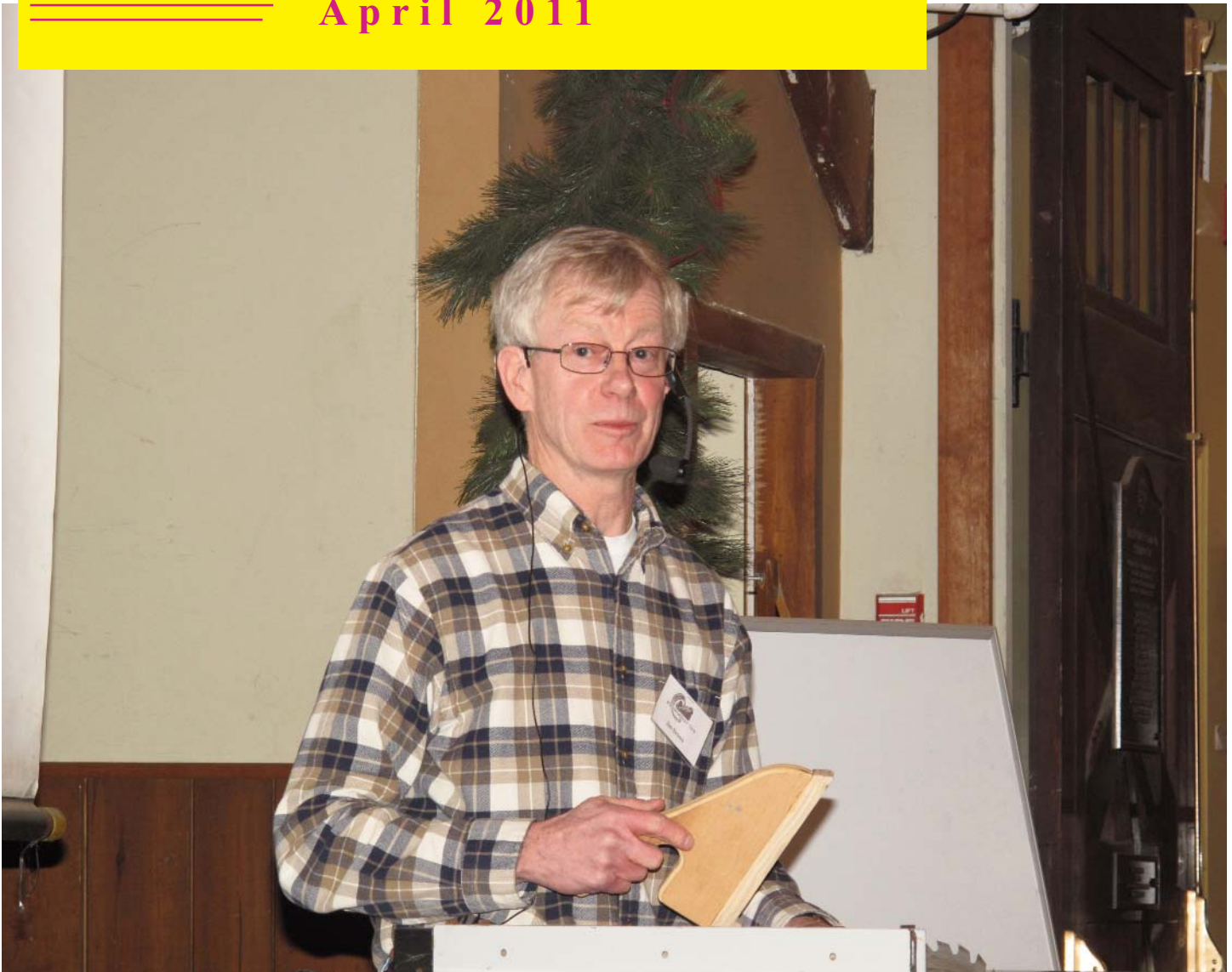


THE
Woodrack
April 2011



JIM BROWN

ON THE TABLESAW

LIW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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<i>Photographer</i>	Jim Macallum
<i>Workshop Coordinator/ Food Critic</i>	Charlie James

President's Message

Mike Daum



Ok, so the bus was stuck in the mud. Was I worried we'd all be stranded here for the night? I admit to imagining 51 LIW members in line for the bathrooms the next morning, but quickly shook this out of my head. After all, look at the company we are comprised of. Brilliant minds from a wide range of backgrounds. I thought, collectively we can conquer the world. Surely we can get a huge bus out of the mud. And we did.

I'll back track a bit to mention we had a great bus ride up to Saratoga Springs to attend the Northeast Woodworkers Association (NWA) 20th annual Showcase. This was the first bus ride in our history of making the trip that we filled the bus to capacity. I would recount the first few hours of the trip, but of course I was asleep minutes after boarding the bus at 6 am (and on-time I might add). After we made the rest stop for breakfast and resumed the journey, I made the most of the opportunity by holding an unscheduled Show Committee meeting with a truly "captive" audience. With new Show Chair Robert Coles, we accomplished the first phase of planning the November 12 and 13 dates of Show 2011. Congratulations and thanks to all on the committee. Note that we are still looking for members to fill positions during this planning phase, so please let it be known you are interested at the April meeting.

We arrived at the City Center right on time, and thanks to Mike Luciano we went right on in with our prepaid tickets. Once inside, the layout of the venue was different due to major renovation completed. Natural light from large windows allowed us to see every project in great detail (much to the chagrin of some of the makers). The feature exhibit was "grand workbenches", which I enjoyed. All were too small for me though. The vendor area was pretty much the same, with attendance consistent to the previous year. LIW Vice-President Bob Urso was there with his Long Island Woodworking Supply, hardly able to speak to me as he raked in the sales. The seminars were on par, and the added attraction this year was the "Totally Turning" exhibition and symposium, which brought up even more LIW members who planned to spend the entire weekend and drove up separately.

