it's the critical one, where the crossbanding meets the field. Any excess width can be trimmed away later after all the inlay work is done.

Once I've established the distance from the pivot point to the inside edge of the crossbanding, I hold a rule to the underside of the trammel, with one end against the inside edge of the bit, and mark the length on the trammel. I drill a hole with a bit the same diameter as the finish nail pivot point, so the trammel will fit snugly.

Though routing the rabbet is straightforward, I take my time (see the photo above right). After the first pass is complete, another hole is drilled in the trammel arm for



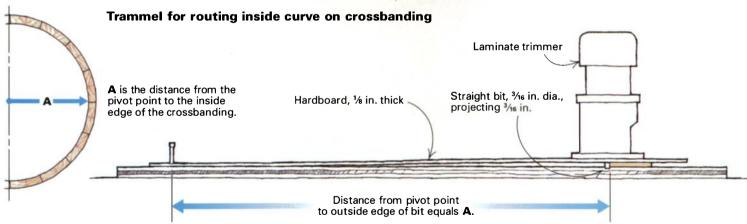
the second pass. I use a block plane to level the rabbet where the two passes overlap. I knock off any fuzz created by the router at the edge of the veneered field using a piece of 120-grit paper wrapped around a block.

Laminate trimmer cuts matching curve in crossbanding

To get a perfect joint between the field and the crossbanding, I use the same trammel

measurement for cutting the crossbanding as I did for the rabbet—with one big difference. To cut the rabbet, I measured from the pivot point to the inside cutting edge of the rabbeting bit. To cut the matching arc in the crossbanding, I switch to a laminate trimmer and a 3/16-in.-dia. straight bit and measure to the outside cutting edge. I use a laminate trimmer for this job because it's light and can be managed easily with one





hand. Bit depth is about 3/16 in. The trammel arm is made of 1/8-in.-thick hardboard and is tacked to a piece of 1/2-in.-thick plywood.

Swinging the trammel arm across the plywood gives me a reference groove. I place the leaf of veneer I'll be using for the crossbanding over this groove, trim away the waste at one end (see the top left photo above) and then check the fit. If it's not quite right, I'll adjust the distance between the pivot point and bit by drilling another hole in the trammel arm. If the fit is good, I mark the veneer a little beyond the edge of the table, establishing the width of cut (see the top right photo above).

This width is then transferred to the piece of plywood I'm routing. I simply hold the veneer in place against the pencil marks on the plywood, swing the laminate trimmer slowly through the veneer and then advance it for each subsequent cut (see the bottom right photo above).

Veneer tape, clamps pull crossbanding tight to field

Gluing the crossbanding in place is next. I position each piece of crossbanding so it's

centered on a section of the sunburst. Then I align a straightedge with the seams of the sunburst, mark the crossbanding (see the near right photo) and cut it with a veneer saw. I apply glue to the rabbet for that one section of crossbanding, tape the banding in place and pull the veneer tight to the field (see the far right photo).

The trick to getting perfect seams is in the clamping. The first time I tried crossbanding, I unclamped the first few pieces only to find that they'd crept away from the field and had left 1/16-in.-wide gaps between the inlay and the field.

When I asked my friend Frank Klausz how to prevent this, he said that the clamp must be tilted out before it's tightened. This causes the clamp to walk forward as you apply pressure (see the bottom photo at right). Pressure is transferred to the clamping cauls, which push the crossbanding tight against the field. Since I have adopted this technique, every seam has been perfect.

I work my way around the top, gluing down every other section as I go. When I finish, I usually take a break and maybe have a bite to eat while the glue dries. When I get back, I start in on the sections in between. Any squeeze-out at the edges of the sections of crossbanding already glued down can be cleaned up with a sharp chisel. I mark and cut these in the same way as the first pieces, just taking a little more time because the fit has to be perfect at the edges as well as along the inside curve.

Adding string inlay is simple. I like the way a 1/16-in.-wide line of holly or ebony defines the border between field and crossbanding. The process for grooving the tabletop for stringing is identical to routing the rabbet and uses the same center-point fixture. I use the laminate trimmer because it gives me more control, and I set the distance between bit and pivot point so the bit straddles the seam.

The last thing I do before removing the center-point fixture is rout the edge of the tabletop to its finished diameter. Using the router on the trammel arm leaves an edge that's smooth, round and ready for edge-banding. I set the distance between pivot point and the inside of the bit to the desired table radius and plunge a long straight bit slowly down through the edge of the table as I move the router. I move very slowly around the table, maintaining pressure near the center.

The center point can be removed now. I squirt a little VM&P naphtha (available at

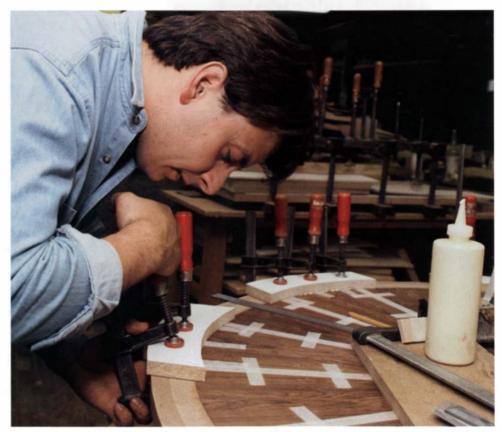
Trimming and gluing crossbanding



Mark and cut seams. While holding the crossbanding firmly in place, mark seams by lining up a straightedge on the sunburst seam.



Tape crossbanding in place. After spreading glue in the rabbet, stick veneer tape to the crossbanding, and pull it in toward the center.



Angle the clamp out, so it forces the crossbanding inward when you apply pressure.

most hardware stores) under the fixture and pry gently on the laminate with something that won't dent or gouge the wood. The naphtha breaks the bonds between laminate, tape and veneer and will not stain the wood.

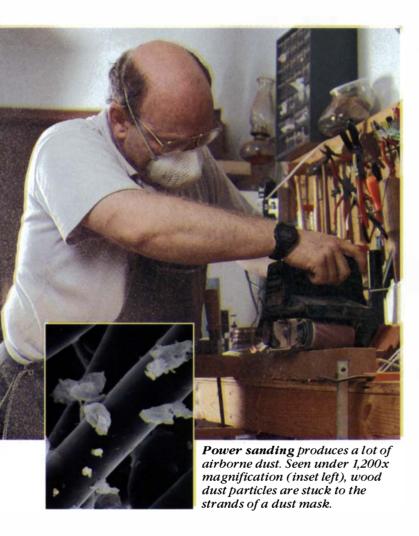
If I've routed a groove for string inlay, as I did on this table, I press the stringing in, using white glue to hold it in place. The table is now ready to be sanded. When working with veneer, you can't sand after every step. Each sanding increases the likelihood of sanding through the veneer, so wait until all inlays are in and you have nothing left to add before sanding.

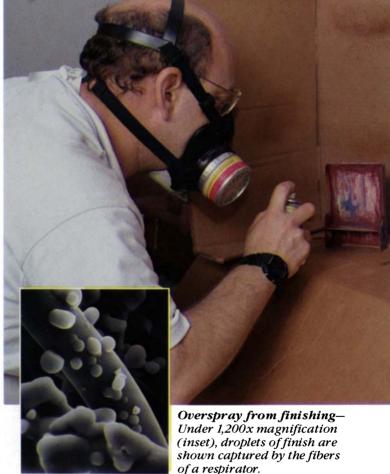
Frank Pollaro owns and operates a custom furniture shop in East Orange, New Jersey.

Protecting Your Lungs from Woodworking

Dust masks and respirators can capture a variety of workshop hazards

by Charles W. Calmbacher





y great-grandfather emigrated to this country from the Black Forest of Germany at the end of the 19th century and found work as a finisher for a piano company. That would have been unremarkable except he had only one arm. He was a hard worker and wasn't cut any slack.

The company occasionally held demonstrations that displayed his speed and ability to keep up with other workers. He became so well known for his talent that Mark Twain, who had an eye for unusual characters, hired him to repair some furniture the author had singed with cigars.

In my great-grandfather's day, safety took a back seat to getting the job done. He never wore a dust mask or respirator when he worked. That attitude has prevailed for many generations of woodworkers. I approach woodworking with more caution. For many years, I worked in the pesticide and herbicide industry where a respirator was mandatory. I got used to wearing one, and I've carried that habit over to my workshop.

Fine dust particles are the most dangerous

Wood dust particles created in woodworking come in all sizes, some so small you can't even see them. Sanding machines produce very fine particles; even dull cutting tools will create fine dusts as well as larger chips. Very fine particles cause the most damage to your lungs. Wood dusts are considered a potential carcinogen by



Not all masks are rated for wood dust. You might find these low-cost masks near the lumber racks at the home center, but read the label carefully. Some aren't rated for wood dust.

the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Some woods, such as Western red cedar, contain resins that are considered toxic. Studies have found that people in the woodworking industry suffer a higher incidence of respiratory system problems, including lung cancer, than the general population.

The nose and bronchial tubes are the body's first line of defense against air-borne invaders. There, fine hair-like fibers, called cilia, snag particles. The irritants get trapped in mucus and are expelled through coughing or sneezing. Excessive exposure, however, can irritate the tissues in the nose and bronchial tubes, causing difficulty in breathing and other allergic reactions.

Dusts and mists are most harmful when they enter the lungs, which act like a freeway interchange to other parts of the body, including the bloodstream, kidneys and central nervous system. Small particles, those ranging in size from 0.5 microns to 5 microns (a sheet of typing paper is about 25 microns thick), are most likely to do this. When dust particles enter the lungs, the body's immune system springs into action and tries to destroy and expel the invaders. Our bodies are quite successful at this. But lung cells can get battle-weary and mutate into cancerous cells when they're overwhelmed by toxins.

NIOSH has revised its standards for respirators because it has been determined that respirator filters are less efficient at filtering dust and mist particles about 0.1 to 0.3 microns in diameter than at filtering smaller or larger particles (see the box on p. 67). New respirators are very efficient at capturing all sizes of fine particles. Because you never know exactly what size particles you might face in the workshop if you're running machine tools, it pays to wear some sort of dust mask or respirator. When spray finishing, it's even more important to protect your lungs because you will be faced with fine mist particles as well as potentially hazardous vapors from the chemicals.

Disposable masks have improved

Disposable masks are designed for specific hazards. Some are only designed for pollen and other large particles (see the top left photo above). It's a safe bet to pick a mask that's been certified by NIOSH. Then you'll know it meets certain standards.

Though often referred to as paper dust masks, these disposables are made of a variety of materials including finely woven paper, plastics and polymers. These filters come in many styles: from the basic mask with an elastic headband to more elaborate, molded units with exhalation valves, silicon seals and adjustable headbands. Prices for these respirators range from about 15 cents to several dollars each. The most inexpensive masks, made of thin





Getting a good fit from a respirator—Masks with two adjustable straps (top and center) usually fit well. A mask that doesn't seal flat against the face (bottom) will allow dust or mist to escape past the filter.

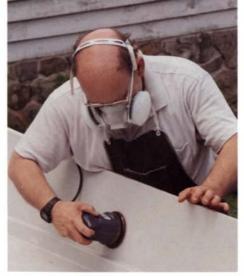


Photos except where noted: Anatole Burkin

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Quarter-face mask-This mask seals well because of its soft body and fabric covering. The filter is replaceable.



Half-face mask-These respirators are usually made of soft rubber or silicone and have replaceable filter cartridges.



Full-face protection—Powered airpurifying respirators deliver a constant supply of filtered air.

materials and a flimsy bendable metal strap over the nose bridge, often don't seal well. Fiber masks, made of thicker materials molded to conform to the shape of the face, provide a better fit and improved seal. Some come with one-way valves, which make breathing easier and help prevent fogging of glasses. Masks equipped with two adjustable straps offer a more secure fit than those with a single elastic band. People who have beards, however, won't get a good seal with any of these masks.

Replace a disposable mask when breathing through it becomes difficult. Don't try to extend the life of a mask by vacuuming or washing it. Doing so will only break down the material and make the mask ineffective.

Air-purifying cartridge respirators

Air-purifying cartridge respirators come in three basic styles: quarter-, half- and full-face designs. These make you look like a serious



Testing the fit of a cartridge-style respirator—Cover the cartridges with your hands and inhale. The vacuum pressure created should collapse the mask against your face.

toxic avenger. The quarter- and half-face models cover the nose and mouth; the full-face models offer eye protection as well. Again, many of these will not seal well if the wearer has a beard. To be effective, respirators must seal against bare skin.

The quarter-face air-purifying respirator is usually made of rubber, silicones or plastic (see the photo at left above). It is designed to fit over the nose and mouth, and it rests on the chin. It comes with a replaceable filter that will block out dusts and nontoxic mists. These respirators cost about \$5 and replacement filters are usually available for about \$1 or less.

The half-face respirator covers the nose and mouth and fits under the chin. Outfitted with the appropriate cartridges, it can protect against very fine particles, toxic vapors, mists and some gasses (see the top photo on the facing page). A respirator body with a pair of filters costs \$25 to \$40. Cartridges cost \$8 to \$20 per pair.

These are a good choice for woodworking because they have soft rubber or silicone seals and adjustable straps. A good fit is important with a respirator, and except for those with beards, halfface respirators will fit almost anyone (see the photo at left).

Although half-face respirators serve most woodworkers well, there is a mask that provides even more protection: the full-face respirator, available from industrial equipment suppliers. It seals along the forehead, temples, cheeks and under the chin. A fullface respirator has the additional advantage of built-in eye and face protection. The body of these devices costs from \$150 to \$250. Cartridges are \$8 to \$20 per pair.

Powered air-purifying respirators are comfortable

Powered air-purifying respirators (PAPRs) come in several styles: half-face, full-face, with a hood or with a face-shield and a seal around the face. These respirators (see the photo at right above) have battery-powered fans that draw air through replaceable filters. Depending on the model, they can filter dusts, mists and other hazards. (NIOSH is still developing new standards for these.) Like fullface respirators, these offer excellent protection. If you wear glasses or have a beard, a full-face, hooded PAPR may give you the best fit and, therefore, the best protection. I prefer PAPRs for woodworking because they reduce the strain of breathing through a filter.

PAPRs are available through professional tool stores, woodworking equipment suppliers, safety equipment companies and directly from some manufacturers. The cost of these respirators varies based on the design—the more hazards they guard against, the higher the cost. Prices range from approximately \$150 to \$500. Cartridges range in price from \$8 to more than \$20.

PAPRs pump filtered fresh air toward your face, which makes them very comfortable to wear, even in warm weather. But pay attention to the sound of the fan; if it sounds like it's beginning to strain, it probably means that it's time to change the filter.

Filters are made for a variety of applications

It's important to pick the right filter for the job. When spraying lacquer, for example, be sure to get cartridges rated for organic vapors. Those come with charcoal filters that capture toxic vapors, which even the best dust mask won't. You shouldn't be able to detect the smell of a finishing product when breathing through a respirator fitted with the proper cartridges. If you can, it's time to replace the cartridges. They cannot be cleaned.

There's not a cartridge available for every chemical you might use in the workshop. If you're working with methanol or products containing isocyanates, such as urethanes and polyurethanes, have plenty of fresh air circulation—there isn't a NIOSH-approved filter cartridge to trap those vapors. A respirator, however, will help somewhat by capturing mists from overspray.

It's possible to fill an enclosed room, such as a spray booth, with a high concentration of mists and vapors, which will overwhelm an air-purifying respirator. Air-purifying respirators do not supply oxygen, they only filter contaminants. If you suspect you are creating high concentrations of chemical contaminants, you should have a professional test for oxygen levels.

Because NIOSH has issued new standards for respirators, and old and new models are still on the market, it's confusing sorting through all the numbers and alphabet soup printed on the labels.

On old-style disposable respirators rated for dusts and mists, the label or packaging will have the code TC-21C, followed by some numbers. The 21C tells you it's an old-style mask, and possibly less effective than the newer models. New masks are coded different-



Use the proper cartridge for the chemical hazard. For spraying lacquer, organic vapor cartridges, which contain carbon filters, will trap hazardous fumes.

ly, and even the most basic NIOSH-approved dust mask will capture 95% of the particles at 0.3 microns, the most penetrating size.

