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FEBURARY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Our wonderful members, Leonard and Theresa Wilfret were again the hosts this month and while Leonard had to work, Theresa was, as always, the perfect host with hot biscuits, butter and jam..

There was lots of interesting Show and Tell including a couple of bowls by Gary Rock — one large one of walnut and another of cottenwood.

Jim Anderson brought two great looking boxes this month. One was made of spaldered beech and the other was of mulberry. Jim is turning into a great box maker. Jim also brought a trivet that he made.

Lee Frazier, despite his new day job at Sowela



Community College, is still working wood. His S & T this month was one of a pair of infant bed rockers he did for a client. They are made of cypress and a discussion on cypress finishing ensued. Fortunately, John Perry was in attendance. John, a past President of the LCWW has vast experience as a professional cabinet maker and finisher offered some hints and tips for those of us using 'oily' wood. such as cypress or teak.

John said that white cypress is not a good outdoor wood as it does not have either the natural insecticide that red cypress contains nor the natural oil that resists decomposition. He also mentioned that

'sinker' cypress (typically red cypress) is very resistant to rotting. However, the very oil that protects red cypress means that it is difficult to finish. He suggested that prior to your final finish, multiple coats of reduced shellack or lacquer should be applied to the sanded surfaces of the project. This seals the wood and allows you to then apply any finish desired. John said that teak is even worse when it comes to finishes and the appropriate coatings of shallack or lacquer are required.

Jimmy Evert showed us some of his resent canes. One was an eagle in cedar with a true two-part poly finish.

Pie Sonnoer typically brings us one or more



beautiful vehicle reproductions. But this month he brought rocking chairs. Of course these were very small and true to design. In addition to the racking chairs, Pie had a candy jar dispenser in oak. Nice design from which he got from a plan.

Please see all of the items and much more at our web site at www.lcwoodworkers.com.

Coming Up ... Saturday, March 11— At the Shop of Pie Sonnier. Come see the Shop of Pie and his wonderful collection of vehicles plus WW discussion and more.

Coming Up ... Wednesday, April 26 — The annual LCWW BBQ at the PPG Family Center.

CRAWLING AROUND IN MY ATTIC

I don't like crawling around in my attic. There is the need to be careful so you don't step through the ceiling below (did that once, but the patch doesn't show). There's the poor lighting, heat in the Summer, cold in the Winter, the itchy feeling you get from just being around all that fiberglass. It's never a task I want to do unless it's an emergency.

So when Linda said she needed to access the Internet in the living room while writing one of her books, I resigned myself to pulling a category 5 network cable from our home office up inside a wall and along a hundred and fifty or so feet of attic and then down inside another wall. Of course this would entail buying enough cable, cutting holes in the walls, fishing the cable, buying and mounting the plates, carefully wiring the two ends, cleaning up the mess and finally, praying that it all worked when I finished. Hiring a qualified electrician was one possibility. Finding one in our area is another matter and then paying \$120 per drop plus \$70-90 per hour.

As I'm the household technologist, I thought there's got to be a better way. I should be able to do this without crawling along rafters with a flashlight in one hand and the end of some Cat 5 cable between my teeth under less than ideal conditions.

It is the challenge that comes with every leap forward in home technology: how to retrofit the house for the modern equivalent of gaslights. Just where do you put the additional electrical service, the second telephone circuit for a home fax machine, cable television in the bedroom and that surround-sound home theater you keep eyeing?

Fortunately, computers are easy – well, sort of. With modern Wi-Fi (wireless) technology, you can broadcast a high-speed network throughout your home including Internet access, printer sharing and more without an unsightly wire. But as I learned, getting Wi-Fi to work at its best is more complex than unpacking the hardware and plugging it in.

What you have to deal with are the quirks of your house – the room layout, the wall and floor construction, where that large mirror is hanging or the location of that 50 gallon fish tank. All of these and more can get in the way of a clean network signal and make your wireless Internet connection as slow as, well, that old modem you used to use.

