

APRIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Steve McCorquodale's Mill was our meeting place this month and Steve was our presenter. The McCorquodale Mill, located in Longville is admittedly a small operation, but Steve is a professional Sawyer and retired Forest Ranger. He knows wood and its characteristics, especially how it reacts and how to saw it to get the best lumber possible out of a given log.

The meeting started in the McCorquodale party room—a beautiful structure just a few feet from his lovely home. The building was completed in August of last year and is constructed of cypress. It includes a kitchen area complete with sink/bar, refrigerator and cooking equipment. The building included a large great looking cypress tressel table.

One of the best things about meeting at the Mill were the Helga McCorquodale selection of home-made biscuits and jams that were a sensation. Helga can cook for me any time! What a great way to start a meeting.

Before seeing the milling operation, we took a tour through part of the McCorquodale home to see some of the beautiful furniture Steve has built over the years. Included was a large china cabinet built by the Crookshanks out of McCorquodale supplied lumber as well as a 36" x 8 foot dining table made of cypress, cherry and sycamore. On entering the dining room, you see a terrific natural sided cypress bench. From the sitting/breakfast area, you look out over a large pond that Eltee Thibodeaux said was stocked with large fish.

While you must have the right machinery to be a lumber mill operator, the experience and skill of the sawyer is what makes it all come together. Steve's long experience as a ranger educated him in the ways of wood. His experience as a sawyer furthered that knowledge so that he can produce quality lumber for his clients.

When buying or selecting logs, Steve recommends that you choose either the first or second log from the tree. These are more stable and of course, much larger than anything else you can get. He paints

each log end with Anchor Seal (an ordinary latex paint will also work well). When he mills the log, this means that each piece of lumber has a seal on both ends. The seal permits controlled drying of the lumber.

Steve uses a Timber Harvester brand milling machine. It is supplied with 3-phase utility power providing an efficient, low cost operation without the noise of a generator. In fact, the milling machine is relatively quiet. The machine consists of a horizontal band saw that moves along a track that holds the log. As most woodworkers know, a bandsaw cut results in a minimal waste due to the thin curf of the blade. This means much better yield than with a conventional circular blade setup. The logs are held in place by hydraulic clamps that are also used to turn the logs for the various cuts.

Steve first cleans the log if needed to remove dirt and loose bark to reduce wear on the blades. He also scans the log with a metal detector for metal debris. A nail, spike or screw will quickly ruin a saw blade.

Steve said that the lumber yield for a typical log will be about 60% to 80% for first logs and about 25% to 40% for seconds. However, this varies with the species of the wood with pine more forgiving than harder woods. For example, pecan, hickory and misquite are very difficult to mill with oak and walnut somewhere between. For the harder woods, Steve has to go very slowly through the log. In fact Steve gets only about two sharpenings per blade before it is unusable.

In general, Steve cuts 6" to 8" long from up to 10 foot logs. This extra length means the resulting lumber can be trimmed for checks and cracks that may develop during drying.

Steve also dries wood, first doing outdoor air drying and then in a dehumidifying room. In the room, we found beautiful examples of cypress, oak, cedar and walnut.

Coming Up Saturday, May 14, 9:00 a.m. at
the shop of Gary Rock with Master
Turner Bill Berry

GETTING THE BUGS OUT

Dick Trough recently reminded me about a great insect killing technique I've know about and used for years. I just didn't think about writing it up until Dick reminded me. Several years ago I went hiking near Washington, CA. in the Sierra Nevada mountains in eastern California. We got there on June 1st and it was sleeting along with a few flakes of snow. Kind of an interesting place to be in the middle of the summer! But before traveling to the hiking area, I had visited with some friends in Davis, Ca.

Dr. Steve Roberts, besides teaching anthropology at UC Davis, collects American Indian rugs. He has hundreds of them, all over the house. They are on the floors, on the furniture, on the walls and in or on just about every more or less flat surface in the house.

As I headed to the freezer to get ice for my drink, Steve mumbled something about being careful of the rugs. I thought he was just warning me to not trip over the ones on the floor. I wasn't paying much attention to what he actually said as I carefully stepped over the very valuable native American rugs covering nearly every inch of the floors in the house. When I opened the freezer, a rug fell out onto my feet. Making my way back to the picnic table in the back yard to join our group, Steve noticed the puzzled look on my face.

