The Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers is celebrating its twentieth anniversary. The first meeting was held in Warner, NH on April 28, 1990 at John McAlevey’s shop and was attended by approximately twelve people. It was an organizational meeting discussing what direction the guild should take.

The General ideas put forth were 1. Promotion, marketing, and exhibitions; 2. Education; 3. Group discounts; 4. Exchange of ideas; 5. Tool sales and exchange.

By the end of the meeting the attendee’s had Officers, a Steering Committee, dues and a newsletter editor. The foresight at that meeting was quite profound. What I took from reading the minutes of that long ago meeting, were that members were discussing various directions the guild might take. I sense it was attended by more professional woodworkers than amateurs with ideas like promotion, marketing and exhibitions. The basic structure was set. A structure that is still intact.

I have heard from a number of the original meeting goers that they could have never conceived of the Guild in its present state. With 500 members, forty plus meetings a year, a scholarship program. I cannot conceive of the Guild on its 40th anniversary but, I’m sure it will be good.

The Guild it turns out is made up of 90% amateur woodworkers. Of the five general ideas, promotion and marketing are not a major focus for Guild members. A small amount of this is done through photos but, I would hardly call it marketing. We do promote and highlight advertising for supporting businesses who give us discounts.

What the Guild does best is education. Our general meetings not only get active members together five times a year, they provide high quality education focusing on all aspects of woodworking with some of the finest
Hey, you thinking of actually finishing something? Want a suggestion of what to do with your work after you’ve assembled it? I’m talking about woodworking and the Guild meeting on April 17 at Pinkerton Academy in Derry.

Thinking about the finish you’ll use for your current project? The April meeting is featuring a Finishing Q&A. You ask the questions and one of the professional, highly regarded experts will answer.

Check out the Guild’s website photo gallery pages to see members’ work or even see your own. The gallery pages are open to all to post to. And to make it easier we’re scheduling some help. The meeting will have a short presentation on photographing work, including tips on website posting. So take this suggestion for your finished pieces and consider doing a little camera work.

When you get to Pinkerton at about 9:00 the shop classroom will be locked—we’re not meeting there. We will be using the auditorium in the Shepard Building familiar to those who attended finishing and turning events in the past. Take a few minutes to get coffee, check out and return DVDs, and see the latest Guild fashions.

At 9:30 Tom McLaughlin will be giving a presentation on the new BIG. The Beginners and Intermediates Group is highly successful and very popular. Find out why some of the most experienced beginners are attending.

Everyone remembers the great article in The Old Saw on photographing furniture. You don’t? Pull out your November 2006 issue. It’s on page 12. Your collection doesn’t go back that far? Then download it on the website. At about 10:30 Paul Miller, the author of that fine article will be giving a short presentation on photographing work. Then Roger Myers will go through “photoshopping” and posting pictures. When Paul and Roger are done, you’ll really know what to do with your work after you finish it.

Pay attention or you might miss half of lunch; we will break from 11:30 to 12:30 for lunch. Those that wish to step out and get lunch will have time to do so. The business session will run from 12:30 to 1:00.

Don’t even think of bringing cans of stain or old shellac to the Finishing Q&A. We’re not doing any finishing or messing around with any liquids. Just bring your practical how-to or why type questions, and maybe you’ll get answers. We’ll have Bruce Hamilton of The Wood Finishing School in West Newbury, MA. Bruce works as a professional antique furniture restorer. We will also have Dale Vigent of Vigent Custom Finishes in Rollinsford, NH. Dale finishes fine furniture, but specializes in less common techniques such as distressing and faux finishes, milk paints mixed from traditional Amish formulas, and architectural millwork.

Some questions may take some preparation to answer so starting the week of March 28, you can email your more complicated questions to me at sasaffron@myfairpoint.net. I will forward them to either Bruce and Dale and they will answer these questions during the first hour of the session. Save your more practical questions to ask live during the second hour.

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The Guild of NH Woodworkers

President Bob LaCivita
Vice President Greg Benulis
Secretary Claude Dupuis
Treasurer Peter James
Old Saw Editor Open

www.GNHW.org
Furniture Design Symposium

So I undertook to put together a Symposium on Furniture design... the first question was what are we going to put in it? How are we going to fill a day? It became apparent very quickly that the real question was what can we leave out? There are so many talented furniture designers and makers, so many different styles and techniques.

