

The Scrap Pile

Monthly Newsletter for Woodworkers

from Charles Neil Woodworking

Issue #2

April 2016

Well, it's April Fool's Day, but you won't find any pranks in our newsletter!

You will find a lot of different information in our newsletter each month. Articles pertaining to woodworking, furniture making, finishing, tools and a little bit about what's happening at our workshop in the Shenandoah Valley. We will also share things that we think might be interesting to our readers whether directly related to woodworking or not. We hope you enjoy our new format which you are now able to download, save and print. We received a lot of good feedback from our first issue, we certainly welcome your feedback.

A Word from Charles

Every class is different and they all have their own challenges. One of the main ones is never knowing the student's ability. You can ask and screen all you want but ultimately, until you get into the class, you just don't know.

I am often asked, "Do you think I can do this class?" I simply tell them I have no idea. It's always been the case that you will get a novice or two and the more experienced folks will always step up and help them. Makes for a good learning experience.

In the Bombe class we have going right now, yes, a bombe, just the lower case, we have two who are novices, well, not any more. We took care of that, quick, fast and in a hurry. I Love It!



Continuing Woodworking Education

Anyone who wishes to find out about "woodworking" needs only to do a simple Google search. The internet is full of information, as well as the opportunity to read magazines online, watch YouTube videos, ask or comment on forums, or visit various blogs. It's a great place to start. As a woodworker seeking knowledge to improve your skills, it still always comes down to hands-on experience.

There are many woodworking experts who offer classes around the country. [Charles Neil](#), [Roy Underhill](#) and [Mary May](#) are just a few. Yes, you can find these schools and classes via the internet, and watch countless hours of video, but what you can't find on the internet is the hands-on experience which, when paired with the instruction of a Master, can take your skills from "book smart" to "workshop smart".

"It's one thing to look at videos, but another to go through the process and see it first-hand with your own eyes, being taught by a true master. An in-house class gives you a clearer understanding of what you're doing and takes away the guesswork of 'Am I doing this properly?'" -Giovanni, Canada

Becoming a woodworker is a skilled craft. Every minute spent in the workshop is time spent learning and enhancing your skills. It is important that you are patient, and consider that your woodworking is a process on a journey to an end result. Looking back at some of your first pieces, you can hopefully recognize

how your skills have improved, and your process has refined itself through time. Is your goal to just build a piece of furniture, or to find satisfaction through the growth you achieve with your hobby? Are you willing to invest your time, talent, and financial resources into your own personal growth?

You'll only progress so much learning on your own. We encourage you to check out local woodworking clubs and guilds, and take courses as they are available through Community Colleges, Tech/Vocational Schools, through local stores that may be sponsoring a class, or find other in-person classes online via sites like <http://www.woodworking-news.com/woodworking-classes/>. And of course, we offer several in-shop classes throughout the year as well. Our most popular one is the Finishing class, and no amount of video will correct your spray technique. Having Charles watch you spray and adjust your



technique can give you confidence in yourself and the knowledge you need to go from Hobbyist to Craftsman. For those who sell their finished

work, you'll find your customers are willing to pay more for your better pieces, and you can easily recover the investment you make into your skills.

"If you want a more structural, individualized approach, you must take one of Charles's hands on, in-house classes. Not only are these classes

educational, they are thoroughly entertaining and worth every penny of their cost." - David, Ohio

Our "Mastering Woodworking" show subscribers often tell us how great it's been to learn from Charles every Thursday. Crystal has filmed 300+ webisodes and jokes that in theory, she's a Master Woodworker. But she doesn't know how to turn on the table saw. That's the difference - seeing vs. doing with hands-on instruction. Taking a live class, learning from mistakes you make, and knowing how to get yourself out of trouble as it comes up is an invaluable tool for anyone who seeks to be a craftsman.

"First off, the show is excellent and worth every penny. But when you build a project with Charles, in person, you're going to make mistakes. 10 students will make at least 10 mistakes. And you'll see how Charles Neil works through and overcomes all of them." - John, New York

Taking classes does mean a financial and time investment in your hobby or business. But there are so many benefits that can take you beyond "just another woodworker". You have the opportunity to learn from masters of the trade. Techniques that never seem to make it into a book, a video, or an article. A video makes it appear easier than it is, but videos done by the best in the business often have the benefit of years of practice. They don't necessarily show those "oops" moments, or the craftsman takes it for granted that he or she has done this hundreds of times and their skills are on a level beyond where you may be at in your woodworking. By working right alongside them, learning in a correct and safe way, you

have the opportunity to gain confidence in your own skills. And being around the other woodworkers in the class generates a fraternal atmosphere and camaraderie. You become friends for life. Through the extensive, intense, exhausting days, you may even find your deep passion for woodworking, and an escape from your everyday stress and responsibility. It becomes a vacation.



"You can do woodworking on your own for several years and not learn as much as what you can learn here in just a week." - Jason, Minnesota

So where do you start? Look locally for classes, and check out our schedule for this year to see if there is a class offered you would be interested in taking. Our students become our friends, and we love getting to know each person on an individual basis. If you're looking for a specific class and can't find it offered anywhere, contact us and ask about getting one scheduled. Charles also offers week-long private classes for those who wish to have his undivided attention to work on a specific project.

