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Officers and Directors

John Marcon, Barry Humphus,  
Bubba Cheramie, Brent Evans, George Kuffel

### OCTOBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Harrison Paint Company on Kirkman has been around in the Lake Charles market for many years. And owner Tom Simms has been in the finishing business over 38 years. Harrison also sells flooring including carpet and tile products and more. They offer a complete finish and floor line of products with expert assistance in choosing just the right product for your project.

Simms focused on polyurethane products this meeting. Polyurethane is a resin based finish — actually a modified urethane. Most are lacquer type though there are also varnish type poly products. Most of today's poly finishes contain drying agents that provide for very fast drying times — as little as 15 minutes. Most brands come in satin and gloss. Some common brands are Deft, Minwax, Spar and Old Masters.

Tom pointed out that polyurethane finishes will sometimes react with the zinc sterate in sanding sealers. It's best to do a test piece before using a poly over standard shellac-based sealers. Read the label — some sealers are specifically made for poly overcoats.

Several members asked about exterior finishes. Tom suggested the old stand-by from Spar as a time-tested solution. Minwax's Helmsman is also one that works well. Both contain UV additives that protect against the sun but are typically more amber in color than an interior product such as Deft.

Simms also discussed table top coatings and several adhesive products such as Franklin's TiteBond line. While TiteBond II is water resistant, a two-part resorcinol-based product such as from DAP, has the best water resistance. Polyurethane glues also do well for water resistance. Gorilla Glue is a good example of a polyurethane glue.

Norman Morin and others asked about product shelf life (after opening). Tom suggested a couple of techniques. The easiest is to move the product to a smaller container and fill to the top. This reduces the product's exposure to oxygen. George Kuffel suggested that you can float a piece of wax paper (cut to the inside diameter of the can) over the surface to help reduce exposure. There are also commercial products available that are an inert gas (such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), that displaces the air in a can. You can make your own CO<sub>2</sub> gas by mixing a teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 cup of vinegar in a clean container. This measurement yields about two quarts of CO<sub>2</sub>. When the reaction slows, quickly pour the colorless CO<sub>2</sub> (NOT the sludge remains) into your finish container and seal the container. The CO<sub>2</sub> is heavier than air and displaces the air in the can. This works equally well with paints and other finishes.

To extend the life of white glues, such as TiteBond, you can add up to 5% water to the product. More than 5% will substantially reduce its adhesive ability. You can also use a small amount of water to extend the setup time of these glues.

Tom offered those present a substantial discount on all the TiteBond products in stock — 1/2 off the regular price.

<http://org.laol.net/woodworker>

There was a line of members buying lots of TiteBond at the end of the meeting. Tom said that he would continue to offer discounts on other products to LCWW members in the future. You must show your membership card to receive the discount. The Franklin glue offer is good until the end of October. Tom later added that he would offer his store as a place for future LCWW meetings. We'll see him again. Thanks Tom!

Bubba Cheramie was nominated, 2nd'd by Norman Morin and elected as a board member to replace Camile Vincent.

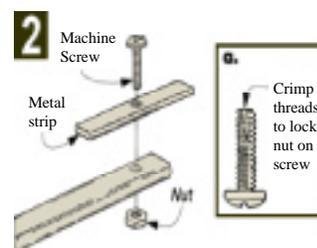
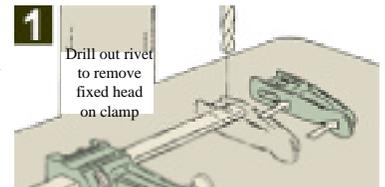
### BENCH HOLDFAST



It seems to me that bench holdfasts are a lot less common these days than they used to be. That's too bad — they're really a great way to secure boards to a workbench. But don't take my word for it. If your bench has holes for bench dogs, you can build one for yourself. All you

need is a common bar clamp, a scrap piece of bar stock, and a few minutes.

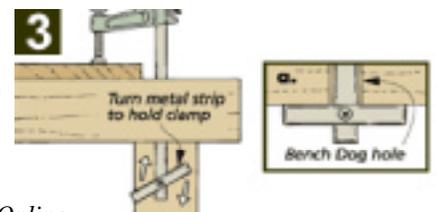
To make a holdfast, first remove the fixed jaw from the clamp by drilling out the rivet that holds the jaw to the clamp bar, as you can see in Figure 1.



Next, take a small metal strip and fasten it to the bar with a machine screw and nut, as shown in Figure 2. Then to complete the holdfast, you can "lock" the nut in place by crimping the threads of the screw at the end (Figure 2a).

To use the holdfast, just swivel the metal strip so it's parallel to the bar and slip it through a dog hole in the workbench. Then swivel the strip back to hold the clamp, as shown in Figure 3a.

