

Jeff Cormier, President
Sandy Kramer, Treasurer

Officers and Directors

Barry Humphus, Editor, George Kuffel
Gary Rock, Jeff Cormier, Dick Truth

Mentoring Program - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volunteered to help. Give them a call. Jeff Cormier: 582-3278; George Kuffel: 478-2707; John Marcon: 478-0646; Chuck Middleton: 625-3134; Gary Rock: 433-1679; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Dick Truth: 583-2683. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

September Meeting Highlights

LCWWC President Jeff Cormier was our host this month at his well equipped shop. Besides the usual donuts, Mary Cormier made a batch of her great sausage biscuits. Thanks to both.

Jeff has requested that a member volunteer to be the next club president as Jeff has been this for two years and wants a break. Please contact Jeff should you be interested. This is not hard work at all as you have the support of Treasurer Sandy Kramer and Editor Barry Humphus to help make things run smoothly.

Jeff also announced that Larry and Leddie Cooper will host the Holiday meeting in December. Jeff asked that we relieve them a bit by bringing side items and deserts if possible. Please contact Joe Comeaux as he will coordinate this list.

Mr. Thibodeaux began the Show and Tell by passing around a small chunk of eucalyptus wood. Home Builders in Sulphur (one of our wonderful sponsors) now carries the wood. The wood is from the myrtle family of plants and its habitat is very wide growing in the tropics as well as northern climates. It can come as a bush or be as tall as 200 feet. It is the tallest tree that has flowers. The leaves and bark have medicinal uses and the oil extracted is a natural insecticide. The wood carried by Home Builders is sustainable and grown on farms like pine trees.

Woodweb.com says "In general eucalyptus is a very good wood and is used for construction, fine furniture and everything in between. It is common to have internal stresses in the wood (growth stresses, not drying stresses). Accommodating these stresses can require extra effort compared to most North American hardwood species. Some eucalyptus species are quite dense, and require special care when machining. Often the grain is too fine to easily determine if the wood is flatsawn or quartersawn." Eltee's sample seemed very dense and heavy which is amazing for such a fast growing wood. Someone needs to get a chunk to turn (Hint-Gary) and report on this.

Jeff's Safety discussion was on safe table saw use, reminding use that there are great replacement switches avail-

able and low cost that are magnetic meaning that if the power goes off, the switch must be reset before the saw will come back on. This is a great safety feature.

J.W. Anderson discussed the new Marathon series of table saw blades called the Marples line of very high quality blades. Jeff also mentioned a wonderful saw blade pitch remover from Dollar General called "Awesome Grease Remover" for a buck. I have used this to remove grease and it really works and so well at that, I'll now steal the bottle from under the sink and move it to my shop!

Eltee brought a nice knitting caddie he built from a plan and turned his own dowel rods. He also had a couple of scrawl saw items also from plans. Steve Thomas just amazes each time he brings one of his segmented turnings. This bowl was of coffee nut and basswood.

There was a discussion regarding the right glues to use for segmented bowls. Steve Thomas suggested that because standard urea-formaldehyde resin adhesives (yellow wood glue) move a bit, they conform well to the movement of wood thus making them ideal for this application.

Master turner Gary Rock combined sycamore, cherry, black wood? and aluminium for a wonderful turning. He mentioned that he sold three of his art peices recently at the Lafayette show.at The Vault. J.W. Anderson brought us oneof his great sycamore peices - a three leg small table in spalted wood.

Joe Comeaux is still busy with his turned pens and pencils as well as other items of interest. This time he showed a hard maple scratch awl plus a pen and pencil set of zebra wood. The pen and pencil set was the Bring Back Item this month. Don Elfert brought us a very nice foot stool for donation finished in Early American stain with a poly coat or three. Don also won the Show and Tell drawing this month while J.W. Anderson won the Bring Back Item. I think we may want to follow J.W. or Eltee around and particularly when they go to the casinos. Just bet what ever they do and you may be a winner.

Comming Up . . . Saturday, October 13 at 9:00 A.M. at the shop of George Kuffel. Great all year round in this nice shop.

Keep Safety Glasses Handy

Many of us are bad or at least lazy about keeping our safety glasses at hand. Many of the injuries that woodworkers encounter are eye issues - getting something in your eye is never a pleasant experience. Safety glasses worn at all times while using power tools just makes a great deal of sense.

