

THE Wood Rack



NOVEMBER 2000

www.liwoodworkers.org

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NEXT MEETING: Wed., Nov. 1, 7 p.m., Brush Barn, Smithtown

***FURNITURE DESIGN WITH IAN KIRBY:** Members should please take note that November's meeting will begin one-half hour earlier, that is, at 7 p.m. Our speaker will be long-time friend of the LIWC, Ian Kirby. Ian's presentation will be a further development of last month's topic - furniture design. He will, of course, bring his own unique perspective to the discussion.*



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Gabe Jaen

A few words about design process. It seems as if there is a sudden or latent interest in the subject of design in the Club. We've had the speaker

Struther Purdy give us a presentation about the design process at our last meeting. Questions were asked about dimensions or the ergonomics of design. By the time you read this article some of us already will have attended a seminar on "Practical Design of Furniture" by Mr. Struther Purdy and have had several of those questions answered.

We as woodworkers are often involved in the design function, particularly when we construct a jig or fixture to help us in the fabrication process of a piece of furniture. Typically it could be a routing fixture, a holding devise or a piece of furniture that has a unique function, like a tool cabinet. There are books that deal with furniture design. Some treat the subject from a classical perspective while others are more practical. An example of each could be "Visual Awareness and Design" by Philip Thiel, which treats design by way of texture, color, rhythm, and space, and "The Woodworkers Guide to Furniture Design" by Garth Graves, a Betterway Books Publication for the practical approach.

I can relate to the design process from my own personal experience. My course of study included

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SECRETARY'S REPORT



Owen Brady
& Steve Costello

Our president, Gabe Jean, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 4, 2000, and reported on the LIWC

Board Meeting held on Sept. 28th. At that meeting it was decided NOT to increase members' annual dues. To assist in raising operating funds for the club, members were encouraged to participate in the monthly raffle and to be generous in their contributions to the "coffee-can." We will continue to arrange for prominent woodworkers such as Mario Rodriguez, Ian Kirby and Struther Purdy, to make daylong presentations to club members - but only if these meetings are well attended. At \$35 (including lunch) for an entire day spent one-on-one with professional woodworkers, these meetings represent exceptional opportunity and value for our members, who are urged to let the board know what subjects they are interested in.

Vic Werny has volunteered to head a house-keeping committee to assure that the barn is left clean for our next meeting. Members are urged to help in putting away the chairs and to assist in gen-

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President's Message continued

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subjects such as: strength of material, metallurgy, static and dynamics, drafting and a lot more - and too many years ago to remember. But, the design process was dictated by form, fit and function. The customer told us his need (function, a radar scanner) the space limitation (form) and the interface or footprint (fit). It's different for me now with my woodworking. My wife may say, "I want a table to place alongside the sofa to hold a

lamp." Off I go to my stack of books and magazines in search of a design. I get an idea, I make it, and my wife says, "Nice design."

Our design niche is a very narrow one, when one looks at the whole spectrum of design needs. It takes in clothes, buildings, cars, and a whole host of disciplines. So don't fret; it's not a mystery or talent we can't capture. You've been doing it for years - whether it's a piece of furniture, toy or fretwork you conjured up.

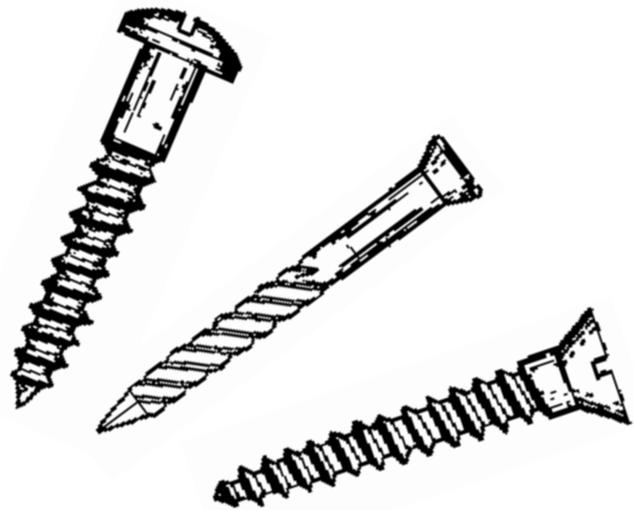
Secretary's Report continued

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eral cleanup. Our monthly newsletter will be sent to vendors who participated in Expo 2000 and will (at least twice a year) publish a list of the books and videos we have. A volunteer was requested to head up a task force to choose and execute a design for a collapsible workbench. The club will provide up to \$250 for materials.