Store your holdfast under the workbench so you don't confuse it with a regular bar clamp and so it's handy when you need it. *From Wood Online*



### COMING UP.....

November 18, Saturday — No Meeting, See Back  
December 9, Saturday — Annual Christmas party at  
Nemo Robinson's Shop

## SERIES ON WOODS

Over the next several months, we're going to give you information on a variety of useful woods. They'll go alphabetically, so if you want information on Zebra wood, just be patient, we'll get there. In general, we'll describe the wood, show a photo of the tree it comes from and give you as many characteristics and uses as we have time and space in the newsletter.

### BALCK CHERRY: POOR MAN'S MAHOGANY

Today we think of black cherry as one of the classic furniture woods, it wasn't always that way. Settlers in the Appalachian Mountains, for example, valued the tree's fruit more than its wood. They dubbed the tree "rum cherry" because from its dark purple cherries they brewed a potent liquor. Also, black cherry's inner bark contributed to tonics and cough medicines. Elsewhere, though, the wood was more appreciated.

Early New England furniture-makers often found the price of fashionable Honduras mahogany beyond reach and turned instead to native black cherry. Because black cherry wood eventually darkens to a deep reddish brown, these frugal craftsmen mixed what they called "New England mahogany" in with the real thing.



Allegheny and Appalachian Mountains of the East. There, in forest conditions, trees grow to 100' heights and 4' diameters.

Young black cherry has satiny, dark, red-brown bark that develops into gray flaky scales as the tree matures. Oval-shaped, pointed leaves appear in the spring. Then, before the new, reddish leaves turn dark green, flowing clusters of white flowers bloom. By late summer, purple, pea-sized cherries appear. Birds eat them and distribute the seeds.



The heartwood of black cherry has a light pinkish-brown color when freshly cut. Sunlight deepens it to a dark orange-red. The cream-colored sapwood, however, never darkens to match.

Black cherry's straight, close, and finely textured grain generally features a gently waving figure. Sometimes, trees yield boards with rippled or quilted patterns. Dark spots—actually gum pockets—often appear in black cherry heartwood. Avoid selecting these boards, or at least keep pockets to a minimum.

At 35 pounds per cubic foot, black cherry weighs less than maple. And, it is two-thirds as hard but just as strong and stable.

Uses in woodworking: Rated as a fine cabinet and furniture stock by centuries of craftsmen, black cherry has few limits. It takes abuse as tables, desks, and chairs. Black cherry also becomes musical instruments and architectural paneling, as well as millwork. It's only moderately durable outdoors.

Machine: Select boards with a minimum of sapwood and gum pockets. Then, remember these tips:

Black cherry planes extremely well due to its fine, close grain, but take light cuts in jointing. Dull blades burnish it. We've found that for some reason steel blades burn black cherry less than carbide-tipped blades. Avoid burning by feeding the stock without hesitation. In crosscutting, carbide blades outperform steel. Except for the common twist drill, any type of bit does well. However, use slower drill press speeds (about 250 rpm). A pause will burn the wood.

In routing, black cherry doesn't chip or tear like maple, but it will burn during a split-second hesitation. Take light passes without stopping. All types of woodworking adhesives work well, as long as you carefully control squeeze-out. It mars a clear finish more jarringly than on other woods. To check this, wipe joints with thinner. Because black cherry is nearly as hard as maple, it scratches easily in cross-grain sanding, so never overlap strokes where joints bring the grain together at right angles, such as the corner of a face frame. For best results, use a cabinet scraper to remove scratches between grit changes.

You probably won't want to stain cherry, except to blend sapwood with darker heartwood. For control, aniline dye is recommended. To hasten cherry's natural tendency to darken, mix a solution of 1 or 2 ounces of sodium hydroxide (*this is better known as lye, and it is very poisonous — Ed.*) to a gallon of water, brush it on the wood, then neutralize with water. Experiment for shades. Although oil finishes and clear lacquers or varnishes work equally well on cherry, you'll get a smoother finish on this fine-grained wood if you thin the first coat to act as a sealer. Then, sand with 400-grit or 0000 steel wool after it's dry and recoat.

Carving: Although hard, black cherry takes detail and finishes beautifully. For an eye-catching natural-finish carving, follow these suggestions:

Flat-sawed wood has the most grain pattern; quarter-sawed boards (growth rings perpendicular to the width of the board), the least.

Turning: Cherry turns nearly effortlessly, as long as you use sharp tools to shear the wood. To sand, shut off the lathe and start with 150-grit, working only with the grain.

## ABLE TO CANE

During the Summer, a friend asked me if there were anyone in the Lake Charles Woodworkers Club that did furniture restoration. I said maybe, and after polling several members, most were interested in new woodworking and not restoration. Restoration is somewhat tedious and generally unrewarding. When you do restoration, it's mostly for your own stuff and not someone else's. Restoration demands a great deal of time and you often can never really charge enough to the customer to justify the effort you make.