If you have a cartridge-style mask, there are many specialty filters available. For capturing fine dusts, high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters are a good choice. Most of the HEPA filters manufactured under the old standards will meet the highest level of the new guidelines, which require filters to capture 99.97% of dusts in the 0.3 micron size.

Charles W. Calmbacher is an environmental, health and safety consultant and teaches at the University of Georgia at Athens. He lives in Lawrenceville, Ga.



Dust mask that complies with new standards-This NIOSH-approved dust mask is rated N95. That means it's not oil resistant, and it's 95% efficient at capturing dust particles as small as 0.3 microns.

New standards for respirators

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued new standards for respirators that went into effect July 10, 1995 and allowed a 3-year grandfather period. Dust masks and cartridges for respirators manufactured after July 10, 1998 must meet the new standards. Consumers will continue to see older products sold after that date because retailers will be allowed to deplete their stocks. Respirators that meet the new guidelines are already on the market.

The new regulations require approved filters to be at least 95% efficient at capturing particles 0.3 microns in size, the most penetrating. Disposable masks that meet the new standards are rated with a letter designation followed by a

number, such as N95. Masks beginning with an N are for use where there is no oil present in the air, masks labeled with an R are resistant to oil mists and P is for masks that are even more resistant to oils. The numbers refer to the efficiency of the respirators: 95%, 99% and 100% (actually 99.97%) efficient. Cartridgestyle filters must meet the same standards. Because cartridges are available for a host of hazards, they are labeled with additional information.

Manufacturers are making new cartridges to fit all or most masks on the market. The new standards apply to all particulate filters for non-powered airpurifying respirators. NIOSH may work on new standards for powered respirators in the future. -C.W.C.

Arts-and-Crafts Sideboard

——Part three ——

Ebony and carved yellow heart inlay: crowning touches for a handsome case

by Gary Rogowski

etails in a handmade piece of furniture are what make it sing, and where a furnituremaker can really have fun. In some ways, this mahogany sideboard looks as if it could have been designed by Charles and Henry Greene in the early 1900s. I relied on the inlay of ebony and carved yellow heart to make this design my own.

Articles in the last two issues of *Fine Woodworking* have covered construction of the carcase, the web frames, which support the drawers, and the doors. What's left is the top, back rail, drawer pulls and door handles, and, finally, the inlay across the front of the case. Although each of these remaining parts gave me some chance to experiment with design, I especially looked forward to the carved inlay that would simulate ginkgo leaves blowing across the face of the finished sideboard.

A breadboard top stays flat but allows seasonal movement

To keep the top flat, I used breadboard ends, which prevent the top from cup-

ping yet still allow it to move across its width as humidity changes (for more on breadboard ends, see FWW #110, pp. 78-81). The breadboard ends were dimensioned 1/16 in. thicker than the top and a little longer than the top is wide, adding shadow lines. The top and breadboard ends are flush on the bottom.

To join the breadboard ends and top, I used four mortises and tenons at each end, along with a full-length groove in the ends and a mating tongue at either end of the top (see the drawing on pp. 70-71).

The mortises and grooves in the breadboard ends were cut on the router table. The tenons and tongue across the ends of the top, both ½ in. thick, were cut with a hand-held plunge router after being defined by sawkerfs. Remember that any trimming to fit must be from the top cheek of the tenon so the bottoms of the bread-





board ends and top remain flush. When the tenons were finally seated, I pulled the two end pieces off and planed a slight belly along their inside edges. This spring joint ensures that the joints between top and ends remain tight.

Once the joinery was cut and fitted, I eased all exposed edges on the top and ends, except for those where the ends meet the top. I finish-planed and then wetsanded before I glued on the ends. This work is easy now, but a real pain later on.

Pins and plugs finish top, functionally and decoratively

Because the top has to be able to move across its width, I couldn't glue all four tenons on each end into their respective mortises. Instead, I glued just the center two tenons and used short sections of dowel to pin all the tenons. The outer two tenons have slotted pin holes so the top can move. I plugged all four holes at each end with squared ebony plugs.

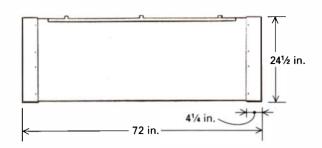
With the top and breadboard ends apart, I drilled the 1/4-in.-dia. plug holes (about 1/4 in. deep) into the ends and then squared them. These holes do not go into the mortise. Next I drilled 3/16-in.-dia. pin holes (centered on the 1/4 in, holes) through the mortises and just into the bottom half of the breadboard ends. Then I dry-clamped the top and ends together and marked the pin locations on the tenons. I pulled the ends off, drilled the holes in the two center tenons at each end and routed 1/2-in.-long slots in the outer tenons.

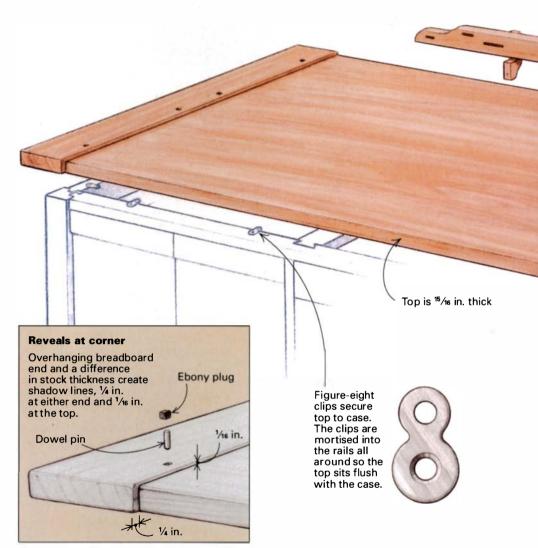
I glued and clamped the breadboard ends to the top next (see the top photo on the facing page). When you glue the ends on, make sure you have the same reveal at both edges of the top and that the ends pull in at their centers. Have long clamps ready to apply pressure on both sides of the top, and make sure the ends don't deflect under clamping pressure. If you don't have long enough clamps, threaded couplers can connect lengths of pipe clamp.

I pinned the four mortise-and-tenon joints at each end of the top with short sections of 3/16-in.-dia. dowel, driving them home with a piece of brass rod (see the center photo on the facing page). Then I tapered one end of each of the 1/4-in.-sq. ebony plugs to ease their entry into the squared holes in the breadboard ends. I hammered these home, stopping when I could hear that they were fully seated (see the bottom photo on the facing page).

This sideboard called for a soft, rounded

Breadboard ends keep the top flat and create shadow lines for visual interest. The ends are pinned and plugged. The back rail is attached to the top rear rail of the carcase with a pair of brackets that are notched to fit around the overhang of the top.



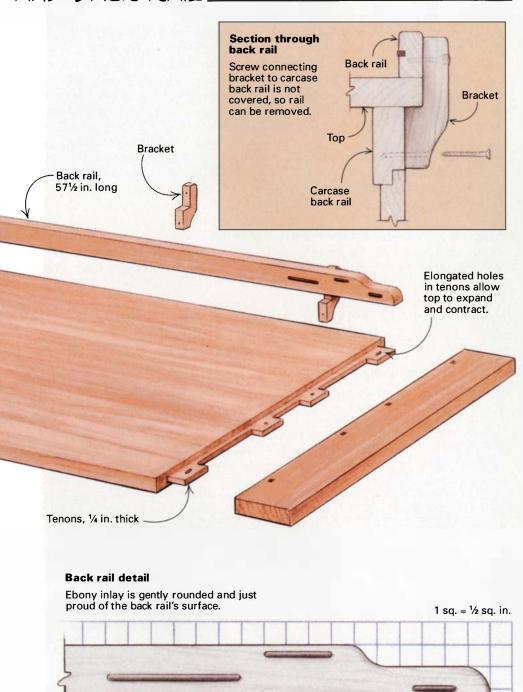


look, so I domed the plugs using a chisel and sandpaper. A scrap of plastic laminate prevented damage to the breadboard ends as I pared down the ebony plugs to within 1/16 in. of the surface. I finished doming the plugs with 180-grit sandpaper, stopping when I could run my finger over a plug without catching an edge.

I attached the top to the carcase with 20 figure-eight clips (see FWW #112, pp. 54-57 for more on attaching tops to bases). I used a 3/4-in.-dia. straight bit in a plunge router to cut the recesses in the top rails for the clips. Because the figure-eights can pivot, the top is free to expand and contract.

A low back rail doesn't overwhelm the case-I had originally designed the back rail as a 5-in.-high plate rail with cutouts similar to those in the stretchers. But later, something told me that such a tall back rail wasn't quite right. So I started mocking up

AND BACK RAIL



other possibilities on cardboard, using a marker to indicate inlay. I arrived at a rail just 11/2 in. high and inlaid with strips of ebony. The effect is lighter and more graceful than what I had intended.

I routed 1/8-in.-wide grooves in the back rail for the inlay, using support pieces on either side of the rail to keep the router base steady. To fit the inlay, I planed the ebony to thickness, sanded one end round to fit and then cut the other end close to length. I snuck up on a fit by sanding a little off the other end, checking and repeating until it just fit the groove. Once I'd glued the ebony in place, I domed its top to match the plugs in the top and elsewhere on the sideboard.

To attach the back rail, I glued, screwed and plugged brackets to it from behind, notching them to fit around the overhang of the top (see the drawing detail above). The brackets are screwed to the back of the

PINNED JOINTS



Glue only the center. The center two mortise-and-tenon joints are glued. The other two are pinned through elongated holes but assembled without glue so the top can move with seasonal changes in humidity.





Joints are pinned and then plugged. Tenons in the ends of the top are pinned in place with short sections of 3/16-in.-dia. dowel. The author uses a piece of brass rod to set the pins before adding the ebony plugs.

carcase. To ensure accuracy, I attached the brackets with the back rail in place.

Handles are designed after the piece is built

I never design handles for a piece of furniture until it's built. It's impossible to know what will look right until then. I started with a stylized ginkgo-leaf shape for the door handles. It looked great there, but it didn't work as a drawer pull—it wasn't enough for the huge expanse of drawer face.

I mocked up longer pulls so they would be more prominent. I kept playing with the proportions of the pulls until they felt right both visually and in my hands. I settled on long mahogany pulls with a pattern of ebony inlay in them (see the drawing below). For the door handles, I shortened the pulls and included one square of ebony. The undersides of the pulls are slightly coved to provide a better grip.

Door handles are placed as close to each other as possible, centered in the width of each top door rail. Locating the drawer pulls took a bit more head scratching. Both pulls and inlay increase in length from top to bottom. I wanted them to line up on a diagonal, with each of the pulls centered on the width of the drawer, but when I tried that, it just didn't look right. I ended up keeping the top two pulls centered in the drawer faces, but I positioned the bottom pull nearly 1 in. above center.

Ginkgo leaves swept by the wind

This inlay work was the detail I was most excited about. It was a chance to break

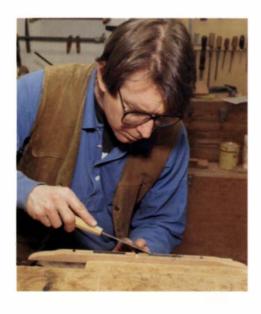
away from the Greene and Greene mold. What I hoped to create was a natural-looking display of ginkgo leaves, as if a gust of wind had just blown a small pile of them across the front of the sideboard.

I got the patterns for my carved leaves from real ginkgo leaves I'd collected (like the one on the facing page). I began by drawing these shapes until I felt I had a sense of what the leaf looked like, whether flat or curled, falling or tumbling in a breeze. Because the leaves were brittle, I also made up some cardboard versions, which I folded and rolled to mimic real leaves. Then I started to draw various leaf shapes on large sheets of brown paper where I had drawn the outline of the doors.

When I liked a leaf, I traced its shape onto cardboard using carbon paper and a

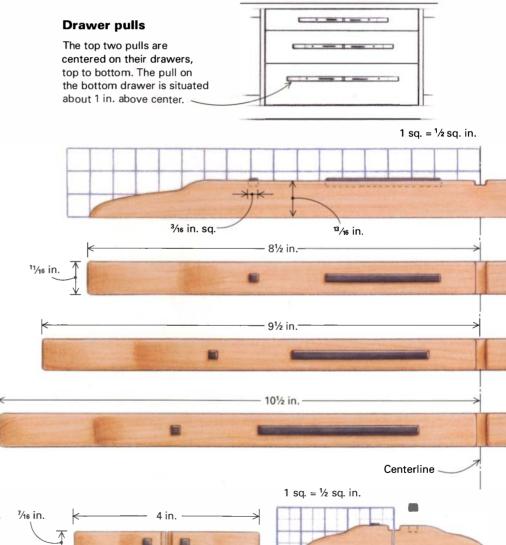
SIDEBOARD PULLS AND HANDLES

Both pulls and handles are made of mahogany with ebony inlay. The ebony is pared down and gently rounded until it's just proud of the mahogany.



Door handles Handles are situat

Handles are situated as close together as possible and are centered on the width of the top rail.



CARVING THE LEAVES

A gust of wind sends the leaves flying. The author sought a natural looking display of leaves blowing across the front of the sideboard. He taped real leaves on the doors as he worked toward a final design.



pencil and cut out the pattern (see the near right photo). Then I played with the position of each leaf. A yellow marking pen brightened the cardboard enough to give it some life. I began designing with the leaf patterns by applying them to the real doors with double-faced tape.

Inlay is sawn, shaped and beveled-

The wood I chose for the inlay was yellow heart. This South American wood is valued for its consistent yellow color and is often used in parquet flooring and, surprisingly, fabric dye. It was perfect for the autumn yellow of my ginkgo leaves.

I used quartersawn material to minimize wood movement and resawed it into pieces 3/16 in. thick. The leaf pattern was marked on the yellow heart so the grain followed the direction of the stem. This way, I wouldn't have to worry about a stem breaking off because of short grain.

I cut the leaves on a bandsaw and scrollsaw, then shaped and beveled them slightly, using a sanding drum (see the top right and bottom left photos). Any edges I couldn't reach with the sanding drum were shaped and beveled with a knife.

Recess for inlay is routed, then refined with carving tools

The next step was to transfer the leaf patterns to the door. I placed each piece of in-



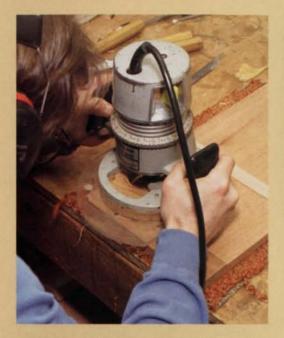
Trace, then cut. The author transfers a drawing to cardboard with carbon paper (left). Patterns are used to trace leaves on the inlay before they are cut (above).





Shape the leaves, and bevel their edges. A spindle sander does the job quickly (left), but the author needs a knife to get into tight corners. He scribes a leaf on a door (above).

CARVING THE LEAVES continued





Rout out most of the waste; then pare to the line. After routing as close to the line as he dares, the author finishes the job with carving gouges, cutting straight down or slightly undercutting.



Press, tap and then clamp the inlay. The author used a caul to distribute clamping pressure evenly across the inlay.

lay on the door in position, marking its shape with a scratch awl and with a thin knife in very tight spots (see the bottom right photo on p. 73). Accuracy at this point is critical. A slip of the knife can create nasty marks on the door's surface, and a slip of the inlay will result in an inaccurate pattern that's nearly impossible to fix. Take your time, keep a firm grip on the inlay and make sure the entire perimeter of the leaf is marked before you lift it off the door. I darkened the incised line with a soft pencil—it's much easier to see than a knife line when you're routing.

To create the recess, I used a ³/₁₆-in.-dia. straight bit in a fixed-base router and set its depth of cut at ³/₂₂ in. I attached spacer strips to the door with double-faced tape to bring the router base up to the level of the door rails. Then, after a deep breath, I began routing out the inlay pattern (see the top left photo). I started at the center of each pattern and gradually worked my way out to the edges. Because the bit pulls itself into the cut when routing clockwise, I cut in the opposite direction to maintain control.

For the leaf stems, I used a ½6-in.-dia. straight bit; then I switched to a shopmade, ⅓2-in.-wide chisel. I put a hollow grind on its edge, honed it razor sharp and used it to finish cutting the stem recesses to depth.

After routing, I trimmed the walls of each recess with carving tools, trying to keep them straight or just slightly undercut (see the top right photo at left).