True to form, the day's hours seemed like minutes and we were boarding the bus again. Twenty minutes away, we would arrive at member Doug Plotke's new shop/house (in that order) for a catered dinner. We got a tour of the breathtaking property, admiring the post and beam construction of the tractor garage made with reconstructed hand hewn timbers hundreds of years old. Amazing. I think we were all bedazzled with Doug's shop having more square footage than his living space. And the slab floor has radiant heat. Doug asked for

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THIS MONTH:

- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- SECRETARY'S NOTES**
- THE GALLERY**

- SIG NEWS & PHOTOS**
- SSOW**
- TURNERS' GUILD**

- ARTICLES**
- FRENCH POLISHING**
- ROUTER REVIEW**
- SHOP VISIT**

CLUB HOTLINE
(631) 656-5423

The Woodrack

Volume 23 Number 4

Next meeting
Wednesday April 6th 7 PM
Brush Barn

Spike Carlsen, author of
Wood A Splintered
History

**There is NO show and tell for
the April Meeting!!!!**



Secretary's Report

Steve Blakley

The meeting began by announcing that Robert Coles has been approved by the LIW Executive Board to be the Chairperson for the 2011 Show and asked for a vote to ratify Robert by the members in attendance. The vote was unanimous. PLEASE, PLEASE, volunteer this year to help make this year's show one of the best. Your part can be very small, yet very critical, in running the show. It only takes a volunteer a few hours overall to do their part. Contact Robert Coles if you are interested. And remember; start making your projects **NOW!**

Mike reminded everyone that name badges are required to be worn during a meeting. The name badges were culled out for those who did not pay their dues, so if you were not wearing a name tag at the meeting, you were wearing a sign that said, "Hey, I'm not a paying member and I am sucking all the information out of you guys for free." My mother would have said that was not playing nice. This of course did not include the new (prospective) members who can use a "stick on" name badge, replace it in the box and a regular name badge will appear the next meeting. Speaking of new members, last night we were joined by Rich Kittel of Kings Park, Chris Sigeralli of Deer Park, David Haff (Charlie Felson's friend) Brian Coyle (a NYCFD employee from Hicksville) and Brian McKnight. Welcome to all the prospective members and we hope you like what you saw enough to join our group.

Mike mentioned that if you did not get an email link for the Woodrack to see Joe Bottigliere to make sure that your email address was correct. For those who get it via USPS, please see Steve Blakley at the end of the meeting as they were just picked up today.

Steve Eckers reported that he is involved with the Boy Scouts and one of their projects was to send care packages to US Armed Forces personnel in foreign countries. One of the packages that Steve sent out included some small wooden planes for children, so the soldiers could give them out. They were GREATLY appreciated and Steve wanted to let Jim Clancy know that his toy pat-

The Gallery

Bob Schendorf



So I'm taking some time off from writing my "LIW man of the year award" acceptance speech, (the winner still gets a new Cadillac, right?) to do this month's column. This month I will spare you all from the rants and raves of an angry little man and attempt to provide some useful information.

But first, let me acknowledge the club's board. Over the last year I've dealt with them on several occasions, for different reasons. We are very fortunate to have a dedicated group of people who give a lot of time to ensure that this club is the best it can be. Running our club is more complicated than most folks realize, and these guys put in quite an effort to keep it going. So next time you get a chance give a board member a pat on the back and say "thanks"... Including the editor of the newsletter, Daryl. (How's that boss?) Sorry. Seriously these guys do a lot for us and I for one appreciate it.

Ok, on to the gallery. As of this writing I think it is ready and here's how it will work: Each contributor will be referred to as a "maker". When you submit your first piece you need to fill out and sign a consignment agreement. This agreement will cover all future submissions, each submission will be noted on the original agreement.

Your submission then gets logged in to the gallery ledger where you will be asked for your top and bottom price. The two prices give the company some wiggle room to make a sale. You can use the same number for both prices, it's entirely up to you. Your piece and or pieces will then get a serial number which will go on a tag which will be displayed next to your piece. When a client comes in they will be given a "menu" which will be a list of all the pieces in the gallery, which will include a brief description and price. (Which will be your top number plus the amount of the commission). The reason for the menu is we are trying to establish a high end gallery where talented crafts people can get what their work is worth. I know there are still plenty of people who appreciate a unique and well made piece, some are collectors and some just appreciate the finer things. Unfortunately, there will be some uneducated folks who

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tern went international.

Jim Clancy mentioned that Allied Knife sharpening in Lindenhurst does a great job in sharpening table saw blades. Also mentioned was Ridge Carbide and American Saw Works in Medford.

Steve Costello reported that John Keane had some medical issues and is in rehab in Florida...John said he is not yet having a garage sale to get rid of his tools.

Mike mentioned that a friend of Pete Profeta has a 2 year old daughter who has cancer. They are collecting donations of handmade items to raffle off to raise money for medical care. Any donation would be greatly appreciated. Mike also mentioned that the Library is a wealth of information and urged the membership to utilize it.

Mike called for a Membership report and Joe B. said we had 198 paid members thus far. He also reported that 47 members are signed up so far for the trip. There were 4 seats available and three of those were taken before the conversation was over. Richie Zimmerman asked if any non members were on the bus, saying members should be given first choice. Joe replied that the trip was, as in the past, on a first come, first serve basis. Treasurer Mike Luciano reported that last year we were in the red of about \$2500.00, but still remained in the black overall. This year the only outstanding bills we have thus far are insurance and the Saratoga Trip. Doug Plotke (who's workshop the Saratoga Bus trip will be going to after the show, said people such as Chris Schwartz and Charles Bender will be at the barn. It will be a catered, hot meal. There will be coffee and desserts to go. Dinner is at 6P. The SIG's then reported; the SSOW will be working on mailboxes, LISA will be working on inlays and discussing different types of wood, the LIWG's agenda is TBD and the LIC will have a demo on cutting mortise and tenons.