We still have a few spots available in upcoming classes,

[Click Here to Check Them Out.](#)

'APPRECIATION' DRAWING

Each month we randomly draw three names from our newsletter subscribers and send them a great woodworking item, compliments of [Woodcraft](#) and Charles Neil Woodworking.

This month's winners are:

Wayne N., Kent, OH

Russell C., Pittsburgh, PA

Laurence P, Cumberland, VA

Each winner will receive the following gifts:

Wayne, you will receive a [Woodcraft 16-Pocket Tool Bag](#)



Russell, for you, we have a [WoodRiver Max Awl](#)



Our third winner, Laurence, we will be sending you a [Veneer Variety Pack](#).



WOODCRAFT®

Using Screws from the Outside In?

Problem: You are working on a project, such as a bookcase and you want to add strength by screwing from the outside of the bookcase through the end of the shelf that sits in a dado but you know that sometimes a wood plug or using filler does not say 'fine furniture.'

Charles suggests that you try a method he has used many, many times, in various circumstances in his fine furniture.

The secret is to use a trim head screw. A trim head screw has a low profile like a finish nail but the holding power of a screw.



They are available from woodworking supply stores as well as box stores. The difference being the lengths that may be available at a local store.

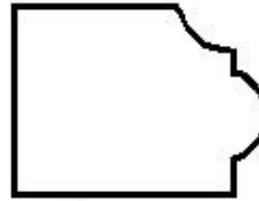


When Charles uses them, he sinks the trim head about 1/4" deep into wood and then makes a square peg as he would if he were actually pegging the piece. Tap.... Tap....

Tap.... saw it flush, sand and it looks great!

Charles Neil Custom Profile Bit

Last month re ran an article on the Custom Profile Signature Bit. The order was placed on March 15th and for those of you who placed a pre-order, we expect the bits to arrive from the manufacturer around mid to late May. We will ship them as soon as they arrive.



If you did not pre-order one, there will be a few available when this order arrives. They won't stay in inventory long, you can place an order now that will ship when they arrive if you are interested.

[Order Profile Bit](#)



Despite Your Best Effort

Have you ever noticed that often times, the more you “fuss” over something, doing everything possible to ensure everything is perfect, it just goes south, and the thing you quickly threw together comes out flawless. Am I the only one who has experienced this?

I could write woodworking horror stories forever. I think most are attributed to stupidity, or that CRS thing (can't remember s***), or transposing a measurement, or I'm trying to think too far ahead. Whatever the reason, it seems to just be part of woodworking. but it sure can test one's patience and religion.

A few years ago, a friend of mine, Aaron came to the shop and asked if I could help him dye and stain a crib he had built. The crib was hard maple, very nicely crafted, well sanded, and he had already applied Pre-Color Conditioner (blotch control as we lovingly call the product in our shop). He had worked with samples and determined his finishing schedule, he was all set, no issue right? Well that was the intent, but things just didn't go that way.

Aaron's finishing scheduled called for a base dye of orange under some brown mahogany, so we spray the dye because there were lots of spindles. We lay it down flat so no over spray can bounce under and give us more dye than we want. After we got it all a nice pumpkin orange, we wipe on a coat of stain, and it is immediately much darker than we want. We decide to thin the stain and spray it on applying light coats and it is still way too dark. I thin the stain and keep

thinning it to get it light enough, I am now spraying brown water. I add some finish to act as a binder for the stain, add some amber dye, and tinted it and so forth, it looked like we had it, so Aaron starts spraying, I head out to the shop, I come back in, and it keeps getting darker, couldn't figure it out, by now Aaron has it all shot, but as it sits, it just keeps getting darker.

To make a long story short, Aaron heads home, a 100-mile trip. I kept thinking about this and finally figured out that the orange was migrating into the brown and making it go darker, it had to be, I could see no other reason. Knowing Aaron was not happy with the color, I decided to “punt” so I get some lacquer thinner and wash off a rail, which removed the stain and most of the dye, I then wiped the stain, and it was super close, that seemed to be the solution.

I got several gallons of thinner and Ed came in and we were at the shop until 9 pm or so with fans going, respirators on and washed it all off. What a mess, but we got most of it off. I called Aaron and told him to get another quart of stain, that we had the color, he was relieved. The next morning, he drove back to the shop. We did a final wash down to be sure everything was clean and then he started wiping. The result was much better. We had reduced the orange to a light tangerine and also the finish that I had used in the stain provided a barrier so the stain couldn't bite in so much and the color came in. It surely wasn't fun and was quite frustrating, but we won the war which was the important thing.

Aaron looked at me and told me he would have “lost it” had he been at home and I understand that quite well, believe me.

What I have learned through the years is that despite your best efforts mistakes are made and issues arise, you just have to hang tight and not give up, mistakes happen to the best of us. What’s that old saying? “I have cut this da** board 4 times and it’s still too short”, yep pretty much how it works.

In the case of Aaron’s crib, our biggest mistake was when we saw it getting darker we kept going, that’s a huge mistake, as Thomas Jefferson said, “When the horse is dead, Dismount”, he was right! We failed to SNEAK UP ON IT. Not a wise move, “What were we thinking, I guess we weren’t.

We’ll Be Back May 1st!

Catch Ya Later.