Detail is carved in. The author creates depth and motion in the leaves through his use of line and texture.



The illusion of depth—With just ³/₃₂ in. of leaf above the surface of the door, every cut counts when carving. Deeply incised cuts where the leaves fold or curl create shadow lines that suggest depth. Gentle, flowing curves give the leaves an organic feel.

Then I began fitting each leaf. I used carving tools and a sanding drum. I checked the fit often—until the leaf fit almost all the way down into its ground. If a leaf sticks in its recess, lever it out with the edge of a #1 gouge or a skew chisel.

When I was comfortable with the fit of a leaf, I spread a little glue in the recess, pressed the leaf into place and then tapped it so it was well-seated (see the center photo on the facing page). Then I put a caul over the leaf and another under the door and clamped the inlay until it would go no farther. There was a considerable amount of glue squeeze-out, so I pulled my clamps after three hours and cleaned up the excess.

When the glue had cured, I carved in the wind. Here was a chance to play with the shape and texture. I spent about an hour working on each leaf with #3 and #5 gouges, carving in the gentle undulations and curves that you see in falling leaves. Then I lightly trimmed each leaf edge with a #1 skew chisel to make them friendly to the touch. Do this with a carving tool, not sandpaper. Sandpaper will smear the details and leave a soft, unsatisfying edge. After each leaf had been carved, I burnished its surface with a piece of burlap.

Finishing the sideboard: shellac inside, varnish outside

For all the interior surfaces of this cabinet, I used a 1½-lb. cut of dewaxed super blond shellac (a proportion of 1½ lb. of shellac flakes to a gallon of denatured alcohol) that I mixed myself. I added a few drops of jasmine oil (available in many health-food stores) to this mixture to give it a pleasant scent. This finish is easy to apply, dries quickly and has a much nicer aroma than lacquer, varnish or oil. The drawers were shellacked inside and out except for their faces. I also waxed the drawer sides and web frames after the shellac had dried.

For the exterior of the sideboard, I used a product called ProFin manufactured by Daly's (for a distributor, call 800-735-7019). It's a wiping varnish that's easy to apply, and it gives a lustrous finish in three coats. I used the gloss version. I tried to make sure that all the dust in my shop had settled before applying the final coat. I wanted to avoid having to rub out that last coat with anything but a polishing cloth.

Gary Rogowski designs and builds furniture and teaches woodworking at his studio in Portland, Ore. He is a contributing editor to Fine Woodworking magazine.

BUILDING AN ARTS-AND-CRAFTS SIDEBOARD



THE CARCASE

In FWW #125, Gary Rogowski described the construction of this sideboard's carcase, including its two interior divider panels and the back.



DRAWERS AND DOORS

Final carcase glue-ups, construction of the web frames, and drawers and doors are described in FWW #126.



Bottom photo: Jim Piper November/December 1997 75

In Search of the Perfect Benchstone

The pros and cons of Arkansas stones, ceramic stones, diamond lapping plates and waterstones

by Brian T. Derber



The author checks a stone for flatness—To hone an accurate bevel on a cutting tool, such as a plane iron, a benchstone ought to be at least 0.001 in. flat over its surface, measured diagonally.

hen I studied violin making in the early 1980s, the first lesson I learned was how to hone a block-plane iron. Honing my hand tools became a daily practice. I think I spent more time sharpening tools than working with wood that first semester.

Straight-razor hones, what barbers used before the advent of disposable razor blades, were the benchstones of choice at the school. A student could opt for ordinary oilstones, but they were frowned on by our teachers because of the risk of

cutting oil contaminating our violins. The razor hones used water as a cutting fluid. Several students had heard about Japanese waterstones, but these were new to the U.S. market. And none of us was willing to spend the money on a set, especially when a couple of dozen razor hones were the same price.

Last fall, I opened my own violinmaking school. My first lesson, of course, was showing my students how to sharpen a block-plane iron. I offered them the use of my razor hones until they could buy their own. But when I tried to order additional hones, I discovered they were no longer available. We had to look at other options and decided to sample a variety of benchstones.

We evaluated five types of benchstones

My students and I tried Arkansas stones, Japanese waterstones, Norton waterstones, ceramic stones and diamond plates. We judged the benchstones on flatness (see the photo above), ease of use, speed of cut, how sharp they made our tools (see the story on p. 81) and how much maintenance they required.

Many different hand tools are used for violin making. We concentrated on sharpening plane irons, from small fingerplane irons to standard-sized bench-plane irons. These irons are made of highcarbon steel or high-speed steel, which is very hard. The benchstones were used for hundreds of sharpenings apiece over the course of a month. It soon became apparent that there wasn't one clear favorite. There were drawbacks to all the stones, but our favorites were the ceramic stones and the Norton waterstones.

My students and I liked the ceramic stones because they cut as aggressively as waterstones but weren't messy because they are used dry. The ceramics produce a nice polished edge on both high-carbon and high-speed steel tools. But the drawbacks are the stones are only 2 in. wide and aren't as flat as we'd like. Unlike waterstones, they can't be flattened.

We also really liked the Norton waterstones. They're big, about 3 in. wide, have a slightly harder bond than Japanese waterstones and can handle high-carbon and high-speed steels. But owning waterstones requires a disciplined personality. You need to flatten them frequently because they dish out rapidly.

Arkansas benchstones are good for high-carbon steel

Native Americans used the pure silica rocks from the Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas and Oklahoma for tools and weapons long before they had knives to sharpen. Beginning in the 1800s, largescale mining began for these rocks of novaculite, which were found to be excellent for sharpening tool steel. They have been the benchstones of choice for generations of American woodworkers (see the photo at right).

Arkansas stones are graded according to grit size and assigned various trade names. Washita is the coarsest, and soft Arkansas is considered a medium grit. There's a difference of opinion about which stones are the finest grit. Some manufacturers rate black Arkansas as the finest grit, but others say that the translucent and true-hard are the finest. In either case, these three stones are not that far apart on the grit scale, ranging from 900- to 1,200-grit, depending on who you talk to.

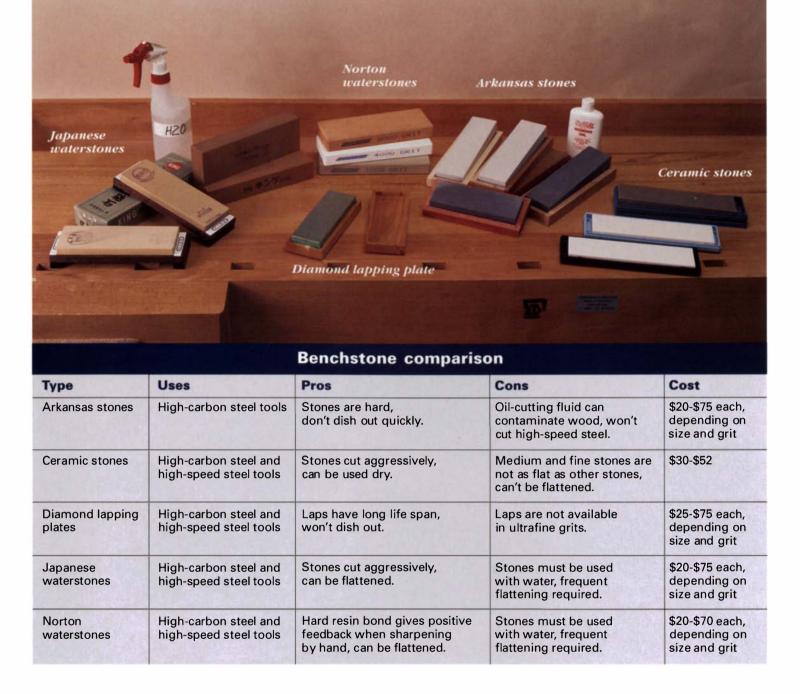
The abrasive in all Arkansas stones is





Benchstones subjected to hundreds of sharpenings—Students Korinthia Klein, left, and Leslie Arendt helped the author evaluate four types of benchstones (above).

Arkansas stones are fine for highcarbon steel. But high-speed steel tools take too long to sharpen on these stones (left).



primarily quartz. When you buy a specific grade of Arkansas stone, you get a hunk of natural material, and because of that, the grit size can vary slightly within the stone and from stone to stone. We tried Washita, soft Arkansas, black and true-hard.

A light oil is traditionally used as a cutting fluid with Arkansas stones. You can also use kerosene or some mixture of the two. Water can be used too, and some people add a drop or two of liquid soap to the water. Cutting fluid keeps the pores of the stones open and also acts as a lubricant to keep the tool from sticking. The stones we used were nice and flat. within 0.001 in. flat in any direction.

When we used an oil mixture with the fine Arkansas stones, the tool glided easily

across the stone; when we used water, the tool didn't rub smoothly across the surface. The drawback with using oil is that it gets on everything, even when we were trying to be neat. If any oil gets in contact with the wood of a project, it may show as a blotch on the final finish. Arkansas stones can produce a good edge on high-carbon steel, but they cut slower than the others we tried. It's pointless to sharpen high-speed steel on these stones because of the slow cutting action.

Maintenance of Arkansas stones is a breeze. They stayed flat after repeated use. Unlike waterstones, they are very hard and don't require constant flattening. They will, however, eventually dish out. To flatten them, it's best to use 34-grit to

96-grit silicon carbide powder on a lapping plate. If cost is a factor and you are only honing high-carbon steel, these stones are fine.

Japanese waterstones can sharpen the hardest steels

In the mid-1970s, Japanese waterstones began to catch on with American woodworkers. You can buy natural waterstones, but they are becoming rare and cost hundreds of dollars apiece. Most Japanese waterstones sold in this country are aluminum-oxide particles bonded with resins. They are priced competitively with other benchstones. The bond in a waterstone is designed to be relatively soft; that allows the abrasive particles to



Japanese waterstones cut aggressively and are good for sharpening all bench tools. Water is used as a cutting fluid and the stones quickly break down, creating a messy slurry.

spall off the surface easily, constantly exposing a fresh, sharp surface. Aluminum oxide is just hard enough to handle highspeed steel and some carbides.

We tried the King brand waterstones in four grits: 800, 1,200, 6,000 and 8,000. A coarser, 220-grit is available too, and the abrasive is silicon carbide rather than aluminum oxide. This is the stone to use if you need to remove nicks in a tool's edge.

Out of the box, the waterstones were about 0.003 in. to 0.004 in. out of flat. We flattened them to about 0.001 in. tolerance using 220-grit silicon carbide wet-or-dry paper on a piece of flat marble (see the photo at right). A piece of plate glass will work just as well. We found that it was best to keep up the maintenance of these stones, flattening them with a few swipes across the wet-or-dry paper after every sharpening or two. Ownership requires a disciplined personality. They also require a lot of water and can create quite a mess.

The 800-grit and 1,200-grit stones need to be soaked for about five minutes before use. These two stones also felt a bit soft. It is fairly easy to round the bevel of a small tool when using them because it takes a while to get the feel for keeping the tool's bevel perfectly flat while sliding it back and forth across the stone. With larger plane irons, it's easier to sense whether the bevel is positioned flat on the stone. It's also easy to gouge the surface of these stones when sharpening small tools because their edges can catch. But the stones cut very quickly. Japanese stones cut better if you maintain a muddy slurry on their surface. Moving up to the higher





All waterstones require frequent flattening. That's done with a sheet of 220-grit sandpaper placed on a flat surface, such as a slab of marble.

Norton waterstones are slightly harder than Japanese stones. When sharpening by hand, a hard stone makes it easier to sense whether you're keeping the bevel flat.



grits will produce a razor-sharp edge and mirror finish on metal. The 6,000-grit and the 8,000-grit stones don't have to be soaked, just wetted down. We couldn't see a quality difference in edges sharpened on the 6,000-grit stone and the 8,000-grit stone.

Norton waterstones are an improvement

The American-made Norton stones are the counterpart to the standard Japanese waterstones (see the bottom photo on p. 79). They are also comprised of bonded aluminum oxide particles. The bonding agent, however, is slightly harder than what's used in the King stones.

We tried three different grits: 1,000, 4,000 and 8,000. (A 220-grit coarse stone is also available.) The stones came out of the box 0.001 in. flat across their surfaces.

The 1,000-grit and 4,000-grit stones need to be soaked in water before use, just like the Japanese waterstones. The Norton stones are slightly harder than the Japanese stones, so they provide greater feedback and, therefore, better control when sharpening. But the speed and quality of the cut are indistinguishable from the Japanese waterstones.

Even though the Norton stones are an improvement over the Japanese stones, they seem to dish out almost as rapidly and can be nicked just as easily, especially by small tools. Like Japanese stones, they are messy and require periodic flattening.

We did have a problem with the 1,000-grit stone. After it had been flattened, the stone didn't cut as aggressively as it had initially. The company assured us it was part of a batch of stones manufactured with an overly hard bond, and we could send it back for a replacement.

Ceramic stones are narrow but cut well

Ceramic stones are made of aluminum oxide particles mixed with a ceramic bonding agent, compressed at high pressure then fired in a kiln. This process makes them extremely hard. We tested three stones from Spyderco: medium, fine and ultrafine (see the photos at left).

The medium and fine stones were within the company's specification of 0.010-in. deviation from flat across any direction. For my needs, that's not flat enough. The ultrafine stone is manufactured to higher standards, and it was within 0.001 in. of flat, what I consider acceptable.

We all liked the fact that these stones are used dry. They did not dish out and seemed to be impervious to surface nicks. They excel at honing the smallest of cutting blades. The ultrafine stone clogs up quickly with metal particles and tends to glaze over. But it, as well as the others, can be scrubbed clean with an abrasive dish pad and water.

Ceramic stones cut fast, much like waterstones. The ultrafine stone will produce a highly polished and extremely sharp edge, as good as the 4,000-grit or 6,000-grit waterstones. Because these stones are so hard, they cannot be flattened. We tried flattening the medium stone anyway, and sure enough, it no longer cut aggressively.

Diamond lapping plates are best for initial honing

Diamonds are the hardest natural material and will cut any type of metal. We tried two different kinds of laps, both graded at 1,200-grit (U.S.). One is manufactured by Diamond Machining Technology (DMT); the other is by Eze-Lap (see the photo at right). The DMT lap uses monocrystalline particles, and the Eze-Lap uses polycrystalline. Some experts say the monocrystalline diamonds will last longer, but in our short evaluation, we couldn't detect any difference in wear.

Both laps are available in various sizes and grits ranging from 220-grit to 1,200-grit. The Eze-Lap plate is just that, a plate of steel with diamonds bonded to one face. The DMT stone, however, is perforated steel and nickel plate glued onto a plastic base. The plastic is nearly flush with the perforations, which the



Two types of diamond plates—The DMT plate, top, has a perforated surface. The surface of the Eze-Lap is solid. Both can handle high-carbon and high-speed steel tools.

manufacturer says act as reservoirs to hold metal shavings. DMT recommends water as a cutting fluid; the Eze-Lap plate can be used dry or with water.

The Eze-Lap we used was very flat, but the DMT had a minor twist in it. Although the 1,200-grit stones are described as extra-fine, for our purposes, we consider them medium stones, good for initial honing. Sharpening with only a 1,200-grit diamond plate leaves fine serrations on a plane iron's edge, which then get telegraphed to the wood being planed.

Gliding a tool across the Eze-Lap feels similar to using a ceramic stone. When honing very small tools over the DMT stone, however, the edges of the tools sometimes catch on the perforations.

For ease of use, maintenance and portability, the diamond laps are superior. They will cut any steel put to them, cut dry or with a bit of water and will never dish out. Both stones cut quickly.

Brian T. Derber is a professional violin maker in Oconomowoc, Wis.

How sharp is sharp enough?

To get a tool razor sharp, you have to hone and polish the cutting edge to a mirror finish. The quickest and most accurate way for me to check sharpness is to slide my finger gently across a tool's cutting edge (see the photo at right). When I feel a smooth drag, that tells me that the edge is free of nicks and sharp enough to effortlessly slice a very thin layer of skin. If the edge is dull, my finger will glide right across the edge. A semisharp blade will drag and skip across the skin, which means it still has some rough spots.