Mike D. mentioned that Bob Schendorf's display case is almost ready for the LIW to show items they want to sell. Bob will get a 20% commission on all sales.

Mike then asked for members who had "Show and Tell". Dan Jackson showed a real nice rolling pin

will see all of these beautiful pieces in the window and assume it's a really cute tchotchke store. We want them to come in and be educated and grow our client base instead of being scared off by a number.

The commission schedule is as follows; twenty percent of the final sales price for LIW members and thirty percent for woodworking projects submitted by non LIW members.

Pricing: You will be responsible for setting your own price. As time goes by and we move some things I will certainly offer insight into what similar items have sold for. But for now, you'll have to do your home work.

Criteria: Integrity is the key. I will accept any piece as long as it's made with integrity. I welcome all genres, and all price ranges.

Project size: We have ample display space with adjustable shelves that range in depth from twelve to sixteen inches. Furniture items will gladly be accommodated and are suggested to fit in a two foot by two foot, foot print and will be accepted and displayed accordingly.

Discounts: As woodworkers, we of all people should appreciate all that goes in to making a beautiful piece. Therefore, we should respect the efforts of our fellow woodworkers and pay their asking price. Of course, members will still receive their club discount on all General Finishes products. (of which it has been said, I have a real knack for stacking)

Security: I've been in this location for nearly five years and have never had a problem. My seventy pound golden retriever, Lee, is usually in the store with me and there is only one way in and out. I was a New York City Police Officer for twenty one years, mostly in Midtown Manhattan including several in which I was in plain clothes catching pick pockets, drug dealers and other assorted thieves and evil doers. I am fully insured. and usually keep a home turned night stick within reach. And my immediate neighbor is a martial arts school.

Project exposure to sunlight: I won't sugar coat it. I have great windows overlooking New York Ave. But glass is a two way street. I have, however recently installed one hundred percent UV repellent shades in the shop. They will go down during the afternoon hours, and up at

Notes from the Secretary continued from page 4

with a Celtic knot in it for his wife; Ace Roman showed how to use a putty knife to make a scraper for hand rails by cutting it on the grinder, how to set a band saw blade perpendicular to the plate by cutting around a square piece of wood and how to cut a piece of wood into thirds by using a ruler.

The donations were collected and interesting objects were handed out.

It was now time for our presenter of the night. Mike introduced one of our own members, Jim Brown, who just happened to win a ribbon at last years LIW show for a cherry cabinet he made. Jim spoke of his background which included 40 years of woodworking but he stated he was here tonight to talk about the basics of tuning up your table saw. Jim spoke about the differences in a contractors saw (which he owned for some 30 years) and a cabinet saw, which he owns for the past 10 years or so. The big difference that Jim stressed was that the cabinet saw was easier to tune up because you can just take the top off, while the contractors saw was harder to get at the adjustments from underneath.

Concentrating on the cabinet saw Jim reported that there were two issues that drove him to the particular model he has. One was dust collection (that all cabinet saws have over contractor saws) and the other was a riving knife, which at the time, not all table saws had. Some items that Jim touched on was putting the wings on the table saw and getting them level and straight. Cast iron is like wood and can move. It needs to be adjusted and Jim uses brass shims to get the wings on correctly. He uses a precision straight edge from Lee Valley, one of his most trusted tools.

Another important tool is a dial indicator (calibrator) to make sure the blade is in alignment with the miter gauge. This can be done by securing the dial indicator to the miter gauge and putting it against the blade. Mark the blade with a magic marker and move that blade back so the mark is at the back of the blade. Now move the dial indicator forward and make sure that the blade is in alignment. If the alignment is within 1/1000 of an inch Jim said that is acceptable. A clean cut will leave less teeth marks in the wood, you will not get the dust coming up the top of the saw, it will reduce splitting (especially on plywood) and reduce binding and kickbacks.

For a contractors saw, there is an item called a con-

The Gallery continued from page 4

night, with a light on the place should shine like a jewel.

Payment: I accept cash, checks and now have a credit card machine.

Payments to makers: It is our intention to notify makers by email when a sale is made. Depending on volume this may or may not happen with every sale. When a sale occurs, the maker will receive a corporate check for the gross sales price, less sales tax and commission within ten business days of the sale.

Taxes: The company will collect and pay New York State sales tax on all items. The maker will be responsible for any income tax liabilities.

So there you have it. Any other questions please don't hesitate to shoot me an email (schendorf@aol.com) or give a call to the shop, 631-470-7507. Right now, the operation is pretty much a one man band, so when the official announcement is made that we are accepting submissions, please call before you make the trip to bring your piece in



tractor saw pal which is about \$20.00 to help align the blade. Fence adjustments can be made with the screws in the fence, and the dial indicator.

Jim uses an Incra miter gauge, as he likes the close tolerances. He does not believe that stock miter gauges are the best choice. He also STRONGLY suggests that if you buy the Incra miter gauge or any other one with an aluminum or metal fence, that you replace it with wood. Jim does not like metal and moving saw blades at all! Some safety features that Jim spoke about were an out feed table which should be at least 1/2 the length of the piece you are cutting; push sticks (wood - not plastic) and keeping it CLOSE to the (non cutting) side of the fence for availability; standing to the side of the wood when pushing it through the blade; cross cut sleds, using MDO instead of MDF because it is stronger and lighter; right tilt verses left tilt saws; setting your stops for 45 degrees and 90 degrees when setting up your table saw; drafting angles being good for quick check alignments; tenon jigs; stop blocks; auxiliary fences; dado shims; lubrications; sliding bevels to duplicate angles, and zero tolerance plates. It was a really great presentation and on behalf of the LIW. I want to thank Jim for doing such a fantastic job in showing us all the basics of table saw set ups!