Gabe announced that, in order to allow more time at the monthly meetings for the guest presenters, we would start the meetings at 7 p.m. The July, 2000 meeting would fall on July 4th according to the schedule. It was decided to postpone it for one week, until July 11th. Gabe is continuing his visits to members' workshops and is looking forward to reporting on the next two to which he has been invited. He reminded the membership that we need to propose a slate of Officers for the next year. The election will be in November, and we were urged to make nominations and, indeed to run for office. During Gabe's comments, he took time to compliment Jim Ruppel, Jim Cosgrove and Leo Meilak for their seamless production of the monthly newsletter. It was also mentioned that Celine Blais would be demonstrating her woodturning skills at the Woodworkers Warehouse on Jericho Turnpike, Commack. There was general approval at the use of a portable microphone by the speakers.

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$3,985 in the Club's account. Vice President Bob Urso, the head of the Program Committee, is looking for volunteers to participate in the round-robin hands-



on presentations for the January meeting. Anyone interested should call Bob at (631) 724-4625.

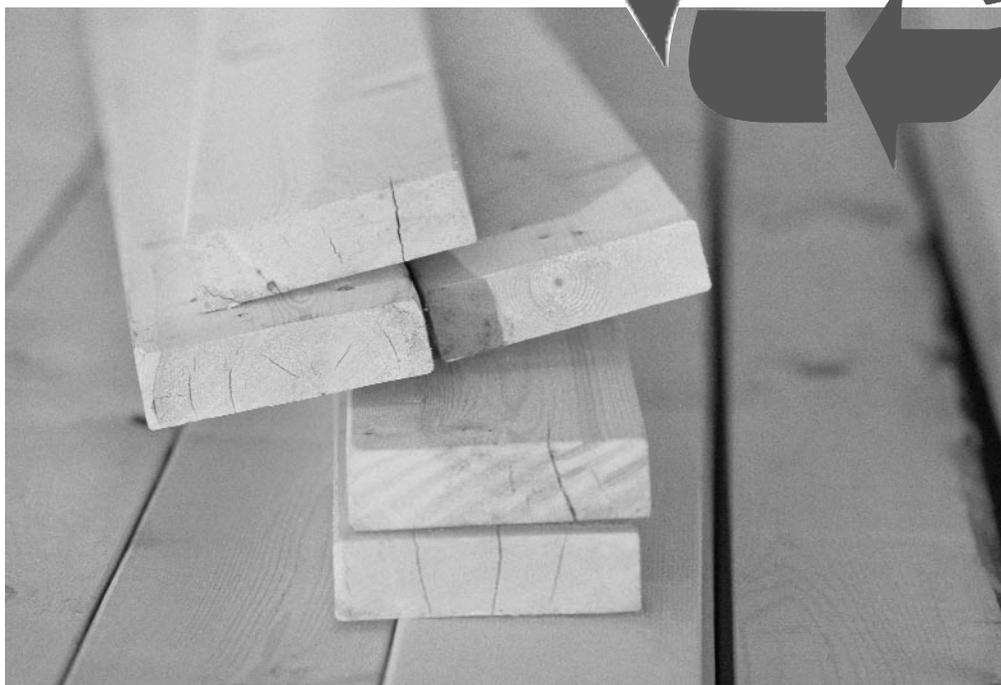
At Show-and-tell, Graham Kelly exhibited a beautiful, dovetailed, mahogany Jewelry Box, and Vincent Mc Neill demonstrated a Marble Roll Toy, which he guarantees keeps his grandchildren amused "for at least 20 minutes." Mr & Mrs. Paul Decker asked if anyone could help them to find plans for a Potter's Wheel.

The evening ended with a presentation by Mr. Struther Purdy on the elements of good design in furniture. His career in woodworking has included employment in an architectural millwork firm, and time as an editor for "Fine Woodworking" magazine. He now owns his own business designing and building fine furniture. His presentation, which included samples of his work, addressed the questions, "Why design you own furniture? Will it last? And is it beautiful?"