We are going to begin the day with a keynote speaker from the Rhode Island School of Design. Dale Broholm is an adjunct Professor from RISD’s Furniture Design Program as well as a successful designer in his own right. He will be talking about the design process in general. I am really looking forward to hearing this presentation.

When I talked to people about this symposium, the resounding opinion that I got was, “I can’t do that because I can’t draw!” So if this sounds like you, we have added classes that will show you those tools and that with just a little practice you can be using them to begin designing for yourself.

Visualization Tools—We will have a presentation by guild President, Robert LaCivita, a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, on hand drawing and sketching.

DJ DeLorie will be demonstrating the Google Sketchup product, a free 3D modeling program for those who prefer the computer.

I also hope to have a presenter talk about the use of scale or full-size models and mockups to further visualize your ideas and explore the envelope before you start cutting expensive materials. When I build a model/mockup, how much detail do I want? Does a small scale model give me the same visualization?

Design Considerations & Components—We have Jon Siegel talking about the design of turned spindles.

Charles Shackleton of Shackleton Thomas of Bridgewater, VT talking about how small details can change the look of a piece and make the design yours.

Last, but definitely not least, Terry Moore will discuss the new avenues that the use of lamination and veneer open up for the designer. Bye-bye seasonal wood movement!

Design Processes—I have tried to bring together three contrasting methodologies for furniture design so that there is something for everyone.

Charles Shackleton provides a very different perspective than the typical studio furniture maker since his business employs a number of craftsmen who individually build a piece from start to finish. He has a range of furniture plus a selection of details that can be added to your made-to-order piece of furniture. Charles does all of the design work for his business so his drawings have to communicate his ideas to others too.

The second presentation will be by Terry—I’m not much of a draw’er—Moore, who at least has a reputation for sketching something on the back of a postage stamp and then starting to cut. We’ll get to see/hear if this is really the case! Can you imagine beginning that harlequin display case with anything short of several artists renditions and a full set of full-sized plans.

And the third—TBA! To be announced on the Symposium blog and in Touch-Ups.

And the thing that impresses me most—these guys give up their own time to come do this! We will have more details on times and location in the Symposium blog on the web site as well as Touch-Ups as we get closer.
Traditional Chest Making with Tom McLaughlin

Each time Tom McLaughlin's Traditional Chest Making session for BIG meets at his shop in Canterbury, it seems more attendees raise their hands to show they are following along at home, with the number growing to about 10 of 33 at the most recent Saturday session, the third of five planned.

The project is an excuse to learn a lot of different techniques, the proprietor of McLaughlin Woods Custom Fine Furniture said at the Feb. 6 session. These are skills that participants are going to use across all of their woodworking.

After a brief review of sessions one and two, Tom demonstrated how the case he dovetailed fits together and pulls apart with minimal force. “A little wiggle to seat” is how Tom describes the ideal amount of force needed. If you have to exert more pressure than that, you need to do more clean up of your dovetails. If you have to use a hammer, put a block between the work piece and the hammer.

Tom reviewed choice of woods for fine furniture, such as cherry, mahogany, walnut and curly maple. White oak is more typical for Craftsman style case work. A good secondary wood is yellow pine.

Putting together and taking apart his maple box first and walnut second, Tom fit up the sides, top and bottom. It was obvious that Tom’s dovetails fit right in. Always make a dry fit like this before you put glue on your boards, Tom advised. Once it is glued, you can clean off the pins.

Tom confessed that gluing up has always been a little stressful to him. “If it locks up, you’re stuck,” he said. Making sure that the joints fit well with a dry rehearsal lets you see how you’re going to use your clamps before you put on any glue. You actually glue the whole case, or box, at once and square it all up.

**Choices for glue up**—The primary wood glue choices are yellow and white. For this project, Tom says to set your yellow glue aside—it dries too quickly. Use white glue for slower drying time. Brush on the glue quickly just hitting the surfaces that will bond (not on end grain or sides, for example). Having an extra person to help spread the glue makes it more enjoyable and speeds the process.