Turners' Guild

Mike Josiah

The March turners meeting was held on 3/10 and led by President Steve Fulgoni. As discussed last meeting, there are a few turning events coming up:

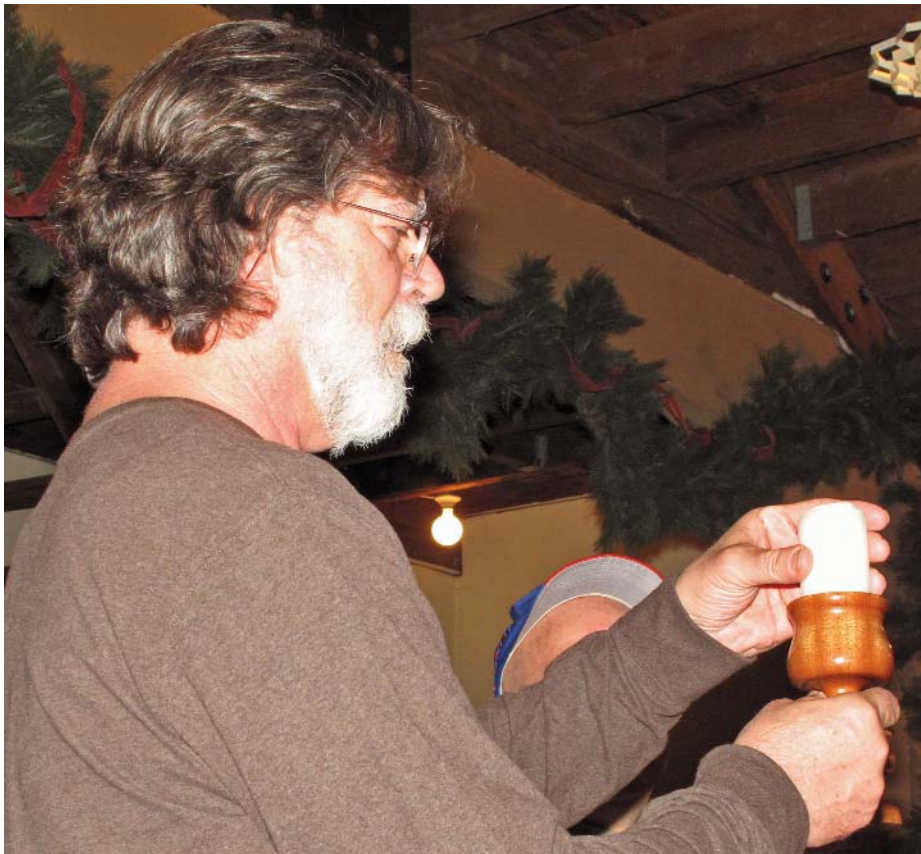
Totally Turning in Saratoga Springs 3/26-27

National Turning Symposium in Minneapolis/St. Paul: June 24th-26th 2011.

Tonight's meeting was on spindle turning. A short demonstration was given by Steve, and then members went to their lathes and practiced turning various spindle techniques. It was a great way to try different tools and see how they work for you.

I had notes on quite a bit more, but they were accidentally thrown out so this is all I have, Sorry!

Steve would really like more members to bring in their lathes each meeting. It is his plan to have mini round robins in each meeting so we can all share what we know and practice a bit on what we just learned.







Secret Society of Woodcarvers

Steve Blakley

There was no January meeting of the SSOW so in February we had two meetings. This is a combination of both meetings.

The group project, should you decide to do it, is a mailbox. If you don't want to do it, you can always "free carve". Wood for the mailbox is \$3.00 and a pattern was emailed to everyone. There was a guest Peter Stolz who joined us for one of our meetings. Pete was interested in carving and wanted to see what we do.

Steve Blakley spoke about the few videos and the Book the SSOW has for anyone interested. For "Show and Tell" there was a Chair back by Barry Saltsberg; a mailbox by Bob Urso, Iris Zimmerman, Joe, Matt and Tim Reardon men; Frank Napoli showed some spoons and bowls.

We then carved and actually made a lot more chips than this report has words.



Club Meeting Photos



French Polishing

Mac Simmons

French polishing is one of the classic finishes for wood. Although French polishing came to the fore in the late 19th century, the underlying premise of using shellac has been used for nearly 4000 years. In this article we offer advice on one particular French polishing technique, although there are certainly many variations.

Shellac is sold as a ready to use coating in most paint and home improvement stores and is usually sold as either a clear (blond) or amber (orange) color. These ready to use variations come pre-mixed with Denatured Alcohol. It is also possible to purchase “pure” shellac flakes that you can mix yourself. The advantage of this latter approach is that it has a longer shelf life than the premixed variations as once the alcohol and flakes are mixed together the wax has life-span of about 12 months (depending on the temperature).

Where it comes from...

Shellac resins come from the *Coccus Lacca* bug, indigenous to Thailand and India, and are actually the insect’s resinous secretions. Ironically, for a finish that has such a dubious start in life, Shellac has many applications in today’s world. The resin provides a non-toxic, thermoplastic coating that is approved by the food and drug industries as a coating on fruits (where the resin prevents molds and spores) and drugs (where it acts as a slow release enteric coating on many of today’s medicines. The Shellac has excellent adhesive properties and can be polished to a high gloss or rubbed out to a satin or flat sheen as desired.

The “pure” Shellac flakes come in various types of flake and, as standard contains a natural wax. However, while the inclusion of this wax can make sanding easier, in some cases the shellac does not adhere to the wood surface too well. To address this issue, you can also buy a de-waxed version of some Shellac’s.

When mixing - or buying - shellac you should look for the number of “cuts.” Each pound of Shellac flakes that is added to one gallon of Denatured Alcohol equates to one pound cut. So, for example, if you were to dissolve three pounds of flakes into one gallon of Denatured

Alcohol, the result would be a three-pound cut. Normally Shellac is not used over a three pound cut, but some manufacturers sell “ready to use” four or five pound cuts. These should be reduced to a three-pound cut (or less) before application. Note: if you are spraying the Shellac you should typically use a two-pound cut, but do so at your own discretion having consulted the instructions proved with your spray equipment.