If you don't wish to risk cutting yourself, you can substitute your fingernail and look for the same qualities. There's also the time-honored method of shaving hair off your arm, although I don't think it's as accurate as using a fingertip. A very sharp blade will cleanly shear hair off. A semisharp blade will burn as it cuts, like a dull razor. -B.T.D



The author uses a fingertip to judge blade sharpness. A finger passed lightly over a razor-sharp tool will drag smoothly. Catches indicate rough spots.

A Game Plan for Big Cabinet Jobs



Good shop drawings, the right materials and accurate machine setups are the keys to success

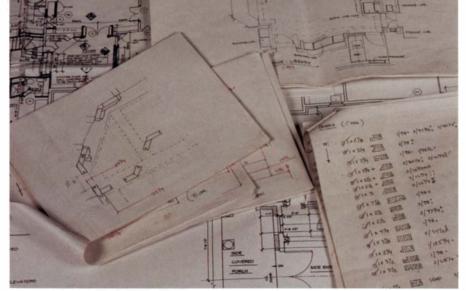
by John W. West

ver the years, I've built close to 20 libraries for residential clients. To me, these rooms of cabinetwork and millwork are interesting for their variety. A library—more than any other room in a house—brings together a lot of different components. Case work, shelving, drawers and pull-outs, frame-and-panel doors, glass doors, paneling, and unique

moldings all make up the finished job. Case work may vary from simple bookcases to more elaborate storage units for television and audio equipment. But in the end, they're all just plywood boxes dressed up to look good.

For a large and complicated job like this one (see the photo above), I always measure the room twice, on two separate days,

to reduce the chance of making a mistake in laying out and sizing the work. By checking the two sets of measurements against one another, any discrepancy will show up readily and may have to be resolved with a third visit to the job site. I used story poles (scraps of lumber on which all the job-site conditions are marked) for many years because they're almost foolproof. (For more



LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Several stages of paperwork-From an architect's original drawing, the author makes a large-scale version. Next come shop sketches, a parts lists and full-sized details (below).



on story poles, see FWW #105, pp. 66-69.) But lately, I've developed another system that works more efficiently for me.

To lay out and design a room like this one, I start with a set of drawings from the architect that have been approved by the clients. The drawings show scaled elevations, or front views, of how they want the room to look. To figure out exactly how cabinets and paneling and moldings will all fit together, I use those drawings to make my own in a larger scale based on the measurements taken at the site. From my first set of drawings, I make another set of free-hand shop sketches where I figure out the joinery details and the actual cut size in overall dimensions of every cabinet, door, wall panel and piece of molding that will make up the job. From those shop sketches, I make cut lists that show every piece of plywood or lumber by finished size-thickness, width and length-and the number of pieces of each. There are still many times when I will draw out some details full-sized, especially when I deal with angles or curves or I want to be sure something is going to look right.

Choosing materials and tuning up equipment

For all open bookcases and wall and door panels, my shop buys the best quality (an A-1 grade), sequence-matched, veneercore plywood. I stay away from particleboard and fiberboard cores. I'm getting too old to hoist the extra weight. We use 3/4-in.thick material for all the case work parts and large panels, 1/2 in. for smaller wall panels and flat door panels, and 1/4-in. (A-3 grade) plywood for cabinet backs and drawer bottoms (see the photos at right). We make everything else, including drawer cases, from solid lumber. By using se-



um-grade plywood, but can be stained and finished for a close match.

FIRST, TUNE UP YOUR TOOLS

To get off on the right foot, make sure tools have sharp knives, and choose a single tape measure for the job.



One tape, start to finish

Tape measures aren't all the same. Using one tape, what the author calls a master tape, ensures accuracy in cutting cabinet parts. For quick identification, the author scratches a symbol into the tape's case (like the triangle on this one), so it won't be confused with any other tape.





Change and set planer knives

After installing a sharp set of knives, the author sets them with a gauge. The process is fast, and knives are accurate to within a few thousandths of an inch.





Calibrate tablesaw rip fence

Using a scrap piece of plywood, the author checks the rip fence setting against the master tape. The tablesaw should be checked again with each blade change.

Jointer

New jointer knives are set flush to the outfeed table. Table surfaces are cleaned and waxed and checked for alignment. Depthof-cut gauge is reset if necessary.





Shaper knives

The author grinds his own shaper knives for all of the molding that must go into a job. He sharpens previously made knives and sets them aside for quick access.

quenced-matched panels, we get the same color and grain patterns throughout the room. For cases that are sunken into a closet alcove or hidden by doors, we use a lesser shop-grade plywood (costing about half as much as the A-1 panels) because the cases are not seen, and you can still get a similar color once they are stained and finished.

Before we start a project like this, we perform a major tune-up on all the equipment

(see the photos above). The time spent on tune-up is critical because one thing we do that's different from many cabinet shops is cut all the plywood and mill all the lumber for a given job before assembling any cabinets. That means shelves and door stiles and drawer parts are all machined and cut to size before case work or paneling goes together. The machining has to be accurate.

We change knives on the jointer and the

planer and reset the thickness gauges to be accurate within a tolerance of less than 1/100 in. We also install freshly sharpened blades on the saws. All the machines are calibrated to agree with one designated tape measure we'll use throughout the job.

When we cut plywood sheet stock, we always cut off the factory edges, usually taking at least an inch from all sides. We may not cut as much off the long edges,

FACTORY FRESH DOESN'T MEAN IT'S SQUARE

You cannot trust that any sheet of plywood from the factory will have square corners, and you cannot make square cabinets with out-of-square parts.

Before I owned a panel saw, I worked in a shop where we used a jig over a regular cabinet saw fence, like the one shown below, for squaring up sheet goods. By tacking an additional straightedge to one edge of the plywood (left) and running it under the jig (right), we were able—simply and fairly quickly to square up sheets of plywood.

When I'm getting ready to make the plywood cuts for a job at

hand, I look through the sheets for the important pieces, the ones that will be most prominent. I rough cut those pieces first, a little bigger than the final size, to make them more manageable. I also make any necessary repetitive cuts of similarly sized pieces, like base cabinet sides. It's better to crosscut first and rip last, so I cut all those oversized pieces to the finished length first. To guarantee that you get square corners on all your plywood pieces, always place a freshly cut edge against the fence with each new cut, until all four sides have been trimmed off. —J.W.



2. Run the workpiece through the saw, keeping even pressure on the straightedge against the jig.



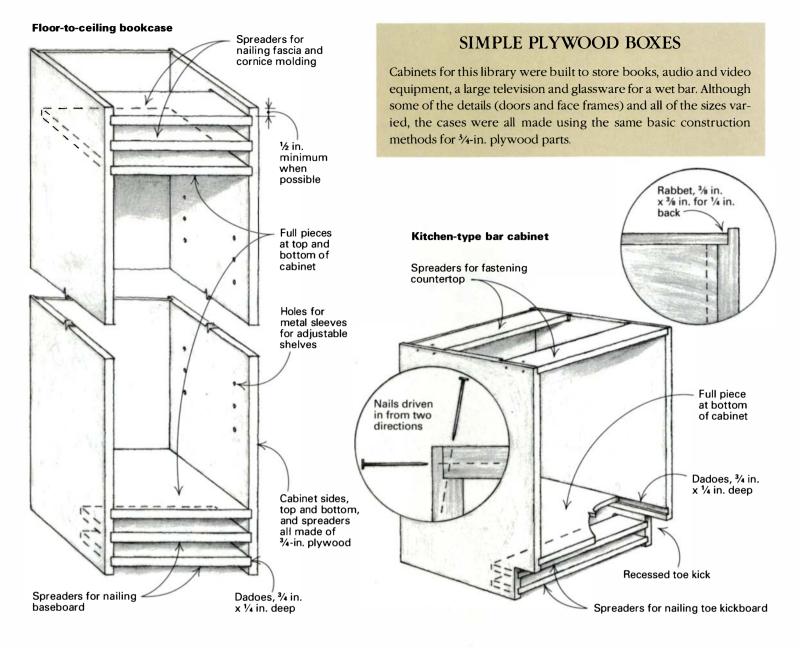
3. Leave plenty of space between blade and saw fence to prevent the offcut from binding.

1. Clamp the jig to the saw fence with the outside of the sawblade flush with the edge of the jig. Tack a straightedge onto the workpiece to a square line marked in pencil.

but we always remove at least an inch from the ends because they are sanded over and thinner than the center of the panel. The sanding machines at plywood factories often leave a pronounced bevel on the ends (sometimes even sanding through the face veneer). Also, edges are often torn up from handling, and you cannot count on the corners being square. Unless you have a panel saw, you may have to spend some extra effort making a jig to guarantee square corners when you cut up the plywood (see the box above). It's worth the time.

Build for the outside dimension of the box

With the cases we build, all the horizontal pieces are let into the verticals by the full thickness of the material, usually 3/4 in., in either rabbet or dado joints (see the drawing on p. 86). One important chore that rabbets and dadoes do is to locate things. And your biggest enemy in making boxes is the assembly time. The machining and preparation of all the parts is worth the extra time it takes when you get to assembly. Jobs will go together better, faster, easier, squarer and truer. Anything that you can do that helps you to index or locate parts for assembly, the better off you are, espe-



cially if you are working alone.

If there's a place where we need additional support or a means of keeping a box straight, we put in additional pieces we call spreaders (see the drawing above). The tops of base cabinets serve as spreaders and also provide a way of fastening a counter from underneath. If there is a fascia piece, which serves as a background for cornice molding, above the solid top of an an open bookcase, then we'll put spreaders across the top.

For cases like a kitchen cabinet, where you have a recessed toe kick, we notch out the sides of the cabinet and add a spreader or two as a nailing surface for the toe kickboard. In cabinets where there is a baseboard across the bottom of the cabinet, we may add one or two spreaders to stiffen the bottom of the cabinet and to act as nailers

for the baseboard. All spreaders, no matter where they are, are always let into a dado the same depth as the cabinet top and bottom or a fixed shelf.

We cut a 3/8-in. by 3/8-in. rabbet to affix the 1/4-in. back to the cabinet. When cabinets go against a wall with bulges in it, that extra 1/8 in. of space usually provides enough clearance so that the cabinets will go flat to the wall.

We use an overhead router to cut all our plywood joints because it's easier to control the overall dimension of cases. Overhead routing leaves a consistent thickness of material in plywood parts because the router bit is fixed in space above the work surface as the plywood is run underneath it. Routing with a hand router is the opposite: The depth of cut remains the same, but the final width of the case work will vary

with different thicknesses in the plywood. You can make an overhead router from scraps of plywood, it's not that hard. Or you can simply measure the thickness of each piece of plywood and adjust the depth of the router cut accordingly, but the job will take more time that way.

We cut a full rabbet, about ¼ in. deep, depending on the actual thickness of the plywood, for all the top and bottom pieces. We also cut matching dadoes for any fixed shelves. We developed this system for two reasons: strength and accuracy. I'm convinced that having the horizontal pieces sitting on a rabbeted or dadoed ledge at full-thickness makes a stronger joint. And by using the overhead router with the cutting depth set to leave exactly ½ in. of material after the cut is made, we can always trust that the overall outside dimension of

86 Fine Woodworking Drawings: Christopher Clapp

the cabinet will be accurate. It doesn't matter that the 3/4-in. plywood we ordered actually came from the factory anywhere from 11 /16 in. to 25 /32 in. thick, as it sometimes does. By building to the outside dimensions of boxes, we can control the overall length of a string of connected boxes. We have put together strings of six or seven large cases and have been off less than 1/16 in. for spans of more than 20 ft.

Pre-finish case work before assembly

Except for the occasional odd box, we usually apply finishes before putting the cases together. The finishing process goes faster and we get better results, without any overspray buildup in the corners. With the cabinets for this library, we applied a pigment-based oil stain, sealed and sanded that, then topcoated all the cabinet parts with two coats of nitrocellulose lacquer. (We usually don't bother to apply masking tape to the joints, unless the glue joint is an important structural factor. That would be the case with a cabinet that will be hung on a wall and loaded with a lot of weight.) Onsite, once all the cabinets are installed, we finish up with a coat of Butcher's wax.

When we put boxes together, we most often use glue and nails, through-nailed from the side of all the rabbets and dadoes and toenailed on an angle from the top and bottom of the rabbets (see the drawing at left). The nails mechanically reinforce the glue joint and keep the pieces from pulling apart under the stress of handling when cabinets are delivered and installed.

I'm partial to coated nails. We use 5-penny resin-coated box nails. The diameter is only a little larger than a 4-penny, but the length is almost that of a 6-penny nail. The nails penetrate deeply, and the shank does not split the plywood. Coated nails hold better than any gun-driven nail of the same length, and I can always stop hammering when a nail starts to come out the other side of the cabinet piece. It doesn't take much longer to put the boxes together this way, and it's worth it.

With some case work, especially if there are many parts that have to go together at the same time, we use screws instead of nails and glue. An example would be a case with a lot of drawers that has dust board dividers between each drawer. For that, we use No. 6 trim-head screws with a squarehead drive. When spreaders are spaced every 6 in. or so along the full height of the cabinet, there will be plenty of fasteners

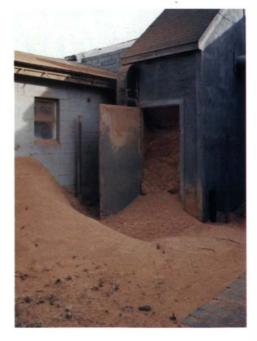


Installing the case work—Job-site conditions usually require shims to make cases level and plumb (above). The result is a beautiful library and plenty of sawdust back at the shop (right).

and glue isn't really necessary.

In most cases, if your plywood pieces and their edges have all been cut square, then the box goes together square. (That's another reason why I like a full-width rabbet; it gives you a full surface on the bottom of the rabbet as a square surface to draw the two pieces together.) When we finish assembling a box, we check it for square. If there's any problem, and there rarely is one, we true it up with clamps before the glue sets in the joints.

John West operates Cope and Mould Millwork, Inc., in Danbury, Conn.



Pneumatic Die Grinders in the Woodshop

These versatile tools solve a host of small shop cutting, grinding and sanding problems

by Greg Scholl

If first saw a pneumatic die grinder in action on one of those Saturday morning television shows for backyard mechanics. The host was removing metal from an engine block with incredible speed and control. His knuckles weren't white. He wasn't cursing. I'm a professional woodworker, not a mechanic, but I knew I had to have one of these tools. And I've never regretted buying my first pneumatic die grinder—or the second, or the third or even the fourth. I now have a good selection of straight grinders, angle grinders and even microgrinders (see the photo below). They have proven their great usefulness in my woodshop on countless occasions. I rarely put in a day's work without using one of them.



Grinders for virtually any job—Air-powered die grinders are an unlikely ally in the woodshop, excelling at jobs like evening up chair legs (right). The author's arsenal includes (from left) an angle grinder, straight grinder, microgrinder and a variety of abrasive discs, wheels and burrs.



I have owned electric die grinders, but pneumatic die grinders have a number of advantages. To begin with, pneumatic machines don't carry their motors around with them. making them far smaller, lighter and easier to control. They generally spin at a higher speed and are capable of variable speeds, producing smoother cuts. They are also cheaper to buy and maintain. Where a good electric grinder can cost \$100 or more, a pneumatic straight grinder should run about \$40. Angle and microgrinders are about twice as much. The tooling is generally inexpensive, from less than a dollar for a cutoff wheel or \$5 for a high-speed-steel burr to \$20 to \$30 for a carbide bit. The largest expense is a compressor. To run an average die grinder, you will need one that can generate from 3 to 8 cu. ft. of air per minute at 90 psi.

The only real drawback to pneumatic die grinders is that they require frequent oiling. A few drops of air-tool oil in the coupler end of the tool before each use will keep a good grinder running smoothly for many years. Be aware that the tool will occasionally spit some oil. It rarely happens, but keep an eye on the exhaust port for any signs of oil drool that be-



A carbide burr roughs out a spoon blank in no time. Burrs grind wood more than they cut it. This makes them easy to handle for freehand shaping. Wear gloves: If you ever touch a spinning bit, you'll know why.

gins to collect, and wipe it off (but not on your shirt).

A jack-of-all-trades

Pneumatic die grinders fill a niche in a collection of more traditional woodworking tools. With a carbide burr, a die grinder shapes quickly and easily where a gouge or rasp would be slow. With an abrasive pad, angle die grinders aggressively sand places a belt sander can't. And with cutting wheels and grinding stones, they shape and cut metal better than any other hand tool.