But as she is a good friend and her engineer spouse is on assignment in the Middle East for two years (he's into concrete — not wood), I agreed. The project was to re-cane a chair purchased just before they were married some 30 years ago. It was a special piece of furniture for both of them. The other problem (besides the blown out cane) was that a spindle of this Windsor-style swivel chair was broken. As they had the broken piece, it was relatively simple to turn a new one. The only real problem was turning the red oak I had. After one attempt on a solid piece, I fabricated stock from two glued up thinner pieces. This worked well and I installed it after boring out the old remains.

As I had done some caning in the past, I reread the reference material I had (*Repair, Refinish and Reupholster Furniture, Brann, 1970*) and began.

There are two basic types of cane for chairs — pre-woven and long strand. I have done the latter on an antique rocker inherited from my grandmother. Long strand cane means that the item will have equally spaced drilled holes around its circumference. The holes have a particular diameter for the cane to be used. We'll do a story on this type of canning in a future Newsletter. If the item has a groove around its perimeter, it requires pre-woven or web cane.

Recaning with cane webbing requires the complete removal of existing spline, webbing and glue from groove. Use steam or hot water to loosen glue holding the spline. Apply hot water to a small area until the spline and webbing loosen up. Use just enough hot water to soften glue, then, placing a small block, a 1 x 2 x 4" to 6", the under webbing, tap the block with hammer to separate the moistened section from the frame. Keep the glue in groove pliable until it can be scraped out with a nailset or better yet, a cane chisel. (A cane chisel is just a regular chisel with a 1/8 inch wide bevel — you can get them from cane suppliers such as Cane & Basket Supply Co., 213-939-9644).

Use new spline that fits groove after webbing has been pressed into position. Spline comes in small, medium and wide widths.

Cut the new cane webbing to overall size the area requires, plus about 1" all around. Soak the webbing from five to ten minutes in warm water or until it is pliable. It helps to soak the spline as well. Place the webbing in position. Bend up the edge if the shape of the frame requires the same.

To press webbing into groove, make a tapered tamper, or wedge. Cut the edge to width required to press webbing into



1" x 2" Wedge

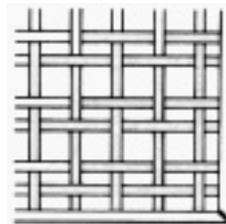
the groove without damaging the webbing or the groove.

With the cane, shiny face up and positioned with equal margin all the way around, and with the strands running parallel with the front of the chair, clamp the webbing in position with a 1 x 2 inch, wedge. The point of the wedge, as suggested, should be just enough to fit in the groove with the cane.

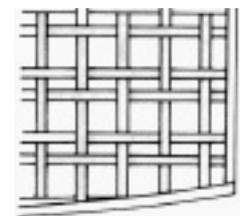
Using a mallet, press the webbing into the groove along a straight edge. Use care not to break the webbing. When you get to a curved area, use a short nosed wedge. Start by pressing webbing in center of a radius, then work out from curve in both directions.

If caning starts to dry, moisten it with a wet sponge. Be sure to position strands of webbing parallel to frame. Take out the slack, but don't apply pressure. Too much pressure will pull the webbing out of shape. Remove the clamp when you do a side. If you have difficulty keeping webbing in a groove, cut a few more wedges and insert these where needed. I used about five wedges as I did this job. You can use more or less as you wish. Always use a rubber or wooden mallet as the soft cane will break under the blows of a steel hammer. As the cane dries it will tighten.

When you have tucked the webbing into the groove all the way around and strands are parallel and at right angles to front of the frame, apply white glue in the groove and drive the spline into the slot, using a mallet. Apply the spline in one piece or use several pieces as needed. The pieces should butt end-to-end until the entire groove is filled.



Mitered



Butt

After the spline has been inserted and webbing is secured in place and dry, use a sharp chisel to cut the surplus webbing flush with the top edge of spline. A knife or razor blade will tend to tear and pull out the cane — a sharp chisel is best.

Next, apply glue to the top of the spline. Use white glue (such as Elmer's School Glue) and not a poly product such as TiteBond. The reason is that you may want to reverse this if the bottom ever drops out of the chair again. White glue is water soluble and TiteBond is water resistant. Miter cut the ends of a square shaped area and butt corners where a curved area meets a straight edge. Allow the webbing to dry thoroughly before using the chair.

Replacing cane webbing is relatively easy for anyone to do. And furniture restoration can be a very satisfying task for any woodworker. Next time, we'll explore long strand caning techniques.

*Barry Humphus.*