"Bugs," he said, "actually *Tineola bisselliella* larvae. They're the ones that eat holes in your casmere sweaters all summer. They also eat 200 year old native American rugs worth thousands of dollars each. Freezing kills the bugs, every time."

In fact at the University of California at Davis, where Steve teaches, they've got a group of researchers doing nothing but studying insect control methods. One of the methods they found that reliably kills moth larvae is freezing them. The real advantage of this technique is that it is not environmentally hazardous (no nasty chemicals, fumigation or trips to the dry cleaners), easy to do (presuming you've got the spare freezer space) and works every time. I asked him about wood boring larvae. He said that as long as the critters contain water, freezing will kill them. He said it might take a couple of days as a chunk of wood is denser than a rug, but it should work.

In fact many museums, historical groups and others use freezing to eradicate damaging insects in historical objects, according to many references on the Internet.

The classical approach to killing wood boring insect larvae is fumigation. Unfortunately, most of the insecticides that will do the trick are very hazardous and can only be used by licensed professionals. Another problem is effectiveness. Insecticides do not easily penetrate wood to actually get at the insects. That is because most of the chemicals are painted or sprayed on the exterior of the wood and only kill those larvae close to the surface. What most larvae do is to bore straight in for an inch or so and then make a 90 degree turn. This means that if you poke the hole with a stick, you probably won't get them and even spraying directly in the hole is not reliable.

It is this time of year (April through July) that boring wasps and bees start looking at your stored lumber as a desirable place in which to lay their eggs. The eggs hatch and the

resulting larvae (some more than an inch long and as big around as your small finger) start doing their work.

I realize that the holes the bugs bore can be of artistic value, especially to the dedicated turners out there, but often, you want a clean work piece without the 5/8ths inch holes. Besides, the holes can catch on a bowl gouge and ruin the entire effort, i.e., chunks of bowl parts flying off in all directions. And there is nothing more entertaining than a fat white worm hitting your face shield (I feed these to my gold fish) at 1,000 RPM (Not wearing your face shield while turning? Bad practice!).

One approach is to use heat to kill the larvae. In fact if you bring the wood up to 120 to 150 degrees Fahrenheit for 24 hours or so, the heat will kill most larvae. That is one of the reasons that kiln dried wood contains few if any insects. You can do this yourself if the work piece is small enough to fit in your microwave. Not the microwave in your kitchen – that old one in the shop! The down-side is that you really can't keep the heat going for 24 hours unless you've got a wood drying kiln.

There are many advantages to freezing wood to kill off the insect larvae. First, you are going to be running the freezer anyway, at least if you want that Starbucks Coffee Java Chip ice cream to stay hard. Second, your freezer is probably larger than the microwave, so if you re-arrange the frozen chicken (check with your freezer manager first – I got into trouble when she couldn't find the Java Chip), and you can get a good size chunk of wood in there. Third, no chemicals are needed – probably the best reason above all as most insecticides for this use are highly restricted.

The key is leaving the wood in the freezer long enough to do the job. Wood is denser than a wool rug or sweater and green wood, because of the water content, is quite dense. So all you've got to do is put it in the freezer and leave it for a week or so – that should do the trick.

Freezing will also dry the wood some and because as water becomes ice, it expands slightly and you run a slight risk of cracks or checks. If you can, you should probably bag the wood and squeeze out all the air. You might also want to start the process on as dry a day as possible, at least in South "wet" Louisiana. But in general, you can freeze it and forget it. By the way, always let the wood thaw a day or so before working it.

And one other thing: be sure to let the home manger know that there is a log in the freezer – it will make you life a little better – there is nothing so suprising than a great chunk of frozen wood falling on someones toes to make the evening a less than happy one. *Barry Humphus*.

A REQUEST FROM OUR MEMBERS

Barry Humphus really appreciates your input. He is always struggling to come up with articles, information and meeting ideas for you. The idea is to improve his skills and improve yours. Like member Dick Trough, the above article resulted in something you can do. Let Barry know what you want to see in the LCWWC Newsletter.