Designed for cutting metal, carbide burrs have very short teeth. Consequently, they cut the hardest wood very rapidly and without clogging or catching, even if they take a little practice to master. I rough out spoon blanks in no time with a straight 1/2-in. carbide burr (see the bottom left photo). This setup works and feels like a small hand-held router. The microgrinder is fantastic for the delicate side of this kind of work. I have used it to shape new wood patched into a damaged carving. I can hold it as I would a pen and literally write away the wood.

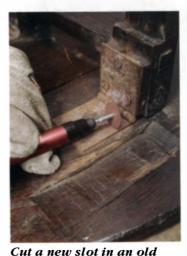
For sanding, I prefer the angle grinder because I can get two hands on it easily. This improved control is a big help when using a Rolock mandrel, which is a small, pliable rubber pad with a threaded hole in the center that accepts resinbacked abrasive discs. The Rolock is excellent for sanding spots inappropriate for a belt sander. One of my favorite uses is for evening up chair legs. To cut down an uneven leg takes just a few touches with a sandpaper disc. For this kind of endgrain task, a belt sander would be unwieldy, an orbital sander wouldn't be aggressive enough and a block plane might chip out the edges.

Rolock mandrels also accept Scotch-Brite nylon pads. The fine grades are perfect for re-



nylon pad saves me hours of handwork with a wire brush and steel wool.

Die grinders really come into their own when cutting and grinding metal. In my furniture restoration work. I often have to separate parts that have been nailed or screwed together for 100 years or more. The hard part is not leaving traces of my work. What would take hours of careful prying, coaxing and cursing takes seconds with a die grinder. Spinning a cutoff wheel at 20,000 to 30,000 rpm and slicing through old nails, screws and bolts like a hot knife through butter is an exhil-



screw. Without marring the hinge, a microgrinder fitted with a thin grinding wheel cuts a short, deep slot.

Spoil the nails and spare the table. After carefully prying up the batten on the underside of a table, the author uses a large cutting wheel to cut through rusted nails.

arating experience (see the photo above). When I need to re-slot a corroded screw that's in a tight place, I use the microgrinder with a small, thin grinding wheel (see the bottom right photo). If this does not work, I can always grind off the entire screwhead with a burr.

A word of caution

Pneumatic die grinders spin tooling at very high rpms. The straight and angle grinders spin up to 25,000 rpm, and my microgrinder tops out near 60,000 rpm, though somewhat less under load. Check the rpm rating of every bit before use. A lot of tooling that has not been designed to fly that fast will fit the pneumatic grinders' standard 1/4-in. and 1/8-in. collets. I have seen small cutoff wheels fly apart. It might be tempting to chuck a wire wheel meant for a drill in a pneumatic grinder, but a stray wire sunk into your face is a painful way to learn not to. Always wear gloves and a full face shield.

Greg Scholl makes and restores furniture in Fairfield, Conn.

Making Wood Look Old

Adding texture, dye stains and glazes transforms even lumberyard pine



by Jeff Jewitt

rom a magnificent specimen of Cuban mahogany to a humble piece of white pine, wood looks better as it ages. All woods mature with use and time, developing the patina so valued in antique furniture. In my conservation and restoration business, I need to match the look of old wood to new when I'm fabricating missing parts for antique furniture.

I try to simulate the order in which the

wear and tear would have happened naturally. I start by matching the surface texture of the new wood with the old. I follow that with a dye stain, distress marks and glazing coats to add more color. Then I apply a finish to match the original.

Match the original surface texture first

Furnituremakers of two centuries ago prepared wood differently from the way

we do it now. Lumber was dressed, shaped and made ready for finishing solely by hand. Their tools left distinctive marks on the wood very different from those left by modern milling and sanding methods. Edges and moldings were shaped with molding planes or carved with gouges and chisels. After planing, surfaces that would show were smoothed and evened out with scrapers or glass paper (made by pulverizing glass and sifting it over glue-sized parchment).

Even on some very fine, more formal antique furniture, you'll often find marks from tools such as rasps and files that were used to clean up the ridges left by sawblades and chisels. Molding planes produced crisp, deep profiles unattainable with many modern shaping bits. Although results may seem somewhat crude by today's standards, the goal then was the same as it is now—to produce as flawless a surface as possible.

Flat surfaces on many country-style antiques have a slightly scalloped appearance produced by fore planes, or scrub planes, and scrapers. The scallops are readily apparent under a finish and when viewed in backlighting. To re-create this effect, I ground a very slight convex profile on the blade of an old jack plane (see the photos at left), making sure to relieve the corners of the blade. A very small relief is all that's necessary. Flexing a scraper with your fingers will create a similar pattern. When you use any of these tools, small tearouts or other imperfections in the wood—a sign of handwork-should be left alone.

Patina is more than an old finish

Patina is the surface appearance of something that has grown beautiful with

Match the tool marks



age or use. The much desired patina on antique furniture involves alteration of both the surface color and the texture of the piece as it ages.

Wood contains natural dyes and pigments responsible for the characteristic color of each species. A change in color, a result of exposure to light and air (photo-oxidation), may be the most obvious effect of age. As a rule, light-colored woods darken, and darkcolored woods lighten.

Another kind of patina develops as stains and finishes age and as wax builds up on the surface of the wood. Photooxidation causes dyes and pigments to fade and finishes to yellow and darken. Over the years, polishes and waxes build up in corners, cracks and crevices and act as a magnet for dust, which accumulates on surfaces that are not regularly cleaned.

Most old furniture ends up soiled, dented, scratched, eaten by insects or worn-out from normal use and handling. Oils from skin produce a grimy buildup around hardware and other areas where furniture is handled. The bottoms of legs get banged up the most. Sharp edges and corners that are regularly handled become rounded. Everyday contact with clothes and shoes will eventually wear finishes and stains down to bare wood.

Use dyes, bleach and light to change the color of wood—You can duplicate the effect of light on wood with either dyes or chemicals. Both produce a color change within the structure of the wood. Although their effects are similar, one very subtle difference is that dyes tend to accentuate figure and grain and chemicals do not. Dyes are, by far, easier and safer to use. They can be soluble in alcohol or water. Some alcohol dyes are extremely light-sensitive, and they will not hold their color over time. Water-based dyes tend to be less vivid than alcohol dyes and produce a more believable color. Although water-based dyes raise the grain in wood, producing a rough texture, the problem can be minimized by applying a wash coat of plain water and sanding off the fuzz after the surface dries before the dye goes on.

In almost all light-colored species, a yellowish-brown dye stain will simulate the color of aged wood. This stain color is sold pre-mixed by many companies, often called honey or amber, but you can make your own from powdered dyes in primary

Recreate the patina



Four hours in the sun show a dramatic color change in this piece of cherry. The center of the board was covered with duct tape to keep the light out, and the right half was coated with thinner to approximate a clear finish.



Test the stain on scrap first. The author used a cutoff from the new pine shelf to fine-tune his custom-mixed dye. By adding small amounts of red dye to his initial mix, he was able to get a better match.

Add some wear and tear



Wire brushes abrade the surface and mimic the wear and tear of two centuries of use. Glass can also be used to make similar scars.





Counterfeit wormholes-After applying a shellac finish but before the final coat of dark, tinted wax, the author uses a small drill bit and the point of an awl to match damage done by worms.

colors. The formula I use most is 10 parts lemon yellow, one part red and one part black by weight, not volume. Use this color on birch, maple and oak. It also works well for warming up the cold tones of kiln-dried walnut. Used on Honduras mahogany, it will kill the pink tone in preparation for subsequent coloring layers. With one or two more parts of red added, a nice aged pine color is the result (see the bottom photo on p. 91).

Some dark woods—rosewood, teak, walnut and old Cuban mahogany-lighten considerably after being exposed to light

for a long time. To match these woods, you may need to bleach the new wood first and then treat it with a dye stain. Use a two-part bleach of sodium hydroxide and hydrogen peroxide (for more on bleaching wood, see FWW #124, pp. 62-65). Avoid using any other chemicals on woods that have been bleached: A chemical reaction may create harmful fumes.

Some woods, such as poplar and cherry, darken considerably after only limited exposure to sunlight (see the top photo on p. 91). Cherry will darken in ambient

room light after a few years to a dark, reddish orange. To hasten this process, finish it with a light coat of boiled linseed oil followed by the finish of your choice. After several months, you will have a color that would normally take longer to achieve.

Distressing: when and how to alter the surface—You can imitate dents by using the tang of a file after the first coat of stain but before the glaze goes on. Scratches can be made with a piece of glass or a wire brush (see the photo at left). Very small drill bits and the point of an awl will mimic damage done by worms (see the bottom photos at left). Drill the wormholes after the finish has been applied but before the last coat of tinted wax.

To wear away edges, wrap some thick twine or thin rope around your fingers, and pull it back and forth, shoe-shine style, across the edges of tops and stretchers. To round off corners, use a brick, and then burnish the wood smooth with a piece of hard maple. Anything goes, except overdoing it. Too much wear will look contrived.

Finish the job with a glaze

The best way to duplicate the depth of color in old wood is with a glaze. Glazes are thin, transparent layers of color applied over another color. Before applying a glaze, it is best to seal in the first layer of color with one or two coats of finish. I prefer shellac. To match most old furniture, the best glazing colors are brown, umber and sienna—sometimes called earth colors. You can use a premixed glaze, or you can make your own if you want better control over the color.

I prefer to use a clear glaze medium (like Behlen's heavy-bodied glazing stain, which is thick and has a long open time). I tint the glaze with dry pigments. Unlike dyes that dissolve into water or alcohol, pigments are suspended in the glaze medium. I also tint with Japan colors, a kind of concentrated paint that will mix easily with oil-based products.

Normally, I do all the distressing before I apply the glaze because the glaze will collect in dents and scratches and provide a very convincing effect. I brush the glaze over the entire piece (see the top left photo on the facing page) to add an overall color effect or selectively dab it in crevices and corners where wax is likely



Apply a glaze to add depth



A glaze adds depth and color. After applying a glaze with a brush (left), the author controls the amount of color left on the surface as he wipes it off with a clean rag. When he highlights some areas more than others (above), he dabs on the glaze selectively and blends it in with a dry brush. This technique will also add extra color to distress marks.

to build up (see the center photo above). The oils in glaze mediums never dry fully, so it's normal to feel some tackiness, even after several days. Glazes and dry pigments are available in many woodworking supply catalogs. Japan colors can be found at professional finishing suppliers or at some paint stores.

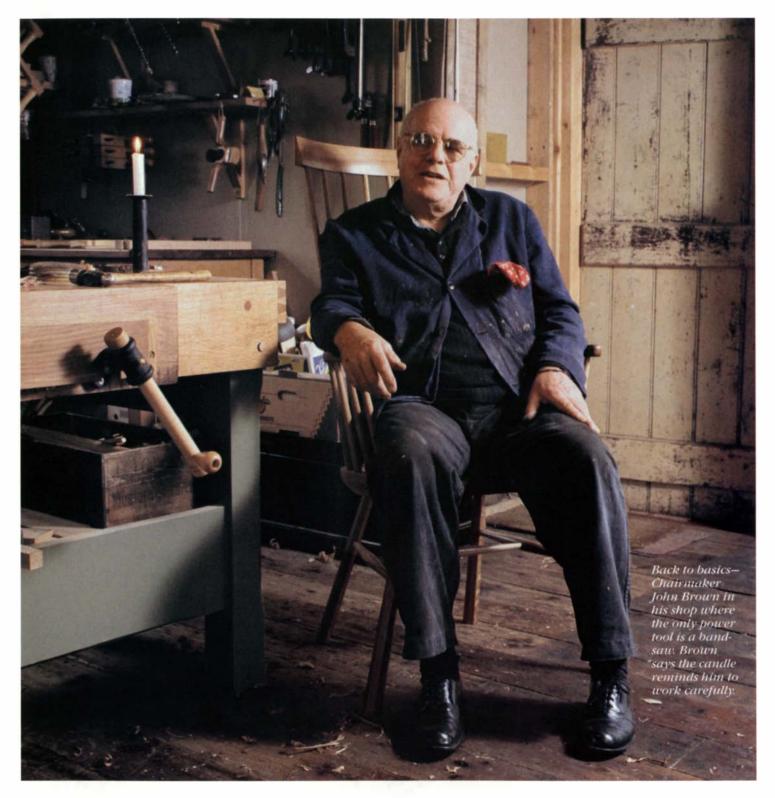
Glazes should be sealed with at least one coat of clear finish. It's best to spray on shellac or lacquer. If you have to use a brush, flow on a thin, 1-lb. cut of shellac without applying too much pressure. You can follow that with a varnish. The sealcoat of shellac is important because the varnish may not bond well to the glaze.

As a final step, I rub it out with steel wool and a dark wax, such as Liberon or Behlen's brown wax. My favorite is Antiquax brown wax. It's tinted with oilsoluble dyes and pigments and matches the look of built-up old wax beautifully. I apply the wax by unraveling a piece of 0000 steel wool and refolding it into quarters. I squirt some mineral spirits onto the pad, dip it into the can of wax and smear it all over the wood surface, working the wax into corners and distress marks. After the wax hazes over, I buff the surface with a clean cloth.

When he's not competing in bicycle races, Jeff Jewitt restores furniture in North Royalton, Ohio. His book, Hand Applied Finishes, and two companion videos are available from The Taunton Press.



Final adjustments before the finish goes on. The author wedge-fit the new shelf into this antique dry sink and added another coat of glaze to adjust the color. When the color was right, he removed the shelf and applied a sealer coat of shellac.



Good Work

Outspoken and unapologetic, a Welsh chairmaker makes a plea for hand tools

y grandmother used to tell me that most of life's ills were caused by men chasing money. Even 50 years ago, the poor old dear could not understand what all the rush was about. She had a theory that the heartbeat hadn't altered since time began and that the pace of life should be regulated by this fact. I didn't take any notice of her at the time, but recently, I've had cause to recall her words. The speed of modern life is out of synchronization with the human body. If we could slow our lives down a little, think of quality before quantity, there would be more time to savor the pleasant things before we are forced to rush on to something else.

Woodworkers are not excused from this malady. Every bit of literature, every handbill or periodical to do with the craft is packed with advertisements for machines. A young man interested in making things out of wood can be forgiven for believing that machines are a fundamental necessity. Hand tools have been relegated to the small advertisement section or antique dealers, as though they were relics of the past whose use went out with grandfather.

Save materials, and stay comfortable

The price of timber once seemed of little consequence. Now, with rain forest problems and a general scarcity, this has become a very to the detriment of careful work. Picture, if you will, a cabinetmaker working on a fine piece of oak furniture clad in a hard hat. I am sure the sense of control of the operator is impaired by wearing all this safety equipment.

against these ills. But to mummify yourself in this way can only be

Machines aid quantity, not quality

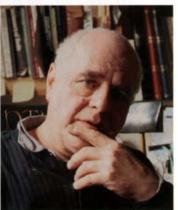
The reason for the introduction of machinery in the 19th century was to speed up the production in the factories. Water, then steam and, finally, electricity provided ample power, and in that great age of innovation, machines were invented to cope with more and more process. The owners cared not a jot for design or quality unless it affected sales. Quantity was the main criterion. "How can we make more profit?" they asked. Unskilled people could be trained to work a single-operation machine in days. The fact that these operators had no interest in their work and did the job for what money they could get interested no one, except people like John Ruskin, C.R. Ashbee and William Morris.

Since the last great war, it seems that these same principles have been adopted by modern woodworkers. Yet the motivation is entirely different. I have never known a craft woodworker who does the job only for money, or at least admits to this. Woodworkers pur-









"Tools talk to the craftsman. You will know when they are right. What the machine does by noisy, brute force you will be able to do with quiet cunning."

expensive raw material. A return to the use of hand tools, apart from being less wasteful, would add more value to this precious material. I fully appreciate the average woodworker cannot render tree trunks into planks. Handsawing huge bulk is pure sweat, so the use of a power saw is necessary. That is all that is required to lead a full and satisfying woodworking life.

Power machines are unfriendly, for they are very noisy and make a lot of unpleasant dust. Craft woodworking should be a creative activity, with the practitioners as artists. Surrounded by ugly, noisy, dusty machines, the woodworker does not have the environment in which to do good work.