Tom usually lays the case on its back. Make sure you’ve got a good flat surface or bench. You can put MDF on top to protect your surface. A table about 20” high that you can break down is useful to have around your shop for this kind of work.

Tom suggests using blocks on corners between clamps and the work piece. Clamp top to bottom along the sides, one clamp each at the front, middle and back of the case. The clamps don’t have to stay on long for the dovetailed box because there is not a lot of pressure outward. You are just seating the joint.

**Testing for squareness**—The best way to measure the box is corner to corner to make diagonal measurements identical. “An eigth of an inch is a big deal in this,” Tom said, so take a little extra time on this step.

You can take your measurements by setting a tape measure into inside corners the same way. If your box isn’t square, change all the clamps to adjust it. A helpful hint from Tom—With a tight-fitting dovetailed box, you can test for squareness before putting on the clamps! Then recheck your measurements after the clamps are on and correct for any movement. The box will move more freely without glue on it than it will after you’ve applied glue.

Sometimes you can use the back to help square the box. Adding a single clamp, side-to-side, across the front bottom can help. “It’s nice to have a few different things to make sure you’ve gotten it right at this step”. Once glued and clamped, Tom suggests letting the case sit overnight.
Dividers—Selecting the right stock for dividers is important to the longevity of your finished chest. Look for nice figure and stable wood especially for the bottom two dividers since these will not have center support. Quarter-sawn wood is best.

Rip the work piece rough into oversized pieces. The wood has to get to a new equilibrium when it's dimensioned to a new size, so let it sit for awhile.

First joint one surface, then run it through the planer to 1/8” thicker than your final dimension. Let the piece sit for a while again. Sight your board again, looking for twist or other defects. Joint again in thin slices and then give it a final run through the thickness planer. Typical width is 2¼”. If your divider board has a slight curve, put the arc up.

For nice, graduated drawer spacing, follow traditional measurements, such as 5⅛” for the top drawer, 6⅜” and 7⅜” for the middle drawers and 8⅞” for the bottom. You can make a story stick marking off the foot, molding, and drawer dividers. Once the case is glued up, you can use the story stick to mark out the drawer dividers. Or you can put knife marks before gluing up the case.

Ash or white oak is good for drawer runners—poplar is a little softer. Thickness all your boards at the same time, including your primary wood.

Joinery—For your chest, you’ll need to construct drawer dividers, runners and gliders within the box. One option is the sliding dovetail. Mechanically, it’s an excellent joint, Tom said. You can also use a twin tenon.

For rails, Tom prefers the twin tenon, which makes a nice, clean right angle joint, and it offers the added advantage of being self-squaring. First square a knife line on the insides of the side pieces, then cut the mortises. Cut the tenons to fit.

The method is as follows—square a knife line at the correct height. Using a sample piece of stock, placed a knife in the line, butt up the sample board and scored a second line parallel to the first. Carry these lines to the back.

For the BIG demonstration, Tom dressed a piece of cherry to 1”. He hollow chiseled the mortises and cut a square hole. Next you have to create the tenons on the divider to fit a 5/16” mortise.

He then moved to the tablesaw to cut the tenons. The mortise should be at least ⅛” deeper than the tenons. You just don’t want to come out the other side!

Tom demonstrated using a tenon cutting jig made from good plywood (e.g. Baltic birch) that rode along his fence. The jig should be snug to the fence but have no play. Tom uses a metal rule to measure blade height. Using spacers, Tom made four cuts to shape the tenon depth. Then, Tom measured ¼” from a right tooth to the fence to establish the shoulders. The fence has to be square to the table.

After establishing the shoulders on the tablesaw, Tom used the band saw to nibble at the space between the tenons. He advises finishing up the space between the tenons with a chisel.

BIG attendees who follow along at home and make their own chest of drawers will get more out of BIG classes. In the sessions, Tom McLaughlin is making two similar bachelor’s chests, one of curly maple, one of walnut.

The sequence for building the chest is: 1) the case; 2) the interior; 3) feet and moldings; and 4) finishing.

In session one, the focus was on the box. Tom McLaughlin showed how to use a full size drawing to guide selection of boards and glue up of sides.