The first thing to consider is where to locate your transceiver router. This device, usually just called a wireless router, is the heart of any wireless network. When plugged into your cable or DSL modem (it is a transceiver that also contains a modem), the router transmits and receives network signals to and from any device equipped with the appropriate Wi-Fi hardware, including computers, printers, PDAs and even video games consoles.

Because the modem can be attached to any cable or phone jack in the house, there are lots of options for placement. Think of the router like the base station of a cordless phone. When you are on the phone and wander too far, you might lose the connection or get static. When out of range of the router, network (and thus Internet) connections slow to a crawl or even are lost.

Wi-Fi routers generally work for 100 to 200 feet in all directions so you need to think of them as broadcasting in three dimensions and also where you or your family will likely be logging on. If it is going to be on the patio or by the pool, it may be best to locate the router outside under protected cover. Similarly, if you have a two story home, locating the router on the second floor may be your best bet. In other words, instead of locating it in the center of the home, locate it in the center of where people will connect.

The big challenge is making sure the router's radio waves are not blocked by something through which they will not pass. Everything blocks Wi-Fi to some degree. Wood, common drywall, plaster and glass matter very little. Brick, stone, cinder blocks and water (where is that big fish tank?) are very problematic. The worse materials are ceramic, concrete and mirrors (which reflect radio waves just as easily as light waves).

The type and brand of Wi-Fi equipment you get is not particularly critical as all have about the same features. They range in price from \$50-90 for a basic unit. Expect to pay more (\$140-160) for long range units, especially if you have a larger home. There are also re-transmitters available that will extend the signal. Just get one that is compatible with your current system. There are two common standards: 802.11b and 802.11g. The "g" routers also work with the "b" equipment, but the older "b" routers won't work with devices equipped with the newer "g" standard receivers. Most newer laptops have a receiver built in but older units will need an adapter at \$40-60.

The best path through the house may take some trial and error (kind of like my woodworking). Radio waves bounce around somewhat, so moving the router just a few feet may a difference. Just remember that if a brick fireplace falls between your surfing location and the router, you will likely have reduced performance. Again, think in three dimensions and moving the router to a second floor over where you'll connect may work.

Other possible items that can interfere are large appliances, some 2.4 GHz cordless telephones (routers operate at 2.395 GHz), and microwave ovens (when in use). If the phone is at fault, consider upgrading to a 5.8 GHz model.

Another consideration is network security. Always turn on the security features built into your router. Otherwise, your neighbors could potentially access your hard drive or share your Internet connection without your knowledge.

After getting the correct router hardware, I could not get a good reliable signal from where I had the modem in the home office and the living room. The signal had to pass through plate glass, across a central courtyard (through some large philodendron plants), through more plate glass and finally, a brick wall. The design of the home includes brick outside as well as inside – it is a brick house, not just brick veneer. So I thought I was left with either pulling cable all the way or pulling it most of the way and locating the router in the attic (where the high heat of summer would substantially shorten its life).

I finally realized that I already had a network in my home, one that was built into the house when it was constructed.

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CRAWLING AROUND IN MY ATTIC continues

It goes to every part of the house and even has a central 'hub' where the network cables come together. That network is the electrical wiring.

While we typically use the electrical wiring in our homes to power appliances, the bandwidth of the wiring is enormous and can carry the very type of signals that I needed without any interference between the power signal (at 60 Hz) and the Ethernet signal (at 10 megahertz). Two companies that make routers (Belkin and Netgear), also make so-called 'powerline' Ethernet and USB adapters. You need two of them (about \$40-50 each) — either two Ethernet or two USB type or one of each, depending on how you attach your DSL/cable modem to a computer. One connects to the DSL/cable modem and then plugs into a nearby wall socket. The other plugs into a wall socket in another part of the house near where the computer is located. A simple patch cable (Ethernet or USB) can then connect the powerline adapter to a computer. Since the living room computer was a laptop, I ended up attaching the powerline adapter to the wireless router in the living room and simply put it out of sight behind the couch. The powerline adapter also has a security feature that prevents your signal from traveling to your neighbor via the power lines.