There are two main health hazards from frequent use of machinery, apart from cutting off the fingers: dust and noise. Neither is instantly apparent, as is an amputation, but nevertheless they are just as dangerous. The most frightening is nasal cancer, which is closely associated with wood dust. And constant exposure to high levels of noise can damage the ears and lead to deafness.

Of course, you can wear protective clothing and apparatus

sue the craft because they love it. They enjoy working with wood, and they get great satisfaction from seeing a well-finished piece. They try their hardest to do fine work and to produce an artifact of delight. I don't suppose there has ever been a time when so much effort has gone into producing good work.

Unfortunately, a large part of the works on show are made by machines. And at what cost! Many thousands of dollars are spent on these machines, saws and re-saws, lathes, planers, thicknessers, spindle molders, mortising machines, doweling machines and biscuit joiners, dovetail attachments, belt sanders and portable machines of all kinds. New ones every week. Apart from the initial expense of this armory, there are attachments to buy, numerous cutters for different profiles and sawblades to be bought. Few of these things can be satisfactorily sharpened by the user. They have to be sent away. The operator becomes a mechanic producing precision engineered works. This has little to do with woodworking.

What about the extra time it takes to do a piece by hand? Well, it can take a little longer, that's true. You need to be well organized, the workshop needs to be laid out properly and, above all, you must have a first-class bench. You must know your tools. Everything must be clean and sharp. Tools talk to the craftsman. You will know when they are right. What the machine does by noisy, brute force you will be able to do with quiet cunning.

I doubt there's much of a saving in machine work over hand work for the small, one-off maker. If you're an amateur, it doesn't matter, and the quality will be so much better. A professional will have to charge a little more. People will pay it. With the saving in capital cost, bank interest and the time-consuming business of setting up machines, you could be better off anyway.

It is difficult to know whether machine-mania was led by the woodworking press or the craftsman. I am inclined to the former opinion. It looks as though the machinery manufacturers have the technical press in a vise-like grip, leaving the humble hobbyist to believe that unless he buys the machines, he will be a second-class woodworking citizen. I was always led to understand that machines were there to do the tedious work and that the craftsman's skills should actually do the making. Gradually, the idea of what is tedious has been updated, for it is now possible to make compli-

cated pieces entirely with machinery. The only handwork left to be done is to lift the wood to the machine. I am sure the manufacturers will cope with this in time!

Classroom is no substitute for apprenticeships

It's a pity the apprenticeship system has gone, when young people were exposed for five years to good practices, working alongside skilled men. Pride in work, pride in a fine set of tools, I know this is now unfashionable, but there is nothing wrong with being proud of one's achievements. It is between a man and his God whether that pride is false or not. Some woodwork is quite tricky and needs a lot of practice. The wonder and joy as each hurdle is leaped has to be experienced to be believed. The material you work with is not uniform. It is moody, it can be deceptive, sometimes hiding faults until the very last moment of finishing, and you have to start all over again. Handwork breeds patience.

The kind of accuracy you can achieve cannot be measured in "thous," It's not necessary. I have heard of micrometers being used on tenons. Frankly, I find this ridiculous. Author Norman Potter tells the story of a visit to his workshop by a Gimson-trained cabi-

> netmaker named Rex. Rex recalled how the famed English Arts-and-Crafts furnituremaker would run his finger along the under edges of a newly finished piece, saying, "Kindly, Rex, keep your edges kindly." You will find no specification called kindly edges in the standard woodworking textbooks.

> I would not go so far as to say that there are no skills necessary to working machines. It is important to be able to read and interpret complicated instructions. What you end up with is engineering skills-precision engineering in wood. As a substitute for apprenticeship these days, we have training colleges. These young people, having been taught design and machine skills, feel they should come out of college and



The form is simple. John Brown's traditional Welsh chair in oak has simple lines and an elegant shape. Surfaces worked by hand have an unmistakable texture.



A delicacy no machine can match-A chair leg takes shape under a deftly used spokeshave. In skilled hands, the process is surprisingly quick. Brown lives and works in the coastal hills of southwestern Wales (right).

jump straight into the first division. One or two cheekier ones do just this. The main skill required is in hiding machine marks. I suspect these young people never feel that wonderful, solid confidence of the apprentice who has just finished his five years, and with his beautiful handmade toolbox full of fine tools is about to set out in the world to do good work.

This piece was made by a person

Handmade work has soul, it has verve, a sparkle that a machine cannot reproduce. The apparent "perfection" of some machined operations has trapped the craftsman into feeling that this is the way it should be. There is no excuse for lazy or shoddy work, hand or machine, but it is nice to think that this table or this chair was made by a human being.

You often see people inspecting furniture minutely to see if all the joints are tight or if there

is any slackness in the dovetails. Perhaps they are looking for graving pieces that cover a mistake. This annoys me. Do these people do the same to a painting in an art gallery? A firm I know makes one-off pieces, things like Welsh dressers and furniture in the Georgian style. The joinery is impeccable. This company has the latest in machines. Yet the furniture is so ugly it is possible to detect their work from a good distance.

When they first started, organic farmers were ridiculed by the establishment as "mud and muck" freaks. Now, demand for their product far outstrips supply, and with farming problems as they are, I think they will have the last laugh. No one has grasped this particular nettle when it comes to woodworking. I often feel that the craftsman of today is recreating in his little heaven the very hell that the industrialists of the last century were so soundly drubbed for. Woodworkers should look anew at their hand tools. Take the meanest, rustiest plane you have. Clean it, grind and sharpen the blade like a razor, and then set it up. Now, with the plane set very fine, run it over a scrap of oak. Hear the sound it makes, and feel the perfect finish. What a thrill!



I have worked with machines in other people's employ. I have owned some machines myself. Years ago, I examined what I was doing and went organic. I haven't regretted it once. It was a renewal of my love affair with wood. We must do our best to turn things round. We must educate ourselves and our customers to realize what quality really means, quality in making, quality in design and, finally, quality in life.

Craftsmen who agree with these sentiments should, at a certain date, give up their machines. Then they should tell everyone what they are doing, broadcast the message, print it on their note paper, make a statement. But what I have said is about as fashionable as advising people to sell their cars and take a bus or even walk. Real progress can only be spiritual progress. The calm and unhurried atmosphere in my workshop makes enough to pay the bills for a simple life, no more.

John Brown lives and works near Newport, on the south coast of Wales. He is the author of Welsh Stick Chairs. Last year, he made 23 chairs by hand.

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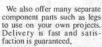
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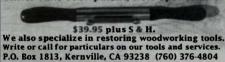
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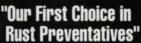
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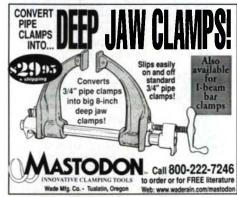
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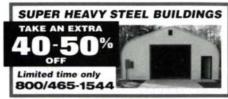
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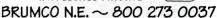


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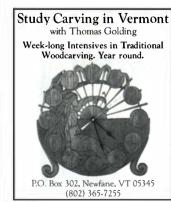
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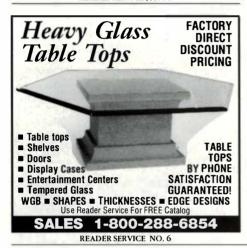


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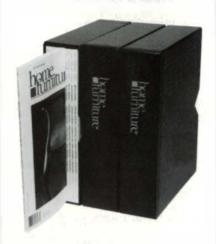
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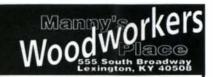
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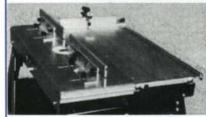
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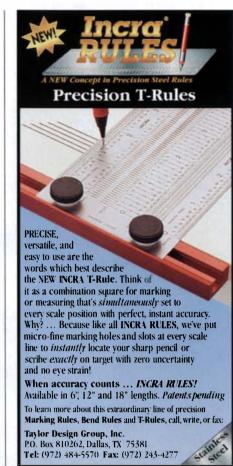
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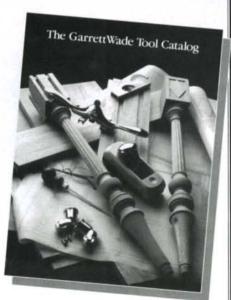
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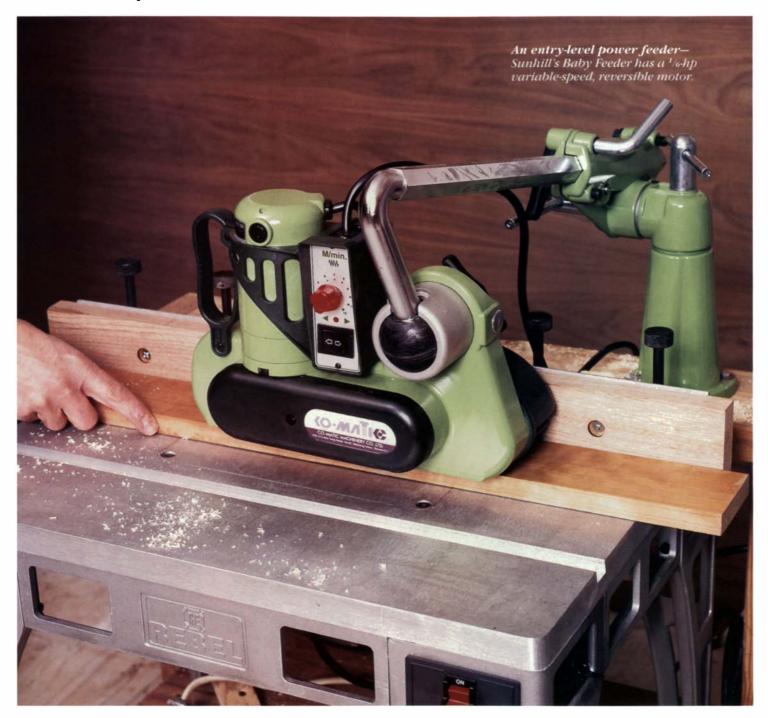
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Sunhill Baby Power Feeder



There's a good reason that power feeders are found in most large, commercial woodworking shops. These machines keep hands away from cutters, and they produce better results because they feed wood quickly and smoothly. Scorching and milling marks are reduced or eliminated. For small cabinet shops, the relatively high cost of these units has made them an im-

practical investment. Not any more.

Sunhill Machinery of Seattle, Wash., recently introduced a mini power feeder. The M-3 Baby Power Feeder is made by Co-Matic Machinery Ltd. of Taiwan, one of the world's largest producers of power feeders for the woodworking industry. (Delta just introduced a small power feeder, too. Co-matic manufactures the machine, which

differs slightly from Sunhill's.) The Baby Feeder is suitable for router tables, shapers and tablesaws, but because of its size, I wouldn't put it on a tablesaw unless I only planned to work stock ³/₄ in. thick or less.

The Baby Feeder is powered with a ¹/₆-hp reversible, variable-speed motor. Stock is fed by three urethane rollers. I mounted the feeder to my router table; it was easy to ad-

108 Fine Woodworking Photo this page. Craig Wester

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K. Reide, Seattle ,WA

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A few reminders are in order: LIN-SOAP™ will not be effective in removing the "baked" on dirt above base-board heaters. Generally, the higher the quality of

paint and the glossier the paint surface, the easier it is to clean.

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just and very rigid. Like its bigger brothers, the Baby Feeder can be articulated to bear against stock in either a horizontal or vertical position. The feed rate is adjustable from 6 feet per minute (fpm) to 40 fpm. The best way to determine proper feed rate is to look and listen. If the wood scorches, increase the feeder's speed. If the motor sounds like its lugging, slow it down.

Once I adjusted the feeder, there was no scorching or scalloping and only minor milling marks. The only time the machine balked was when I set the router bit to take a bigger bite than I normally would.

The M-3 Baby Power Feeder is available for less than \$300 from Sunhill Machinery, 500 Andover Park E., Seattle, WA 98188; (800) 929-4321. —*Jim Tolpin*

Combination nail/staple gun from Airy



Two guns in one—Airy's EZ-2 combination stapler/nailer can handle brads from $\frac{5}{8}$ in. to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. long and staples $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 1 in. long.

Two-for-one deals are hard to resist, which was what intrigued me about Airy's model EZ-2 combination 18-gauge nailer/stapler. Here's a tool that shoots brads from $\frac{5}{8}$ in. to $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. long and staples from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 1 in. long. Both nails and staples fit in the same magazine.

I fired several hundred nails and staples of various lengths into a variety of softwoods, hardwoods and plywoods, and the gun drove them in without complaint. It never jammed, even when I fired it rapidly. But because the driver blade has to be wide enough to hammer both nails and

staples, which are wider, the blade may leave a shallow dent in the workpiece when firing brads. To avoid this problem, the tool must be leaned slightly to the right when firing nails. The instructions that come with the tool explain this, and for the most part, I got used to the quirk.

If you do a lot of finish nailing, you'd be better off with a dedicated brad gun. But if you mostly require a staple gun and occasionally need to drive some finish nails, albeit carefully, the EZ-2, available through mail-order catalogs for about \$150, will do double duty.

—Anatole Burkin

Circular sawblades by Tenryu

The name Tenryu is not synonymous with sawblades, but if you own a power saw made by Makita or Hitachi, chances are the stock blade that came with the tool was made by Tenryu. In 1996, the company began selling blades in the United States under its own name.

Tenryu sells a range of blades, from contractor's models to heavy industrial blades. I tried several samples recently on my tablesaw and miter box and was impressed with their Pro Series line (see the photo below).

The first blade I tried was a 48-tooth industrial-model rip blade (RS-25548CBN). I used it to rip some 8/4 oak. The strips still needed a pass over the jointer to produce a good glue edge. The triple-chip, 60-tooth blade (PR-25560D) is meant for composites and laminates, which I don't use, but I found it ripped through 8/4 oak like a dream. The cuts were so quiet and effortless that I thought I had forgotten to raise the blade. Moreover, the surface was of glueline quality.

Next I tried an 80-tooth crosscut blade (PR-25580CBN) in my miter box. Most blades leave a slight convex area at the center of a miter cut due to blade flutter as well as a bit of fuzz on the exit side of the cut. With the Tenryu blade, I got dead-flat miters and no tearout, even when cutting against the grain at a steep angle.

I crosscut a lot of oak and maple veneer



Japanese sawblades—Tenryu, which makes blades for other companies, recently began selling under its own name.

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The Ultimate Feeder



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plywood on my tablesaw, and I've gotten used to working slowly to avoid tearout. With Tenryu's 100-tooth veneer blade (PR-255100 AB), I was able to make the cuts faster and still get a clean cut.

A blade that doesn't vibrate will produce a flatter cut. These blades have a vibration dampening compound in the expansion slots, and the steel plates are hand-hammered to balance the tension. The cleancutting nature of these blades also may be attributed to the way the teeth are ground. For example, the 100-tooth veneer blade combines a hook angle of 15° and a top

bevel of 15° with a face bevel of 15°. I've never used a sawblade with such an aggressive tooth angle. The 80-tooth crosscut blade has a 15° alternating face bevel and a 20° hook, also very steep.

I've had to clean the resin off these blades several times already, but I haven't sent them out for sharpening. The miter box cuts are not quite as crisp as they were at first, but they are still very good. The composite and veneer blades are still cutting like new. Pro Series blades range in cost from \$85 to \$105. For a dealer near you, call Tenryu (800-951-7297). —Lon Schleining



Tenryu's Pro Series circular sawblades have expansion slots filled with a vibration-reducing compound.

Vac-U-Fence tablesaw guide



Ripping made safer—The Vac-U-Fence attaches to a stock rip fence. A shop vacuum provides suction to hold stock steady when ripping.

It was 1978. I had just bought my first new pickup truck with a really great stereo system. I backed the truck into my garage workshop, opened the doors and cranked up the tunes. Then I went to work on my tablesaw. The first piece of molding I ripped shattered on a knot and shot out of the saw, just missing me. When I turned around, there it was, quivering like an arrow in the

door of my truck, just above a speaker.