Recycle Wood from Unlikely Sources

By Paul Becker

With the rising prices of solid woods, we hear a lot about recycled wood. We hear about sawdust recycled as particle board, and wood chips as OSB. Old wood buildings are carefully torn down for their large timbers, yielding well seasoned, old growth and large (wide & thick) boards for many purposes. This article is about a type that we don't hear as much about, that is, the direct use of the wood from pallets, skids and crates for fine crafted articles. Sure, there are limitations to this readily available source, but if you are willing to work around them, you can get this wood for free.



If you are not picky about wood species, you may enjoy this process. The overall yield with this source of lumber is not very high, but there is a challenge to making it work and a pride in a finished piece when you can tell someone of the source of the materials.

Not all pallets stored outside industrial and commercial buildings are available for the taking, but if you know of a source, the first step is covered. I get the majority of my findings from the skids that metal sheet is delivered on at my place of employment. There are different types of skids and pallets. Usually the ones used for lightweight articles are not worth salvaging. The top boards are too thin, and the cross pieces are spaced closer, which means less usable material between nail

holes. What you want to look for is top boards that are thicker than 1" in the rough and rails that are approximately 2" x 3" or greater. Crates are often made of plywood, but I have seen many crates from Taiwan made of Philippine Mahogany. I have even heard of South American pallets that contained Rosewood. Most of what I get locally is Pine, Oak, Maple and Cherry.

The next thing to look for is relatively new skids -- ones that have not been in the weather long. The primary reason for this is to make nail extraction easy. The nails on weathered pallets rust between the top boards & rails and often break below the surface of the rail when you pull them. They turn up later in your planer (Ouch!). Digging

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Unlikely Sources Can Yield Good Wood

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them out usually doesn't pay. I'll speak more about the nail holes later.

Now you have to get the wood home. If you can transport the skid whole, then you can disassemble it at your leisure at home. If you must disassemble at the site, try not to make a mess with wood splinters and extracted nails, as you may ruin a good source for the future. After disassembly, be sure to brush all surfaces carefully, edges and ends with a bench broom and/or a stiff wire brush to remove any sand that may be sticking in the rough surface. Check again for nails. Be sure to check the ends; they often have staples. Now you must avoid the temptation to feed them through the planer. If the wood is warped and twisted as it goes in, it will come out warped and twisted. Joint one face, then pass it through the planer.

I'm not going to go into the techniques involved in straightening stock in this article, but if it is really twisted, either cut it in half lengthwise or just trash it. Someone with a fireplace will soon become a good friend. This wood also tends to contain wild grain, which will warp more as you cut it. You have to work with it. Since the wood was never kiln dried and probably not even properly air dried, its moisture content will be high. The fact that it has been sitting outside contributes to its free water content. An initial jointing and planing to reveal the grain without totally cleaning it up is wise here; then let it dry out some more. Flatten it again later when you are ready to use it. The 1"+ thickness boards I mentioned previously may end up usable at ½". Here is where I do some more recy-

cling. With all that planing and jointing, there are a lot of shavings, so I use them in my wife's flower gardens as winter mulch.

Now back to the nail holes. You could just cut the board off between the nails, but that means shorter boards than are useful. And even if you are later going to cut off the nail holes, it is a bit easier to surface a slightly longer piece. It seems no matter how well tuned my planer is, I still get snipe at the ends. If this occurs beyond the nail holes, you can cut it off later. If the wood is to be used in a more utilitarian fashion than fine furniture (Yes, it is possible to use it for fine furniture; I've done it.), then the nail holes won't matter. You could drill them out and plug them with plugs cut from the end of the same board.

To summarize my experiences, choose unweathered skids, brush surfaces thoroughly, allow to dry before final dimensioning and leave plenty of time before use.

And if you find that Rosewood skid, let me know.



Layout Editor's Note: This really works! I just finished a kitchen stool from some recycled 2x4s and skid lumber.

Shop Visits: Paul Decker

I had the pleasure of being invited to visit with Paul Decker, his wife and his father Richard and to take a look at his shop. All three of the Deckers, who are new members, were present at our last meeting. Paul had communicated with me by e-mail to make the arrangements for the meeting. He also mentioned that on the day of my visit he was expecting someone who had purchased a tool from him. No problem, I wrote.

