Every year on the 2nd Saturday in June, the Woodcraft Store in Newington, NH, sponsors Guild of NH Woodworkers Demo Day, where we have an opportunity to demonstrate our skills and recruit new members. This year, our demos were spearheaded by Jeb Hooker and the Luthiers subgroup, with additional demos of lathe turning and scroll saw work.

For those of you familiar with luthier work, you will know that making wooden musical instruments encompasses a whole range of skills, and the demonstrations included:

- Side bending by Mike Mahar
- Sharpening by Steve Branam
- Inlay techniques by Al Carruth
- Plate construction by Jeb Hooker
- Neck carving by Terry Moore

Eric Swindell (on the left) and Mike Mahar (on the right) working under the tent in front of the Woodcraft store
We had five benches set up in the store with additional benches and two pop-up tents outside, where Jim Forbes and Eric Swindell took turns demonstrating turning on the store’s Nova lathe. Also under the tent was Mike Mahar, who set up his jigs for bending the sides of guitar bodies. This seems to require a lot of patience and really straight grained wood. Fortunately, the weather cooperated [mostly] and the tents with our display banner added a welcoming feature to our day there.

Right inside the store, Craig Brown setup his scroll saw and worked away making intricate patterns in a variety of styles. He told me he has been doing these demos during Guild Day for several years, and would like to contact other Guild members with similar interests in scroll saw work.

Steve Branam set up two benches with an impressive number of stones, files and fixtures for sharpening hand tools, including saws. Every time I passed by his benches that afternoon there were always a few people listening intently on how to keep tools sharp – something every woodworker needs to know. Perhaps to emphasize that tools must be kept finely honed and ready to go, he had a box of his tools with a sign that said, in effect, “handle with care – my tools are sharp.”

Another impressive skill, demonstrated by Al Carruth, was preparing banding for inlays. This seems to me to be excruciating, intricate work, and I understand that some luthiers can spend literally hundreds of hours doing inlay on guitars. Al starts out with colored veneer, stacks them in a pre-determined order, glues them with hot hide glue, and then shaves them to shape with a low angle plane in a custom fixture. I think he ended up making quite a few stock pieces during the day.

Most custom guitar tops and backs (i.e. “plates”) have a subtle curve in them. Jeb Hooker demonstrated a home built fixture, called a “go-bar deck,” that employs dozens of fiberglass rods that bend the thin plate to conform to a sculpted pattern while braces are glued in place. Nearby, Granite State Luthiers
members Mark Sedutto and Adam Bahrami strummed various instruments which were on display.

Terry Moore started out with a “hunk” of mahogany and ended up with a nearly completed neck for his next guitar, using rough and fine rasps. Unfortunately, he left his fine rasp home – but what a better place to get another one that a woodworker’s store? So he purchased one to complete his carving and now has a spare! Terry was setup in the back of the store near two benches with a display of four beautiful handmade guitars which you can see in the group photo.

Guild Day was a lot of fun and a great success for both the store and our Guild. Several new members signed up on the spot, and many others took information home that also referenced our web site. Thanks to all the demonstrators who devoted a day to representing the Guild, and, I presumed, had a lot of fun doing it. We plan to do this again next year. Stay tuned.

Tony Immorlica
GHNW Program Chair
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