In the second session, Tom showed how use a marking system for keeping track of the face, top and bottom of the project as well as front orientation. He demonstrated how to cut the tails first on the top and bottom and transfer the marks with a knife to the end grain on one of the sides for the pins. Tom also showed how to make good solid, long lasting drawer dividers in the traditional way.

Audi Pauliukonis is chronicling his follow-along experience for The Journal.
What on earth is the Right Brain Woodworking Group? Well, it’s not about a particular type of woodworking. Attending our second meeting were turners, furnituremakers, house remodelers, luthiers, and boatbuilders. It’s not about one’s level of woodworking experience. Although we have the highest percentage of professional woodworkers of any Guild group, we also have beginners, gifted amateurs, and everyone in between. It’s also not about lectures and demos by experts. Although we have only met twice, we have adopted a format of informal group discussion where everyone gets to participate.

So what’s the point? Well, the point is that there is no point—“yikes”, the reader thinks, “why am I reading this? It sounds like double talk!””. Guild president Bob LaCivita’s dream is to build stone walls that go nowhere and serve no function. Nate Carey wants to build wooden boats so he can spend time on the water so that there is something for him to do in the wooden boats he builds. John Whiteside wants to build guitars so he can play songs, the point of which is not to get to the end of.

As best as we can say it, we seem in our absorbing group discussions to be reaching broad agreement that when fine work is done for its own sake it becomes deeply absorbing and satisfying in a way that goal-driven activities do not. Furthermore, it is our suspicion that undertaking work in this spirit is the key to creativity and beauty in our creations.

We are even attracting interest from afar. Our May 6 meeting at Monica Raymond’s shop involved a Guild first—videoconferencing. Brett Harris, a woodworker from Michigan, takes a very right-brain approach to woodworking, despite being an engineer in his day-job. He met Monica in woodworking school last summer and was intrigued by the idea of our group. Monica suggested he join a meeting via Skype, a free online phone and videoconferencing service. During the meeting, Brett’s face appeared on the screen of a laptop computer—albeit blurry and pixilated—and he listened in and contributed his comments. He told us that although we looked a lot like the folks in his woodworking club, the words coming out of our mouths were completely different!

We believe that the RBW group might be unique in the nation and could attract even more interest from others. Our blog is accessible to anyone and anyone can post a comment, so pass on the website to people you think might be interested in the right-brain approach to working with wood.

Check us out on the Guild web blog. You’ll find thought-provoking blog posts as well as information about our meeting schedule, which is unpredictable, as it is driven by our interpretation of the auspiciousness of astronomical events.
President’s Message continued

craftsmen in the nation lecturing or demonstrating.

Our subgroup offers special interest woodworking education. Many members feel that the subgroups are the backbone of the Guild. Most of us tend to lean toward a specific area of woodworking and the subgroups fill a need for our members.

The Guild scholarship and grant program has blossomed this year. The scholarships help woodworkers offset the cost of courses and the grant program helps schools and institutions set up or advance educational programs.

The Old Saw and Journal allow all our members to explore woodworking from the comfort of their home. Both publications bring you high quality articles from members and guest authors.

The video library offers DVDs to be loaned to all members.

The new toy is the updated website www.gnhw.org. What can I say. I feel the website is a jewel. Why? It shows the entire world our mission at work. It promotes the Guild to potential members. It gives members access to all our publications and is a vehicle to share information. It gives subgroups a vast resource to share their interests. The website lets the entire world look into the General Ideas that were conceived at the first meeting. As Jon Siegel says in the Guild’s history, “What a success story.”

What would an anniversary be without a celebration? On July 25 the Guild will have a picnic at the Homestead Woodworking School in Newmarket, NH. This will be a social event for members and their families with no educational program. Activities will be planned so tune up your belt sander for the big race. More details will follow as the event is finalized. Prior to the picnic, Denis Paiste is writing some copy for publication in local and statewide publications and notifying art organizations of our success.

Traditional Chest continued

The finished twin mortise and tenon is a “sweet joint” that creates an amazingly strong frame. It also has the advantage of being hidden.

The sliding dovetail—An alternative to the twin tenon joint is the dovetail. You cut the tail on the divider end first.

It could be done on a router table, but Tom prefers the tablesaw. He uses a bevel gauge to set the blade for the correct angle.

For the back rails, you can use a flat top and dovetail angled bottom. Drawer runners can be cut to 3/8”.