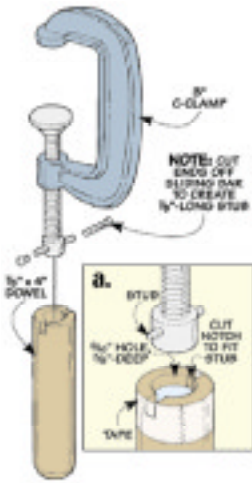
C-CLAMP HANDLE

If you use a C-Clamp when setting up a tool or jig sometimes the sliding bar, used to tighten the clamp, gets in the way. Before each turn, you have to slide the bar all the way to the opposite side.

To solve the problem, you can cut both ends off (use a Dremel cut-off wheel or hack saw) the sliding bar and attached a wooden handle to the remaining “stub.” Now you can tighten the clamp with a few quick turns (See drawing).

As shown in the drawing, the handle is just a dowel with a hole drilled in the end to accept the head of the threaded screw. You should also cut a notch in the handle to fit the stub.

After shaping the handle for a comfortable grip (you can use a rasp or just turn one to fit your needs), a bit of epoxy is all that's needed to secure it to the clamp. But first, wrap the handle with masking tape to keep the epoxy from leaking. *Edited from Shopnotes.*



SIMPLE SHARPENING JIG

If you use sandpaper to sharpen your chisels or plane irons, here's a simple jig from the ShopNotes folks. By “sanding” the bevel of the blade flat and smooth, it produces a sharp edge in just a few minutes.



The problem is holding the chisel at a consistent angle as you sharpen. To do this, you clamp the chisel to a simple sharpening guide (see photo).

As you can see, the guide starts off as a pair of wedge-shaped support blocks that hold the top at a 25° angle. To square up

the chisel (and keep it from shifting), it sits against a wood cleat that's glued into a dado cut in the top.

To set up the guide, place the chisel against the cleat and slide it down until the bevel is resting on a flat surface (not on the sandpaper). Then clamp the chisel in place and “scrub” it back and forth across the sandpaper. Note: Start with 180-grit sandpaper and work up through 400 to 600 grit. If you need a different angle, just cut another set of blocks — say 22° and 30°. *Edited from ShopNotes.*

WAXING MACHINE SURFACES

To maintain a rust-free and slick surface between cleanings, most woodworkers apply some kind of wax to the cast iron surface of their table saw, bandsaw and drill press. If you have steel extension wings, they receive the same wax treatment as the iron parts. However, the type of wax is the subject of much discussion.

Some woodworkers advocate using automotive wax, but there is a good reason not to use this type of product. Most automotive wax products contain silicone that may be great on the fenders but could transfer to wood. Once silicone gets into wood, it is very difficult to get out, and almost impossible over which to apply a finish. Sanding just spreads the silicone.

The most common wax product in use today is Johnson's paste floor wax. It is relatively easy to apply, durable, and does not contain silicone or other additives that may complicate finishing wood. This same wax can be used on all your cast iron surfaces, painted extension wings, router table tops, the backs of jigs or wherever you want wood to slide easily.

Apply the paste wax in thin coats to the entire surface and let dry. Then, use a clean piece of old towel or cheesecloth to buff the surface out. The first time I waxed my table saw, I applied three thin coats. After that, the surface cleaned easily and one or two coats of wax does the job.

A word of caution: Once you clean the surface, be sure to apply the wax. Leaving the freshly cleaned surface bare is an invitation to rust and corrosion.

When I build a new sliding jig, you should sand the surfaces smooth and wax the side that is exposed to the machinery surface. Apply a fresh wax to your jigs whenever they feel like they are beginning to drag.

Cleaning and waxing the work surface on a regular schedule will keep it looking and performing like new. Keeping the surface clean and waxed also helps improve safety.

Once a month is the most common cleaning schedule and should suffice for most woodworkers. If you are a professional and use the saw daily, once a week may be better. If you use your equipment frequently, shortening the time between cleaning and waxing might be necessary. If you notice work pieces beginning to resist sliding, stop, clean and wax the surface before something bad happens.

Remember that any work surface on which you slide wood will benefit from waxing. I regularly clean and wax my aluminum jointer table at the same time I maintain my drill press, band saw and table saw tables. *Barry Humphus.*