A new tablesaw attachment, developed by RRR Safety Products, does a lot to eliminate the danger of kickback, especially for thin pieces of stock. Vac-U-Fence uses suction from a shop vacuum to hold stock steady against a rip fence (see the photo above). This fence attachment is a 2-in.-wide, 3-in.-high, 40-in.-long hollow alu-

minum tube. Two rows of holes along the fence deliver the vacuum pressure. Despite the suction, stock can be pushed easily along the fence.

I spent about 15 minutes mounting the Vac-U-Fence to my Biesemeyer rip fence. I drilled two 3/8-in. holes through my beautiful fence and hoped that this new gizmo wouldn't make me sorry. To complete the connection, I had to buy some threaded rod. The fence kit comes with all the other hardware needed to install it on most stock fences and to attach it to most shop vacuum hoses.

I made some trial cuts using a scrap of 2x4 redwood with the fence set 1/4 in. from the blade. As the instructions and videotape claimed, I didn't need a push stick. I pushed on the left side of the 2x4 until it cleared the blade. The 1/4-in. strip remained steady against the fence, held by vacuum pressure. After I pulled it clear of the blade, I noticed there were no chatter or burn marks. The manufacturer recommends using a vacuum drawing at least 11 amps.

Vac-U-Fence sells for \$179. It's available from RRR Safety Products, 3756 E. 22nd St., Tucson, AZ 85713; (888) 822-8336. Or you can see the fence on the company's Web site (www.vac-u-fence.com). —Gary Katz

Jim Tolpin is a woodworker and author in Port Townsend, Wash. Anatole Burkin is an associate editor of Fine Woodworking. Lon Schleining builds wooden staircases in Long Beach, Calif., and teaches woodworking at Cerritos College in Norwalk, Calif. Gary Katz works as a carpenter in Reseda, Calif.



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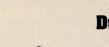


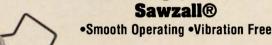










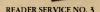




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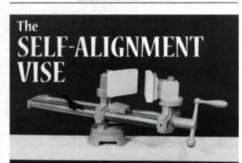
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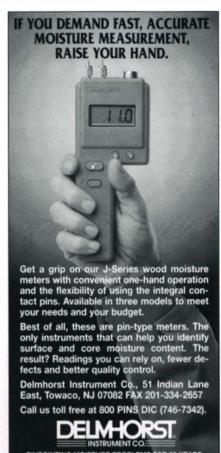
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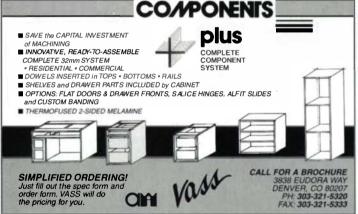
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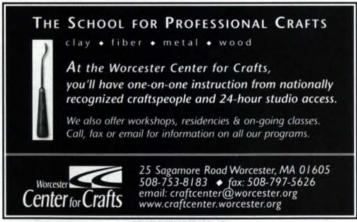


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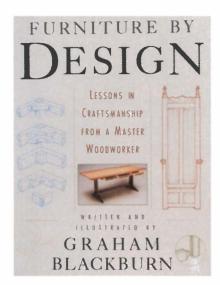
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Furniture by Design by Graham Blackburn. Lyons & Burford, Publishers, New York, N.Y. (212-620-9580); 1997. \$30, hardback; 138 pp.



The first furniture design book I ever opened was James Krenov's The Impractical Cabinetmaker. I was new to woodworking and had few tools and even fewer skills. I was sure Krenov's book would give me the quantum leap I needed to make some really cool stuff. Instead, the text encouraged me to "listen" to the wood. Huh? This sounded like something out of The Wizard of Oz. I wasn't ready to start a dialogue with lumber. It was years before I appreciated what Krenov was saying (or hearing).

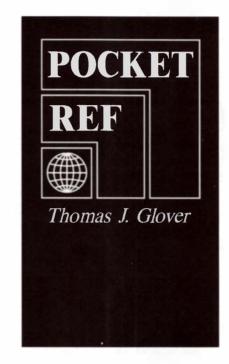
Graham Blackburn's new design book is easier to digest. Blackburn walks the reader through a variety of projects and raises issues of design along the way. The book starts with a simple project and some basic concepts. Subsequent chapters challenge the reader with increasing intensity. Beginners and advanced woodworkers alike can benefit.

Blackburn includes the meat and potatoes of furnituremaking: cutting lists and primers on joinery. Then he garnishes the text with the delicate issues of design, asking questions such as, Does the piece have balance, grace, charm or soul? The answers to these questions are never easy. Woodworking is less a science than an art, and mathematical formulas will give you only a crude road map to where beauty may lie. Blackburn, a furnituremaker and prolific author, is a

good tour guide who will help you keep form and function from clashing.

-Anatole Burkin

Pocket Ref by Thomas Glover. 2nd ed. Sequoia Publishing, Inc., Littleton, Colo. (800-873-7126); 1996. \$9.95, paperback; 544 pp.



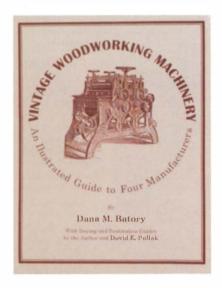
Several years ago, while designing a sailboat, I needed to know the weight of a cubic foot of sea water. I looked everywhere, but found no information on the subject. I finally had to figure it out the hard way, on a scale.

Not long ago, I discovered the Pocket Ref in my favorite local lumber store. It contains 542 pages of the most obscure and useful reference material on the widest variety of subjects-including the weight of a cubic foot of sea water (64.3 lbs.). Thousands of charts, formulas and lists cover literally everything from automotive wiring and the human body's chemical composition to woodworking finishes. If you need to know the shank diameters for wood screws to three decimal places, it's in the Ref.

I turn to the 73-page section of conversion tables often. It lists multipliers to convert one unit of measure to another. Along with conversions for furlongs into fathoms and microfarads into picofarads, the woodworker will find an easy

conversion for centimeters to feet. It's also fun to just page through and discover trivia such as the mean radius of Jupiter (44,423 miles) or the specific gravity of fish meal (0.59). -Lon Schleining

Vintage Woodworking Machinery by Dana M. Batory. Astragal Press, Mendham, N.J. (201-543-3045); 1997. \$21.95, paperback; 145 pp.



This book is destined to become a standard reference for anyone who might want to buy vintage woodworking machinery. It's a thoroughly researched history of the machines made by the major companies operating around the turn of the century. It covers Faye and Egan, Yates-American, Defiance, Oliver.

Looking at the illustrations, you will understand why national safety standards became necessary. Few of these old machines have guards over their blades or other moving parts. A swing saw made by Defiance looks like something out of a tale by Edgar Allan Poe. I shudder to imagine standing near one of those machines when it's running.

Batory also tells you where to find parts for, and information about, old machines. This information isn't easy to come by and makes the book well worth the price.

-Robert M. Vaughan

Anatole Burkin is an associate editor of FWW. Lon Schleining is a designer and stair builder in Long Beach, Calif. Robert Vaughan is a contributing editor to FWW.

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Above drilk kits come wicharger & steel case	DW996K-2 1/2" v/spd Hammer drill w/two 14.4V	612 Knee kicker 17-1/2" to 21-1/2" Sale 86	III (5) 4 \$	Model DescriptionList Sale	Above nailers come with case!
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DW938K NEW Recipro Saw Kit.	The Lettoon dill, bytood saw, dose 345		O SHE	500 C	0626SK 1/4" Crown Stapler 3/8" - 1" 194 104
DW995K NEW Recipro Saw Kit.		DURA III- ADJUSTABLE STILTS			EZ-2 NEW Multi-purpose nailer & stapler
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Case Sale	DW997K 1/2" Drill / Hammer Drill Kit 454 249	D1830 18"-30" extension			fasteners, oil & wrenches
DW991KC-2 DW991K 1.44V drill kit, DW938 3/8" variable speed Drill	DW995KS-2 DW995K Drill, DW936 Saw, and		○ ₹ 0	Model Jaw\Wldth Opening List Sale	8290 Framing Nailer 2" - 3-1/2" 475 315
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DW995KC-2 DW995K 18 volt drill kit, DW938 18 volt recipro saw, & case	14.4 volt recipro saw, & case 349		4		Model DescriptionList Sale
DW997KC-2 DW997K 18 volt drill kit, DW938 18 volt recipro saw, & case	18 volt recipro saw, & case 395	0-1300rpm211 135	THE REAL PROPERTY.		CN-350 Framing Nailer - Full Head 702 369
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Listings of gallery shows, major woodworking fairs, lectures, workshops and exhibitions are free but are restricted to happenings of direct interest to woodworkers. Only workshops sponsored by notfor-profit groups are listed. We list events (including entry deadlines for future juried shows) that are current with the time period indicated on the cover of the magazine, with overlap when space permits. We go to press three months before the issue date of the magazine and must be notified well in advance. For example, the deadline for events to be held in March or April is January 1; for July and August, it's May 1, and so on.

ALABAMA: Meetings-The Alabama Woodworkers Guild meets the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Acton Moulding & Supply Co., Helena. For info, contact Leonard Sanders (205) 822-6876.

ALASKA: Meetings-Alaska Creative Woodworkers Association meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month August to May. Anchorage Museum. For info, contact Arnold Geiger (907) 345-3077.

ARIZONA: Exhibitions-Bent-wood sculpture with Barbara Cooper and Furniture with Tommy Simpson, Nov. 1-31. Joanne Rapp Gallery, 4222 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale (602) 949-1262

Call for entries-Desert woodcarving show, Feb. 21-22. Phoenix Civic Plaza. Deadline: Feb. 20. For info, contact Mel Donaho, Grand Canyon State Woodcarvers, P.O. Box 9112, Scottsdale, 85252-9112. (602) 935-5648.

Exhibition-Turned Wood Sculpture by Dennis Elliott, thru Nov. 19. Select Art Gallery, Dry Creek Plaza, 3150 W. Highway 89A, Sedona, 86336. (800) 585-3199.

ARKANSAS: Meetings-Woodworker's Association of Arkansas meets the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m.; Central Arkansas Woodcarvers meets the second Tuesday at 7 p.m. and the fourth Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Arkansas Arts Center. (501) 985-1118.

Exhibition-Moving Beyond Tradition: A Turned Wood Invitational, thru Nov. 19. Decorative Arts Center, 7th and Rock, Little Rock. (501) 372-4000.

Meetings-Ozark Woodturners meets the third Saturday of each month in Mountain Home. For more info, call Michael Kornblum (870) 424-5893.

CALIFORNIA: Exhibition-Expressions in Wood: Art of John Cederquist, thru Nov. 30. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St., Oakland. (510) 238-2200.

Shows-The San Francisco Bay Area Woodworking Show, Nov. 7-9. San Mateo Exposition Center; The Greater Los Angeles Woodworking Show, Nov. 21-23. Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa. For more info, call (800) 826-8257

COLORADO: Show-Woodworker's Guild of Colorado Springs 13th annual juried exhibition of fine woodworking, thru Nov. 8. The Colorado Springs Museum, 215 S. Tejon St., Colorado Springs. Contact John Lewis (719) 636-1257.

CONNECTICUT: Exhibition-Woodworkers Guild 10th annual fall members exhibition, thru Nov. 30. For further information, contact Randy Bemont (860) 653-0316.

Workshops-Woodworking workshops held year-round. Brookfield Craft Center, P.O. Box 122, Route 25, Brookfield, 06804. (203) 775-4526.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Show-16th annual Smithsonian craft show, April 23-26. Smithsonian Institution. For info, call (202) 357-4000.

FLORIDA: Meetings-South Florida Woodworking Guild meets every second Monday at 7 p.m. Constantine, 1040 E. OaklandPark Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale. For information, contact Charlie Womack (954) 561-0941 or (561) 447-8016.

Meetings-Central Florida Woodworkers Guild meets the second Thursday of each month. American Legion Hall, 2101 Lee Road, Orlando. Contact Bob Lamprey (407) 292-8324.

Meetings-St. Petersburg Woodcrafters Guild meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. P.V.T.I., 6100 154th Ave. N., St. Petersburg. Contact Wally Hebel, 1200 19th St. N., St. Petersburg, 33713. (813) 898-0569.

Meetings-Capital City Woodcarvers meets every Monday at 7 p.m. Senior Citizen Art Center. For further information, contact Lee Roberts (904) 893-4293.

Meetings-North Florida Woodturners meets the first Tuesday of each month. Contact John Penrod (904) 385-0608.

Meetings-Tallahassee Woodcrafters Society meets the second Tuesday of each month. For info, contact Walt Behrle (904) 668-6653 or Austin Tatum (904) 386-6876.

Call for entries-Woodcrafters Club of Tampa's 12th annual fine furniture show, Feb. 5-16. Deadline: Jan. 15. Florida Expo Park, Tampa, Contact John Fischer (813) 645-8933.

GEORGIA: Meetings-Woodworkers Guild of Georgia meets the second Monday of each month. Southern College of Technology, 1100 S. Marietta Parkway, Marietta. (404) 299-3972.

ILLINOIS: Meetings-Chicago Woodturners meets the second Tuesday of each month. York High School, Elmhurst. Contact Harris Barbier (630) 964-0354.

KENTUCKY: Meetings-Kyana Woodcrafters meets the first Thursday of each month. Bethel United Church of Christ, 4004 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, .40207. Contact Ray Thornton (502) 499-1388

MAINE: Meetings-Guild of Maine Woodworkers meets the first Wednesday of each month. Call (800) 805-5100.

MARYLAND: Classes-Woodworking classes, thru December. Glen Echo National Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo, 20812. (301) 492-6266.

Exhibition-Meredith Gallery Tables and Chairs, Nov. 1-Dec. 20. Charles St., Baltimore. Call Terry Heffner (410) 837-3575.

MASSACHUSETTS: Classes-Woodworking classes, most of the year. Boston Center for Adult Education, 5 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, 02116. (617) 267-4430.

Classes-Year-round intensives in woodworking and wood carving. Horizons New England Craft Program, 108 N. Main St., Sunderland, 01375. (413) 665-0300.

Classes-Woodworking classes held year-round. North Bennet Street School, 39 N. Bennet St., Boston. (617) 227-0155.

Exhibition-Warm Contemporary Furniture with Arthur J. Stevens, Nov. 4-Dec. 12. Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, Berkshire Artisans, 28 Renne Ave., Pittsfield. (413) 525-6676. Workshop-19th annual wood identification workshop, Jan. 13-16. For more info, contact Alice Szlosek, University of Massachusetts, 608 Goodell Building, Box 33260, Amherst, 01003-3260. (413) 545-2484.

MICHIGAN: Meetings-Metro Carvers of Michigan meets second Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 p.m. Helen Keller High School, 1505 N. Campbell Road, Royal Oak. (810) 771-1040.

Show-Metro-Detroit woodworking show, Dec. 5-7. Novi Expo Center, 43700 Expo Center Drive, Novi. (800) 826-8257. Show-Sixth biennial Midwest-Grand Rapids woodworking and furniture supply fair, Nov. 6-7. (704) 459-9894.

MINNESOTA: Meetings-Minnesota Woodworkers Guild meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7:15 p.m. Demonstrations each month. Contact Richard Gotz (612) 544-7278.

MISSOURI: Meetings-Kansas City Woodworkers' Guild meets the third Wednesday of each month. Contact Eugene Caples (816) 452-6379.

Meetings-St. Louis Woodworker's Guild meets the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. Woodcraft Store, Olive Blvd. Contact Barney Davey (314) 225-2357.

NEBRASKA: Meetings-Omaha Woodworkers Guild meets at 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month. Libert Christian Center, 60th and L St., Omaha. For info, contact John Cahill, Box 45494, Omaha, 68145. (402) 334-5550.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Exhibition-Deeply Routed: New Hampshire Traditions in Wood, thru Dec. 14. Art Gallery, University of New Hampshire, Durham. (603) 862-3712.

NEW JERSEY: Meetings-Central Jersey Woodworkers Association meets the second Wednesday of the month (except July and August) at 7 p.m. Old Brick Reformed Church, Newman Springs Road, Marlboro. (732) 576-3052.

NEW YORK: Meetings and classes-New York Woodturners Association meets bi-monthly. YWCA, 610 Lexington Ave. (53rd St.), New York City. For more information, contact Howard Alalouf (914) 337-0226.

Meetings-Long Island Woodworker's Club meets at 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month September to June. Brush Barn, 211 Jericho Turnpike, Smithtown. For more info, contact Bill Hermanek (516) 360-1216.