Once you get your WiFi working, you can just about forget it's there. You can sit back and bid on that special tool on eBay, check your stock portfolio or see the LCWW gallery. Linda finally got an Internet connection at her laptop in the living room and when I got a laptop, so did I. *Barry Humphus.*

PLUNGE CUTS

Knowing how to plunge cut comes in very handy. If you are cutting a hole in a counter top for a sink, taking out some damaged flooring or even putting in that skylight you've been wanting, the plunge cut is a good skill to have.

Doing a plunge cut means that you don't have to take the time to drill a pilot hole or start from the edge of the material. Jigsaws are best for material no more than 3/4" thick while circular saws are good for thicker material such as the framing for a sub-floor or roof. The basic technique is about the same

for both tools: make sure you use a sharp blade and hold the saw with both hands.

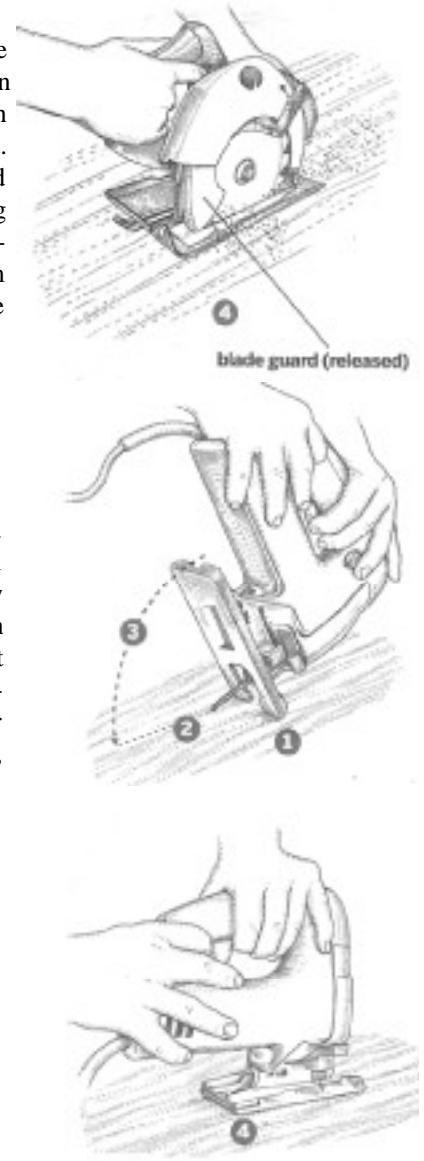
For circular saws, adjust your blade to cut no more than 3/8" deeper than the thickness of the material through which you are cutting. Hold the saw firmly with both hands and rest the front edge of the base plate against the wood,

well away from any edge, corners or ends that you don't want to cut. The reason is that the saw cut will move backward as the blade plunges into the material and completely lowered. Tilt the tool up so that the blade is 1 to 2 inches above the work.

Next, retract the blade guard by pushing down on its front tab or lever with the thumb of your lead hand. Then turn on the saw and gradually lower the spinning blade straight into the material as you maintain a firm pressure on the front of the base plate.

When the base plate is resting against the wood, release the blade guard lever and push the saw to the end of your cut.

If you are using a jigsaw and it has an orbital setting, turn it off. If the saw has a scroll feature, be certain to lock it so the head does not rotate. Make sure you are using an appropriate blade for wood. Like the circular saw, tip the saw forward on its base plate. Hold the blade above the surface of the wood and in line with your cut line. Turn on the saw and slowly pivot the base plate down. Begin to apply light pressure and be patient. The blade will scrape at first but will gradually dig through the wood as the blade teeth bite into the wood. When the blade cuts through the material, you lower the base plate flat against the surface. At that point, push the saw forward through to the end of your cut. *Barry Humphus.*



YOUR MEMBERSHIP

One of the things you've got to do to continue with this Newsletter is renew your membership in the Lake Charles Woodworkers Club. Do this by sending your membership check to our wonderful treasurer for \$20 to Dick Hopes. Make your check payable to LCWWC and mail it to Dick Hopes, 1139 Green Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611. Dick will not only send you a membership card but put you on the mailing list for the Newsletter and provide information for much more. Such as the Annual BBQ, special events and much more.