Applying the base coat

When first learning the art of French polishing, we recommend that you use a ready for use Shellac. You will also need to buy a bottle of Denatured Alcohol and a good paintbrush, as it will be necessary to brush on three thin coats of Shellac. Most ready to use Shellacs are three-pound cuts and you should reduce this down to two lots of 1 1/2 pound cut by doubling the amount of Denatured Alcohol.

To begin the process start on a clean piece of wood to test the shellac by using a brush to apply the Shellac to the wood ensuring that you apply a good even coat to the entire surface. This first thin coat (the “spit” coat) will dry very quickly under most conditions. [Note: If it does not dry to the touch within an hour or two then the Shellac is probably bad and should be replaced. In this situation, remove the sticky Shellac surface by applying some Denatured Alcohol on a clean cloth.]

After the first coat of Shellac is dry, then apply a second coat. Then, once that coat is dry, then apply the third coat. Once you have added all three coats, leave the Shellac to dry overnight. The next day, use a 600 wet and dry sandpaper with water to smooth out the Shellac and then wipe off the sanding dust with a tack cloth. You now have your base coat ready for the final French polishing.

Preparing the polishing pad

Mixing the French polish used within the pad comes down to an individual’s choice. When first learning we recommend that you continue to use the 1 1/2-pound cut that we used to create the base coat above. However, as you become more proficient at this technique you may wish to experiment with lesser and greater cuts.

Take a soft, lint free cloth - such as cheesecloth - and fold it into a ball (called the “pad” or “rubber.” Now apply the Shellac to the pad so that it is moist, but not dripping, with Shellac. Tap the pad in the palm of your hand in order to disperse the Shellac; the aim is to make sure that the entire front of the pad is damp. We recommend that you consider wearing surgical-type rubber gloves before

beginning this process, as it can be quite messy.

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French Polishing

The best way to comprehend the act of French polishing is to imagine that the wood's surface (with the base coat on it) is an airport landing field and that the pad is a plane. What you are going to do is to practice allowing the plane (the pad) to lightly touch down on the field (the wood or coating) and then immediately take off again, without stopping or even slowing down (if you were to stop you would damage the base coat). As you "land" slide the pad across the wood's surface and then take off again, working from left to right and then from right to left, overlapping each stroke as you apply it. Slowly work up from the bottom to the top and then start at the bottom again, ensuring that you have enough Shellac on the pad so that the strokes are uniform. You can add a little lemon oil or cream polish to the pad to help make it slide easier (although you should be very sparing when using either one of these lubricants).

Once you are satisfied with the wood's finish, place the pad in a clean jar and close the lid tightly. Allow the Shellac to dry for at least a couple of hours and then take out the damp pad from the jar and start padding again. Add a little Denatured Alcohol to the pad and tap the pad into the palm of your hand to disperse the alcohol to the front of the pad. Then "lightly pad over the wood's surface again. This process is known as "spiriting out" and serves to remove the oil as well as further evening out the Shellac finish. The result will be a far glossier and much smoother finish.

There are times when furniture is finished in different sheens, when hand finishing is the technique being used instead of spraying; it is common to use pumice or rottenstone to adjust or to match different low or high gloss sheens especially on restorations. You can match almost any sheen with using various grades of white pumice stone, and for the high gloss sheens then follow up with grayish colored rottenstone, which is used to increase the gloss of the coatings. Another option you can use for satin rubbed finishes is 4/0 steel wool with rub cut oil, for high gloss sheens you can use rubbing compounds. I suggest that you first finely sandpaper the coatings before you do any sheen adjustments, as the smoother the coating the better the final finish will look.

Mac Simmons is a freelance writer, and a 50-year veteran of the furniture finishing, refinishing and restoration trades. Mac has written and had published over one hundred finishing articles for several woodworking magazines in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Germany.

Mac now has two finishing E-Books available on CD's, the price is \$29.95 for each one of the CD's, this includes the P&H. you can mail your check to Mac Simmons PO Box 121 Massapequa, N.Y. 11758. You can also order the CD's by going to his web site. www.macsimmons.com and ordering through PAY PAL

President's Message continued from page 2

recommendations for power tools to outfit the new shop. We'll have a great time being his decorator.

The catered layout had long lines, and I noticed some members grabbed cookies and large servings. "This is only the appetizer course" I mention to them. And then the news came. The bus driver(s) tried to turn around on soft ground instead of the compacted earth. Rear wheels stuck. Many of us pondered the dilemma, and Doug had his son call a wrecker to tow it. He certainly didn't want 51 cranky people using his bathrooms in the morning. Yet within the hour, ingenuity prevailed. And, manpower. Call off the wrecker! Yes, about 15 people, including invited guest Popular Woodworking editor Chris Schwarz, found a spot and pushed that bus. It was like an Extreme Makeover: Home Edition moment. But that was a former story.

Now that our appetite's were worked up again, we enjoyed a great dinner and dessert, and headed back uneventfully. I had to sleep off a few Gin and Tonics the guys were feeding me (in an effort to get some dirt), but I remained composed. I think. Thanks again to Joe Bottigliere, Jim Heick, Mike Luciano, and Doug Plotke for their efforts in making this a truly memorable LIW event!