Classes-Traditional and contemporary woodworking with

Maurice Fraser, Bill Gundling and Susan Perry. The Craft Students League at the YWCA, 610 Lexington Ave., New York City. For more information, call (212) 735-9731.

Call for entries-Woodworkers Showcase '98, Feb. 7-8. Contact Herm Finkbeiner, Northeastern Woodworkers Association, P.O. Box 246, Rexford, 12148, (518) 371-9145

NORTH CAROLINA: Meetings-North Carolina Woodturners meets the second Saturday of each month. For more info, contact Tom Fitz, North Carolina Woodturners, P.O. Box 1833, Hickory, 28603. (704) 890-4451.

Workshops-Country Workshops winter classes. Contact Drew Langsner, 90 Mill Creek Road, Marshall, 28753

Juried Show-The Chair Show II, thru Jan. 4. Folk Art Center, Main Gallery, Asheville. Jurors include Sam Maloof. Contact Katherine Caldwell (704) 298-7928.

OHIO: Meetings-Cincinnati Woodworking Club meets at 9 a.m. on the second Saturday of January, March, May, September and November. Reading High School, Reading. Contact the club at 10125 Montgomery, Cincinnati, 45242.

Meetings-Woodworkers of Central Ohio meets on the second Saturday of November, February, April and June. Formore info, call Chuck (614) 457-3704.

OREGON: Meetings-Cascade Woodturner's Association meets every third Thursday. For more information, write 11575 S.W. Pacific Highway, #104, Tigard, 97223, or call (360) 834-6325.

Meetings-Guild of Oregon Woodworkers meets every third Wednesday (except December) at 7 p.m. For info, write P.O. Box 1866, Portland, 97207, or call (503) 492-1515.

PENNSYLVANIA: Exhibition-Turning in Context, thru Nov. 30. Wood Turning Center, Philadelphia. (215) 844-2188. Call for entries-Philadelphia Furniture and Furnishings Show, April 17-19. Deadline: Nov. 14. Pennsylvania Convention Center. Contact Philadelphia Furniture and Furnishings Show, 162 N. 3rd St., Philadelphia, 19106. (215) 440-0718.

RHODE ISLAND: Juried show-Second annual fine furnishings: Providence, Nov. 14-16. Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence. For more info, call (401) 751-8989.

TENNESSEE: Workshops-Turning, carving and more, year-round. Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, 556 Parkway, Gatlinburg, 37738-0567. (423) 436-5860.

Classes-Lumber selection and more. Tennessee Valley Authority, 17 Ridgeway Road, Box 920, Norris, 37828-0920. (615) 632-1656.

TEXAS: Meetings-Woodturners of North Texas meets the last Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m. Paxton Beautiful Woods Store, 1601 W. Berry St., Fort Worth. For more information, call (817) 927-0611.

Exhibition-East Texas Woodcarvers' Wooden Wonderland '97, Nov. 13-15. Tyler Rose Garden Center, Tyler. For more info, contact Charles or Kathy Brooks (903) 839-7042. Meetings-North Texas Woodworker's Association meets the third Tuesday of each month. Contact Bruce May, P.O. Box 831567, Richardson, 75083. (972) 271-0125.

VIRGINIA: Workshop-16th annual oak drying workshop, Dec. 9-11. Airport Marriott, Roanoke. Contact Fred Lamb, Dept. of Wood Science, Virginia Tech. (540) 231-7256.

WASHINGTON: Meetings-Northwest Corner Woodworkers Association meets the first Tuesday of each month, year-round. For more info, call Mike Hess (360) 650-0964. **Show-**The Seattle Woodworking Show, Nov. 14-16. Seattle Center, Exhibition Hall, Mercer St. at 3rd Ave. N., Seattle. For info. call (800) 826-8257

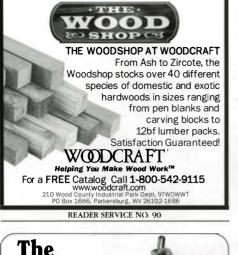
Exhibition-Sculptural furniture with Wendell Castle, thru Nov. 8. Bryan Ohno Gallery, 155 Main St., Seattle. For more information, call (206) 667-9572.

WISCONSIN: Show-The Greater Milwaukee Woodworking Show, Dec. 12-14. Wisconsin Center, Great Hall, 500 W. Kilbourn Ave., Milwaukee. (800) 826-8257.

CANADA: Association-Canadian Woodturners Association, 12A-4981 Highway 7E, Suite 236, Markham, Ont. L3R 1N1. (905) 479-0755.

Association-Superior Association of Woodworkers meets 7 p.m. the last Monday of the month. Confederation College, Thunder Bay, Ont. Contact Vic Germaniuk (807) 767-5964. **Show-**Fraser Valley Woodturners Association show, Nov. 22-23. Woodturning demonstrations. Fort Langley Community Hall, 9167 Glover Road, Fort Langley, B.C. (604) 931-5952.





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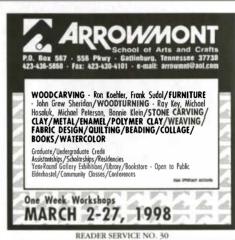
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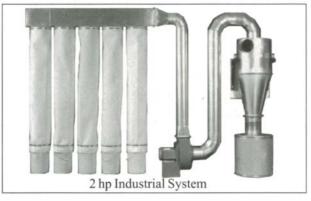


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The Furniture Society holds its first conference



It can be challenging to design modern furniture and earn a living. This may not be the easiest career, but The Furniture Society's symposium this past July confirmed how exciting furnituremaking can be.

I was among nearly 300 furnituremakers, designers and educators who attended "Furniture '97: A Celebration of the Art of Furniture Making." The three-day conference, at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Purchase, included a long list of informative discussions.

There were many seminars on building techniques, the heady stuff of design, our role as furnituremakers and artists, and discussions on where we're headed. The conference gave me an opportunity to talk to many of my peers, including some very well-known furnituremakers.

Another highlight of the conference was



The Furniture Society exhibit in Purchase, N.Y. Pieces included (top photo from left): T-Bar Chair by Fred Crist; Adam and Eve Sharing an Hors d'Oeuvre Preceding Their New Career in Agribusiness by Clifton Monteith; ladder-back chair by Brian Boggs. Photo at left: chair and desk by Hank Gilpin and armoire by Tommy Simpson.

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One look and you'll feel the wheels of your imagination turning!

the exhibit "Survey of Contemporary North American Furniture" (see the photos on p. 130). For someone used to working in traditional forms, contemporary furniture can be perplexing: Is it art, sculpture or barely functional furniture? During the course of the conference. I visited the gallery several times and talked to some of the people whose work was displayed. The more I learned about the makers and what they were trying to accomplish, the more I began to appreciate their work.

-Garrett Hack, Thetford Center, Vt.

George Frank, 93

George Frank, an eloquent and curmudgeonly wood finisher who elevated his craft over a career of seven decades, died in his native Hungary on Sept. 2. He was two weeks short of his 94th birthday.

Frank left south Florida, where he had lived for 20 years, early in 1995 to return to Budapest after a brief and unsuccessful stint in a retirement home. His eldest daughter, Eva Frank, said he left the home complaining he couldn't live with "all those old people."

Frank first appeared on the masthead of Fine Woodworking in 1977 as a consulting editor, an association he continued well into 1994. He lectured widely about wood finishing in the United States and Europe. Ms. Frank said her father was active in his field until only recently.

As a 21-year-old, Frank moved to Paris in 1924 without knowing a word of French, his daughter said. He founded a finishing company called George Frank Vernissage (meaning French polishing). In 1939, he moved to New York City (without knowing a word of English) where he opened the George Frank Cabinet Corp.

Frank was a gifted storyteller. In Adventures in Wood Finishing (The Taunton Press, 1981), he regaled readers with tales of his job-site finishing adventures. He had no hesitation about using a client's swimming pool as a huge chemical stripping vat or sealing up a bank and pumping it full of ammonia fumes on the eve of its opening. He did what worked.

He leaves three daughters and five grandchildren, one of whom—Ms. Frank's daughter-is now a wood finisher in New York City. -Scott Gibson, editor

Racing to glory



Gentlemen, start your belt sanders. Belt sander drag racing events are held year-round in many U.S. cities. Designs are often imaginative, like Belt Sander Barbie (below).

Three guys were sitting in Kiniski's Reef Tavern in Point Roberts, Wash., swapping stories about power tools. One of them, a cabinetmaker named Phil Lipton, recalled how as a 20-year-old apprentice he had set his unplugged belt sander on a countertop on a job site. His ever helpful client plugged in the machine without realizing that Lipton had left the trigger in the locked-on position. As they both watched, the belt sander tore across the counter, then the floor and, finally, into a freshly painted wall.

Before the three left Kiniski's that night, they decided lots of people would get a kick out of belt sanders that go fast. Lorne Nielson, the owner of a local lumberyard and one of the founding trio, hosted their first race two years later.

The event caught on. By the time the 1996 race rolled around, it included more than 30 competitors and attracted a crowd of 650. Nielson and Lipton have since formed the International Belt Sander Drag Race Association (IBDA as they call it) and are promoting sanctioned races all over North America. The organization has a new partner, Hardware Wholesalers Inc., and two corporate sponsors (Makita and Shop Vac). Winners at local events are invited to the finals in Indianapolis next May.

Races don't take long. Two belt sanders connected to a common power source are lined up at one end of a 30-ft. chute. A switch is thrown. The belt sanders shoot down the track, their extra-long power cords trailing behind. A race ends abruptly with the machines crashing into a barrier.

The fastest recorded time is 1.42 seconds for a machine in the modified division. It's actually a Makita grinder attached to a belt sander body. In case you were wondering, the best combination is a coarse-grit belt (Lipton says 36 is the "grit of champions") and a heavy machine. The Makita or the

Porter-Cable 4-in. by 24-in. machines seem to do best.

can be contacted at 1649 **Edwards** Drive, Point Roberts, WA 98281; (360-945-3221). There's even a Web page

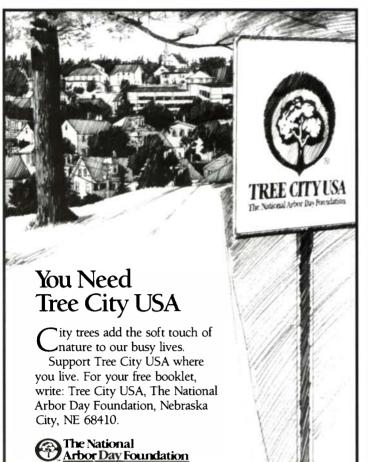


132 Fine Woodworking Photos this page: Grant Waddell

A Cut **Above**, But Priced **Below** Most Band Saws



READER SERVICE NO. 182







North Bennet seeks alumni



North Bennet Street School graduates are looking for others to form an alumni association.

The North Bennet Street School in Boston is trying to track down far-flung former students for an alumni association. The school-which teaches woodworking, restoration carpentry and violin making, among other subjects-hopes the group will help the school attract new students

while making it easier for former students to contact each other.

If you're a graduate who's been out of touch for a while, you can drop a note to the school (39 N. Bennet St., Boston, MA 02113), call (617-227-0155) or e-mail your whereabouts (stuserve@nbss.org).

Made a good bed lately?

The Taunton Press is seeking photos of well-designed and well-crafted beds for an upcoming book. All submissions will be acknowledged and material that can't be used will be returned.

If you're interested, send photos (35mm slides or larger format transparencies) along with a description of your work to Joanne Renna, The Taunton Press, P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. All materials must be received by Feb. 1.

Notes and Comment

We welcome news stories, anecdotes about the triumphs and pitfalls of woodworking, photographs of unusual work-anything that you think other woodworkers would like to know about. We pay for the material we use. Send submissions to Notes and Comment, Fine Woodworking, P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.



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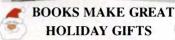
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Treasure of the Sierra Madre

In my chair shop in Tennessee, I try to minimize tools, especially power tools. One reason is economy. Another is my stubborn rejection of the massive tool-marketing establishment. The third, and perhaps the most compelling, is my preference for simple tools and ancient hand-tool processes. Last year, while teaching chairmaking in northern Mexico, I met a violinmaker who radically altered my idea of minimalist woodworking.

The Tarahumara are one of four aboriginal tribes living in the remote canyon lands of the Sierra Madre mountain range in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. The forest is life for the Tarahumara. They have retained much of their original language and culture, despite centuries of subjugation by Spanish soldiers and zealous missionaries, by moving deeper and deeper into the rugged canyons. More recently, a high-stakes drug trade and rampant logging have pushed these people to the edge of survival.

My three students lived four or five miles outside the sawmill town of Agua Azul (population 100), each in a different direction. Occasionally, I accompanied a student to his home after class, visiting other crafts people along the way. Setting out on these journeys, I knew little of where we were headed or what to expect when we arrived, and it was a challenge keeping up with people known as the long-distance runners of Mexico.

The high elevation makes the winters very cold and the summers very hot, but September is glorious beneath a crystal blue sky. The first few miles out of Agua Azul, we threaded paths through dry, rocky terrain and pine forests.

Mixed with the pines were cedar, madrone, oaks and a tree called fresno, which I saw only rarely. From time to time, the forest opened up to reveal large valleys, green from the recent drought-breaking rains and gold from ripe corn. Even the most affluent Tarahumara are subsistence farmers. They do not congregate in villages but are scattered among the canyons and along the riverbanks in small log or adobe homesteads, many with split-rail fences and split-plank roofs.

I learned to be patient on these outings, as my guides must have been with me. A student and I would approach a home, then stand back quietly, waiting to be noticed. There was little eye contact in conversation. In lieu of a handshake, one man's palm simply slid lightly past another's.

After purchasing some baskets on one of these outings, I followed Primitivo, my student, a few hundred yards upriver to another dwelling. He entered and returned moments later with a violin. The maker wasn't there, but Primitivo showed me his complete tool kit: a knife, a tapered boring tool for drilling peg holes (with a T-handle made of horn), an ice pick, an adze, a froe and a chisel made from a ground-down bolt. I was amazed to find no saw. Although the violin was crude by our standards, it certainly didn't look like it was made with a bolt.

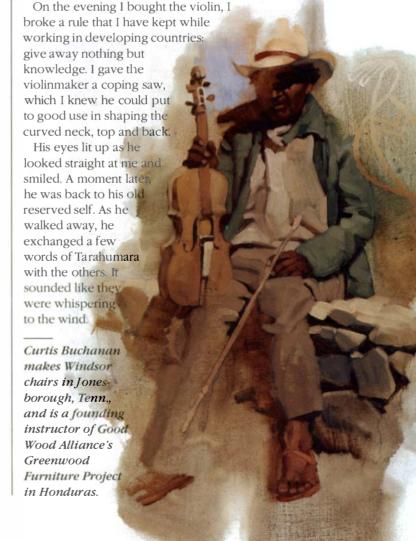
The front and back had been hewn with the adze to the traditional arched shape of a violin, and the curved f-holes were cut with the knife. All the parts were pine, except for the neck, which was made of fresno and had a nicely carved scroll at the end. I was interested in buying it, but Primitivo told me to wait.

The next evening, a Tarahumara man, about 60 years old,

walked into the woodshed that served as our shop. He wasn't dressed in the traditional garb of headband and loincloth, like some of his peers, but in the mestizo clothing worn by most of the younger men. A few words were passed in their own language between my students and the stranger, but nothing was said to me. A little later, Primitivo asked if I wanted to make music. He then disappeared behind the shed with the newcomer. It took me a few seconds to realize that this was the violin maker we had been expecting since early that morning. In the back of the shed, I was introduced to Mariano, who unfolded a worn iacket to reveal the instrument I had seen the day before.

I had read about Tarahumara violins, about how the Spanish had introduced them in the 17th century and how they feature prominently in festivals. I tried to persuade Mariano to play, but he said there was no tequila or tezgüino, the fermented corn drink central to their culture.

I bought the violin, and since returning home, I have had the instrument played by a concert violinist and a bluegrass fiddler and lots of musicians in between. It has good tone, but a very strange sound, maybe due to its odd size. The body is as big as a viola, but the neck is shorter than that of a violin. The strings, of unknown origin, stand unusually high off the fingerboard.



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