Fit the divider to the case and mark the inside of the cabinet with a knife. Hand saw and clean out rough and then use a router to make a flat bottom. Then you can just pare to it until the dovetail slides in. You can use a straight bit in a router to cut it hand held, but a router plane is safer if you have one.

Next Up—Putting the case together, followed by moldings and feet. BIG will meet again the April 10, 2010, at Tom’s shop in Canterbury, NH. For more information, contact Bob Couch at arcouch@comcast.net. Carpool information at www.gnhw.org.
Never hear of the “P D Racer”? Neither had I ’til a couple of months ago. “P D” stands for Puddle Duck and racing is what these basic little boats are all about.

I was introduced to the P D Racer (PDR for short) through Facebook correspondence with a PDR advocate in South Florida. The PDR is touted as “the easiest sailboat in the world to build” (quoted from PDRacer.com) and in the PDR’s most basic form, that statement is probably true.

In contrast, from the photos I’ve seen as well as on the website of Australian designer/builder Michael Storer, I’d say some PDRs are built “yacht quality” on a “rowboat” budget.

The P D Racer seems to be very popular in the United States, Canada, and Australia with groups of enthusiasts holding events throughout the local sailing season. As a “one design” racing class, only one class rule is of any significance; the wetted surfaces of all boats must be built alike (lower 10” of hull); otherwise pretty much anything goes!

Granted, performance is limited. In optimum conditions a well built and rigged PDR can be expected to cruise at 4 to 5 mph—record top speed is listed on PDRacer.com at 9.1 mph.

My wife and I are visiting friends in Florida this month (April) and the PDR advocate I mentioned above has invited me to sail one of his (he has four) PDRs on Indian River lagoon, I can’t wait! I’ll write a full report of the experience on my return maybe with a photograph of me at the helm included.

I have two grandsons, both still a bit young to go sailing. But when the time is right, this little design may be the perfect introduction to boat building and sailing for my Jake and Max.

by Nate Carey

www.pdracer.com • www.storerboatplans.com/Pdr/pdr • http://homepage.mac.com/peterhyndman/Sites/PDRinfo/
Lot’s o’ Lutherie

What do you do when you come up with an invention you think might be patentable? The lawyers say keep it secret whilst you file the expensive paperwork. The Guild ethic says you share it with anyone interested.

So here is my answer to this moral dilemma, as demonstrated at the most recent Guild luthier’s meeting (Jan 24, 2010). “It” is the guitar rotisserie. Its function is to solve the problem of drips, puddles, and runs when applying spray lacquer or shellac to a guitar. The contraption is made of electrical conduit, cooper plumbing elbows, and a rotisserie motor from an outdoor charcoal grill.

What is does is to rotate the guitar around an axis that goes through its center of gravity, perpendicular to the guitar’s top and back. The spray gun operator sprays as the guitar rotates — the gun need barely be moved. Instead the guitar moves under the spray pattern at a rotational speed of about 1 revolution every 20 seconds. When spraying is complete, the machine is left on for however long it takes the finish to dry. The huge advantage is, the slow rotational motion cancels out any tendency of the finish to drip, run, or puddle. The result, once experiments with the correct sprayer settings are completed, is a close-to-perfect mirror-flat finish.

Attendees at the meeting were amazed and appreciative. The rotisserie idea may well be useful for finishing objects other than guitars — try it out. Just don’t apply for a patent. That would be against the spirit of our Guild.

The Guild luthiers meet on the third Sunday’s of alternate months, starting in January. Not enough lutherie for you? Our sister organization, the New England Luthiers (www.newenglandluthiers.org) meets the third Sunday on alternate months starting in February. Everyone is invited to all the meetings.

The next GNHW luthiers’ meeting (Sunday, March 21 at Terry Moore’s shop) will have taken place by the time you receive this via the Old Saw. However. the one after that (Sunday, May 16) will be a knockout. The “brain surgeon” of lutherie, Pat DiBurro, will remove the soundboard from an intact guitar, without disturbing the decorative bindings, and replace it with a new one. Space will be limited and registration required, plus you will be asked to bring hearing protectors and goggles. So check the Guild luthiers’ web blog often to be sure you can get your name on the list when registration opens.