The smile on Joe Bottigliere's face says it all, on our annual trip to the woodworking show held by the Northeastern Woodworker's Association, in Saratoga Springs, NY. Ably coordinated by Joe and Jim Heick, the trip was its usual success. Joe's ticketing policy is so famous, it's the basis of this famous film: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNseba-wHUc>

After the show, we convened at Doug Plotke's beautiful new barn, for drinks, dinner and dessert





with Christopher Schwarz, editor of Popular Woodworking. What kind of day would it be without additional entertainment? After we arrived, our (really comfortable Southampton Jitney) bus was stuck in the mud. Joe, as befitting a coordinator, was worried that now there would be more coordinating to coordinate, such as how would we all sleep in that barn with only one bathroom? However, some quick work with a shovel and some gravel, abetted by mighty Grandma Iris Zimmerman, who single handedly pushed the bus to safety, and allowed us to get home. The bus pulled into the Huntington Park and Ride at about 12:45 AM, making it the longest (we left 6AM the previous morning) trip to Saratoga ever. Of course, why wouldn't we want to break the record?





Shop Visit Ed Maloney and Mark Suesser

Mike Daum

You and I most likely learned the basics of woodworking in junior and senior high school. It is justified to believe that woodworking in the public school system is first attributed to the Educational Sloyd, a system of handicraft-based education started by Uno Cygnaeus in Finland in 1865. Its purpose was to develop the brain in promoting hand-eye coordination, problem-solving, character building, and industriousness. In America, the introduction to Sloyd is traced to the North Bennet Street School in Boston incorporated in 1885, and at the Baron De Hirsch Trade School in NYC. Since cabinet and furniture making was primarily hand-crafted, the popularity of woodworking in the school systems was great, insuring skilled craftspersons with jobs.

This system branched into the Industrial Arts; wood shop class, metal shop, auto shop, etc. As technology advanced, the evolvement of the principles of Sloyd are evidenced in the modern school system's program which is now called "Tech Ed", or Technology Education. Whereas the Industrial Arts taught the process of building, repair, and maintenance, Tech Ed incorporates so much more. In fact, I was not prepared for what I discovered while recently visiting the shops of two LIW members who are instructors in the Three Village School district in Setauket. I fully expected to see a typical woodshop class at Gelinas Junior High School, with student projects consisting of the usual coat racks, wall shelves, and simple designs that were made from plans handed out by the teacher. What I found were projects that involve critical and cognitive thinking in their design and construction, utilizing skills taught in other academic areas including science, math, social science, and computer science.

Ed Moloney has been a Tech Ed teacher at Gelinas for



Gelinas shop with Mark and Ed



Gelinas shop with Ed

two years. He and his dad John joined the LIW in October 2005. You'd probably recognize John as the "greeter" at our annual Show, receiving the entrants with a kind smile as he passes out the Show program. Ed is involved in the LIW Turning group as well, and recently did a presentation on how to make a "celtic knot" at their monthly meeting. Ed grew up in Smithtown and now lives in Lake Grove with life time love Carolyn. His background includes the IT field, where he worked with Intel for some time. Now his interest is in educating our youth. "There is a newer standard which is tied to all projects that students complete", says Ed. "It is known as STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math."

For several years, many school districts on Long Island have recognized that studies show American students are not prepared for the work force or college. Young people need more paths to career success; there is too much reliance on a college education that steers students to office cubicles or socially accepted positions that are not the objective of the individual. Ed agrees and adds, "The percentage of students that become professional athletes, musicians, artists...is minimal", he says. "Our pro-

gram develops critical thinking and life skills that last a life time." And the remediation rate is at an all time high. He gives me a tour of the shop; fully-equipped for all phases of woodworking, and an emphasis on safety. The Sawstop cabinet saw is prominently displayed, with it's unsurpassed safety feature of instantly stopping the blade in the event of accidental contact. "The department recycles materials from other sources here. We reuse cabinets and supplies from other classrooms, and material salvaged from the landfill or donated from other shops. There is great emphasis on being "green"."

What is all the more impressive is that the Tech Ed program is seemingly the life organ of the building. "We are involved in clubs, theater, musicals, set building, and school activities all year long", Ed says. "The kids love to work on these projects, and are quite proud of their accomplishments and inclusion". This pride was easily witnessed during our annual Show last November, when Ed introduced me to the students who visited the OBVR Fairgrounds to see their projects on display - many with ribbons of commendation from the juried competition. It was clear that they were grateful for the opportunity to



Gelinas shop

showcase their work, and hopefully they will be inspired to continue woodworking in their future.

My next shop visit in the Three Village School District was to Ward Melville High School on Old Town Road in Setauket. This institution has sentimental value to me; I graduated from Melville some time ago. Although my woodshop class experience was in the district's Murphy JHS, I remember visiting Melville's shop class often - I took three years of auto mechanic classes right next door. I'm greeted by Mark Suesser and Ed Moloney on a Sunday afternoon, impressed by the dedication to their vocation. Mark Suesser is a Tech Ed instructor here, having taught at Gelinas for many years before the opportunity to teach at the High School opened up for him. His vacancy at Gelinas prompted Ed Moloney to fill the position. The two colleagues became friends, and John introduced Mark to our group. He has been a member since 2009. Residing now in St James, Mark studied art, became Tech certified and taught in Huntington for a

while. I'm told he has just built a home shop, and I'll visit that shop another day.

Through the school entrance on the auditorium side, and right smack in your way as you get past the doors, stands a tall glass hexagonal showcase. Guess what's in it. Beautiful works in wood. I'm extremely impressed - not just with the quality of work, but the fact that these projects get such valuable real estate in the school hall. Mark had his students exhibit their projects at our Show for the last two years at OBVR. Their work was remarkable. Of the dozens of schools invited to participate in our Show (thanks to Frank Kiefer), only Ed and Mark's classes took the opportunity so far to involve their students.