As I walked up his driveway I was met by Paul and his father, both woodworkers. They led me to rear of the house where the garage is. Next to the garage is a typical Bilco basement door, which is an outside entrance to the basement, except there are no stairs. When Paul opened the doors and I looked down, I was looking into a pit. Straddling these Bilco doors was an electric hoist mounted on a rolling crane. We then went through the garage and down the cellar stairs into his shop.

I was expecting to see a wood shop; instead I walked into a small machine shop that takes up half of a very roomy basement area; the other half was the wood shop. The machine shop area has a milling machine, a metal lathe, a surface grinder with a magnetic chuck, a special purpose machine in the process of being rebuilt and, of course, all the precision measuring tools necessary to do what Paul does besides woodworking. Paul likes to buy used machine tools - both metal and woodworking - which he rebuilds and uses to fix other machines. Some of these tools he's purchased on the internet and some from machine dealers.

While I was there, the buyer of the tool Paul

sold came by. The tool, as it turned out, was a second milling machine. They rolled the milling machine to the pit, lashed it to the hook and hoisted it up to ground level. They backed the trailer up to the Bilco doors and loaded the milling machine onto the trailer, and off the buyer went. Easy, yes!

Well, now to the wood shop half. Paul's table saw has a table extension he made. You can lay a 4 x 8 sheet down on it, cut away, and nothing falls to the floor. He has a surface planer he bought that will do stock at least 21 inches wide. He has all the other basic power and hand tools. The space around the various tools is more than ample, and there are overhead wood racks with dressed lumber of all grades and sizes.

What does he do besides all this? Well, in the shop at present he has an entertainment center he's working on. It has the main carcass for the TV and a slanted cabinet on each side with drawers that slide straight out. Upstairs there are a kitchen table and a corner bookcase that follow the same design theme. Indeed, Paul is a busy guy. Aside from his day job as an engineer, he fixes machine tools for guys like us who have very old machines whose parts may not be readily available.

It was quite a visit. I was so impressed with his setup and the things he does that I asked Paul if he could write an article for the Newsletter (*see Recycling Wood on page 3*). It was quite an educational visit, just like all the visits to shops of other Club members. I got this idea to visit shops from member Joe Rodriguez. It's ideas like this that help us get to know each other better. - Gabe Jaen

Woodworking Tips: Buy Your Hardware First

You're starting out on a newly designed project and now you're out buying the wood. Here's a piece of advice: buy your hardware at the same time. Hardware has a way of affecting important features of your project. The selection of the type of hinge you use is based on how you've mounted your door. Is it flush, inset or on a face frame? Is your door ¾-inch thick? Do you want the door to open 270 degrees, so as to be able to fold back against the side of the cabinet? If you're using slides for the drawers, they will affect of the width

and depth of the drawer. Your handles may need longer screws if your drawer design has a false front. These few considerations beforehand will save those of us who make one-of-a-kind custom furniture a lot of frustration and money.

- Gabe Jaen

Editor's Note: If you have any woodworking tips for the newsletter, write your thoughts down on a piece of paper and hand it to Gabe at a meeting, or send e-mail directly to the editor.

THE MARKETPLACE

GRINDING STONE. FREE. 2"x21" wet grinding stone, needs some work, excellent for sharpening mower blades and garden tools. Call Joe Pascucci at 631-385-1877.

UNUSED PLANES. I just came into a collection of unused woodworking planes made by Clifton, Lie-Nielsen, Kunz, Lee Valley, Stanley and other makers. These planes are all mint and never used. I also have antique and used woodworking tools for sale. The new tools are priced well below what Garret-Wade sold them

for. Call Bill Hermanek 631-360-1216.



ROLLER STANDS. Two shopmade roller stands, wood, wide feet with levelers, adjustable from 30" to 43", very good condition. \$20/pair. Call Elaine - 631-369-4295.

WOODWORKING SYSTEM. Shopsmith Woodwork-

ing System. All attachments. Excellent condition. Call Dennis Taddeo for prices. 631-543-2256.

PORTER CABLE OMNI-JIG. Porter Cable Omnijig 16" with 1/4" and 1/2" half blind dovetail templates and 1/2" box joint template. \$250. Call Bob at 631-271-0012.

OLD TOOLS. 1. U.S. Govt. Tool Box (maple) dated 1950, 2. 10 wood-handled chisels and gouges for wood turning, 3. Tap and Die set. Little Giant #5 in original wood box. Call Richard Hickey, 631-549-7436.



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