"The Tech Ed curriculum is much more intensified here at the High School", Mark says. "There are four programs in Woodworking Technology, three requiring prerequisites of the consecutive programs." The culmination of the programs covers nearly every aspect of



Ward Melville
Display Case



woodworking, including the finishing process. They have an impressive spray booth to prove it. Mark and Ed show me the CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine. "Grants paid for the new state of the art technology equipment for the Tech Ed labs", say Mark. Besides the CNC, Sawstop table saws, and other essential machinery in the wood shop, the other tech ed classrooms boast complex computers and network systems, blueprint machines, and my favorite - a 3D printer. Mark hands me a small crescent wrench made of a plastic polymer. "This is a prototype that was printed right here in this machine. Try the gear." It operates beautifully. "The students can learn these skills in Mechatronics, which incorporates their standard math and science curriculums, among others, and includes CAD, machining in wood or metal, computer science, robotics, and engineering."

My senses are reeling now. Feelings of envy I'm trying to contain. If only we had these opportunities in these grade levels. And this is where I learn of the bad news. "We've gotten to this point, and are now in jeopardy of

having it taken away", Ed tells me. We are all aware of cutback proposals sweeping the nation, and impacting the state education programs. Says Mark, "Students have the right to obtain all 28 learning standards, which includes the Arts and Tech Ed." They tell me that the budget cuts are reportedly including the Tech Ed programs. "We have to make the parents aware of the importance of this program. The parents whose kids have gone through Tech Ed are so thankful for what their child learned", Ed says. Hearing this reminds me of the Confucius saying; "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember. I do and I understand".

There is a concept known as "Wisdom of the Hands". I feel that is what "Sloyd" was trying to impart. The closest to this in today's youth generation is "wisdom of the thumbs" for all the video game controlling. If our kids are not even afforded the option of learning to use hand skills, we risk losing traditional methods of woodworking to automated technologies. This is not a bad thing in a business sense, however it is proven that the mind to hand connection is essential to proper brain development and motor skills. You just can't get that from a good typing class. If indeed the Tech Ed programs are reduced or eliminated, it will be solely up to us, hobbyist and professional woodworkers, to pass along our knowledge to our youth, and hope that our legacy will continue through them. Please support your local school district's Tech Ed programs; attend PTA meetings, write your superintendent, or legislator.





Router Review DeWalt DW611 PK

Matt Stern

Did you ever need to use a plunge router, but a traditional-sized one was too big for the job? Until now, you had to either use the low-end units which cost around \$99 but are a bit too flimsy to plunge with, or the high-end Micro-Fence that's as tight as a drum but costs close to \$500 when you include the cost of a trim router. Well now, DeWalt is offering their DW611PK, a dual-base trim router for around \$209.

I was pleasantly surprised at this mid-price entry into the plunge-base trim router market. It's beautifully made, and is easy to use. The DW611PK includes both fixed and plunge bases, which are a snap to switch. There are several other nice features, such as two bright LEDs which shine on your work through the clear bases. They are mounted to the base of the motor assembly, so there are no wires or switches to fiddle with (like on the Micro-Fence), nor batteries to replace. The DeWalt also has a two-prong polarized plug and a nice, long power cord (8'). And, per their web site, "The product comes with a three-year limited warranty, one-year free service contract and 90-day money-back guarantee."

Interestingly, DeWalt's sister company, Porter-Cable, also released their fixed-base Compact Router (Model 450) and fixed/plunge base combination kit (Model 450PK), both of which seem to be clones of the DeWalt with only a couple of minor differences.

General:

This model is a bit larger in diameter than most traditional trim routers, which I liked very much – it felt good in my hands (note: I am 6'4", and have rather large hands). And at only about 1/4" taller than its competition, it's not at all top-heavy; the larger "D"-shaped fixed base makes it quite stable.

To switch bases, you just unclick the motor clamp, slide the motor unit up and out of the base, then slide it into the other base and click the clamp. This takes about 5 seconds, and goes very smoothly.

The power seemed adequate and virtually the same as my other two trim routers. The variable speed, which runs the router from 16,000 to 27,000 RPM works nicely, and includes a soft-start, so there's no "torquing" of the unit (which my older, single speed trim router still does). The

variable speed controller also adjusts the power automatically as the work requires in order to maintain the desired speed. For example, if you start to feed too aggressively, the controller boosts the power; similarly, if you back off on



the feed rate, the motor still adjusts accordingly to keep the set speed. The factory rates the unit at 1-1/4 HP with a draw of 7 amperes.

I didn't care for the power switch; neither its location, nor its operation. Although it's sealed to keep dust out (which is a good feature), I found it rather difficult to use – I had to make a concerted effort in order to operate it. And the location is not conducive to turning the unit on and off while you are holding the router for use – you

have to use your other hand to operate the switch.

The spindle lock is excellent. Rather than having a single detent (like most other routers), there are 12 detents, so it's easy to find a stop quickly without having to rotate the shaft around and around. Secondly, you can use these multiple detents like a "ratchet": tighten the wrench as far as it will go within the base cutout, then instead of removing and reapplying the wrench, you simply let go of the spindle lock, rotate the wrench back to its starting position, press the lock, and continue as before. This ratcheting action did not seem to work when loosening, probably because there was not enough friction on the collet's threads to make the spindle turn; the nut just moved back and forth.

I found the power cord's location a poor choice, as it's 180 degrees opposite the spindle lock (coming out the rear near the top). What this means is that with either base, when changing bits, you can't lay the router on its back, making the spindle lock and wrench cutouts easily accessible. Instead, you will have to either lay it on its side, or on its back with the power cord hanging off the bench so as not to damage it. Furthermore, when using the fixed base, the back is rounded, so you have to orient the router on the proper side in order for the square front portion to keep the unit from rolling on the bench when tightening or loosening. I would have opted for the wire coming straight out the top (upwards) to avoid this.

The kit includes a typical stamped wrench which I found to be adequate. However, I was surprised that no edge guide was included. DeWalt's website does offer two different models; a stamped steel unit (for about \$10), and a "micrometer style" unit for about \$37.00. Unfortunately, both sites listed on DeWalt's page showed that they were out of stock. The unit reportedly also has an optional dust collector, and a base centering cone.

I was also impressed that both bases are held on by round-head screws. What this means is that you can adjust the base to the exact center of the spindle if need be, for precise operations. The flat head screws found on competitors' models don't allow any adjustment to the base.

The noise level seemed average to me for a unit of this size and power, and there was no perceivable vibration. The collet operation was disappointing – other brands tighten and release crisply; this one felt more "gummy"

in both tightening and loosening the bit and didn't seem to have a "positive" feeling when fully tightened or loosened.

The instructions are quite clear and easy to follow, along with good pictures. The usual safety precautions are spelled out, which is always good as a refresher to the experienced woodworker, or very informational to the novice.

The Fixed Base

The fixed base is nicely made – it's shaped like an elongated "D". The front is half-round, and the back is square, offset from center to allow more of the base to be on the workpiece for more stability. To adjust the depth of cut, simply unsnap the lock, turn the depth ring the desired amount, then snap the lock. A full turn of the ring moves the depth 1/2", so adjustments are not only quick and easy, but can be accurate. A nice touch is that the ring has markings from 0 to 1/4" in both directions, so it's very easy to either raise or lower the router by small amounts. In addition, zero setting the ring couldn't be easier, as it can be rotated to the needed setting. The fit is snug enough to keep the ring where you set it, yet not too difficult to turn when you need to. Unfortunately, I found the width of the ring to be almost too small to be usable; you can only view about 0.040 of the ring and the numbers are barely visible. I'm not talking about small numbers here, the numbers are practically hidden by the height adjusting ring. I would opt for a thicker number ring, probably closer to 1/8" wide so the numbers are more visible. Also, the ring has about 1/32 of backlash (in height); so to avoid this you have to move the ring past where you want to go, then sneak back up on your setting.

The base fits my hand well, and has cast textured "bumps" in order to keep a good grip. My only issue with the design is that you cannot reach the on/off switch from the held position.

The Plunge Base

Again, switching bases is a snap, and there's a bottom stop for the motor to rest on so that the motor doesn't go down too far and ruin your work. It also means that if you happen to remove the motor for some fixed-base work, then replace the motor back on the plunge base, it will return exactly to the same position it was in. The two plunge pillars are sturdy and nicely finished despite their odd appearance – they are of different diameters.

However, the plunging operation was smooth with no perceivable canting (when one side moves further down than the other causing the motor unit and hence the bit to no longer be perpendicular to the workpiece).

The DW611PK includes a typical stepped turret stop, so you can rout up to four pre-determined increments, or one custom setting with its own height screw and locknut. Fine adjusting the depth is done by a traditional locking rod with a screw adjuster. For example, to zero set your router depth, with the router unplugged and on a flat surface, gently plunge until the bit touches your work surface, then loosen the plunge rod locknut, press the rod down until the bottom touches the turret stop (presumably the highest one), then lock the rod and slide the depth indicator collar down. Unfortunately, this collar is made inaccurately, and its zero setting is a bit more than 1/32" off. I was lucky to find a washer of just about the right thickness to correct this. The knurled bottom knob of the stop rod can be rotated in both directions to accomplish fine adjustment. The manual states that one turn provides an adjustment of 5/128" or .040. I don't understand their choice, as one would generally expect a more "standard" fraction, such as 1/16" or so, but that's a minor point. The turret stops are unfortunately spaced at 1/4" height intervals, which I found to be way too large for trim router work. My traditional-sized plunge routers have steps of only 1/8"; and they have more powerful motors, a 1/2" collet, and a much bigger base.

Like all plunge routers, the DeWalt has a plunge lock, so you can hold the router in either the down or up position (or anything in between). The lock moved smoothly, albeit there was a slight 5 degree backlash in its movement. What I also found odd is that, this lock does not automatically return to the "locked" position upon releasing it, it kind of stays in the middle, which is a "mostly locked" position. To truly lock the depth, you must move the arm completely to the right.

I was, however, pleased to see that this base also accepts standard universal bushings, so you can easily use the router with various guides and jigs.

Feedback from the Manufacturer

To be fair, I asked Bill Harman, DeWalt Router Product Manager for some answers. Here's what he had to say:

"1) The power of the unit is greater than any other trim router, the closest competitor is at 1HP Max, so a mini-

imum of 25% improvement in power for heavier applications like stepped dados or heavy edge profiling.

2) The switch operation is a tradeoff that we made to ensure the dust seal and life of operation. I've had mine for about 9 months now and have become used to the functionality, but fair comment on the initial operation, but this was the rationale for why we did it this way.

3) The power cord location choice was specifically done for bit change. Most users we profiled take the base off of the router and flip the router on its top cap when changing bits as opposed to laying the unit on its side. As such we went with the cordset out the back of the tool vs. out the top.

4) The adjustment ring is an interesting discussion as the small size in readability was specifically done as a trade-off to having the protrusion on the user's hand when operating. Since most users we found match profiles and eyeball adjustments vs. dialing to a specific depth, we chose this option over the having a more awkward hand positioning.

6) The machining of the Depth collar on the plunge was a good catch by Matt and has since been addressed with the manufacturing team.

I think this covers off some of the challenges that Matt had with the product and explains some of the tradeoffs we go through everyday in product development."

The Bottom Line

This router has been around for several months and the fixed-base-only version (DW611) is available from many dealers. Oddly, the DW611PK (dual-base kit) is still unavailable from DeWalt's web site (or any other as of March 2011), even though the dual-base kit is what makes this unit stand out from the rest of the market. I also found it odd that the "big brother" kits, each with fixed and plunge bases, the DW616PK (1-3/4 HP) and DW618PK (2-1/2HP) sell for within \$10 of the DW611PK.

Despite the minor points I have raised, all-in-all I think this is a well made router and it's perfectly placed (and priced) between the low-end plunge routers and the high-end precision base. Overall, I rate this kit 3-1/2 out of 5 handplanes.





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