Jeff Cormier emphasizes safety as should all of the leaders of the Lake Charles Woodworkers. I do this at my job as well even though I'm a college teacher. I chair the Campus Safety Committee and always tell my students where they can find the fire extinguisher in my lab as well as the emergency kit.

Having your safety glasses right at hand is something you must consider in your shop. Think about this right now - where are your safety glasses in your shop? Hanging on a peg, out of reach, not even in your shop? If so, consider another placement of this important personal protective device. It should be where you are working, it must be at your hand and immediately. Consider that a few of our membership over the years have lost bits and pieces and while that is not good, losing your vision ends your woodworking forever or what ever reason. Keep those safety glasses at hand and at your work place at all times. Wear them, please. *Barry Humphus.*

Cutting Biscuit Grooves with a Router

If you need to cut a few biscuit grooves but don't own a biscuit (plate) joiner - this is no problem, cutting the grooves with your router and a slot-cutter bit is easy. So I'll bet you're wondering if it's so easy then why even own a biscuit joiner? Well there are pros and cons:

It is a great solution if you don't own a biscuit joiner and you cut less than 30 biscuit grooves a year. It is very accurate for flush aligning two workpieces.

If you can't afford a \$200 or so biscuit joiner, then a router and a \$40 biscuit joining router bit set is a real money saver, assuming you already own a router.

This technique can be used to cut grooves in tight corners where sometimes the body of a biscuit joiner interferes. Knowing this work around may be useful in those situations even if you own a biscuit joiner. The down side is that it is way slower than using a biscuit joiner.

To cut a groove you have to plunge the bit into the workpiece, move the router a distance, and then remove the router bit from the cut. Routed groove lengths can be inconsistent. Biscuit joiners cut groove lengths right-on every time.

Grooves cut using a router setup do not match the shape of a biscuit as well as grooves cut using a biscuit joiner.

That makes aligning biscuits in the routed grooves a littler trickier, and the resulting joints are not quite as strong. Although it is possible to rout grooves in beveled edges, doing so is much more complicated when using a router.

To do this you need a midsize handheld router with a 1/2-in. collect preferably, and a 5/32-in. thick slot cutter router bit. Infinity Tools offers a very nice \$40 bit set that cuts grooves for #20, #10, and #0 biscuits. It's one cutter with three interchangeable bearings.

To rout the groove you will lay out a center mark and a routing start and stop mark. The layouts for different size biscuits. Mount the slot-cutter bit with the appropriate size bearing in your router and set the bit height. Clamp your workpiece securely to your workbench. Rest the router sub base on the workpiece and plunge the slot-cutter in so the bit shank is relatively centered on the start mark. Move the router right until the bit shank aligns with the end mark, and then pull the slot-cutter out of the groove. You'll get the hang of this rather quickly. Using a clear router sub-base may be helpful. Another idea is to test this with a scrap peice before doing the actual job just to make sure.

#20 groove cutting setup: Use the 1-7/8" dia. slot cutter with the 7/8" bearing. Mark a centerline and then place a start and stop mark 7/16" on each side of that centerline. That will cut a 2-1/2" long x 1/2" deep groove.

#10 groove cutting setup. Use the 1-7/8" dia. slot cutter with the 1-1/8" bearing. Mark a centerline and then place a start and stop mark 3/8" on each side of that centerline. That will cut a 2-1/4" long x 3/8" deep groove.

#0 groove cutting setup. Use the 1-7/8" dia. slot cutter with the 1-1/4" bearing. Mark a centerline and then place a start and stop mark 5/16" on each side of that centerline. That will cut a 2" long x 5/16" deep groove. *From Woodworkers Guild edited by Barry Humphus.*

Do You Need a Spiral Cutterheads for Your Jointer?

The image below is certainly not your grandpa's jointer cutterhead. It's called a spiral cutterhead. It is a newer design that uses the concept of insert tooling rather than tradit



Do You need a Spiral Cutterhead - continued
tional straight knives installed in the cutterhead. Small square carbide cutters are placed in close proximity to one another along a machined spiral pattern in a steel head. This same technology is available for other tools as well, such as planers, shapers, and moulders, but since the purchasing criteria may be different for these applications, this will focus on the use of spiral cutterheads in jointers.

Spiral cutterheads are considered an upgrade for a jointer, and generally carry a premium of \$300 to \$1,700 depending upon the size of your cutterhead. Many manufacturers now offer this as an option that can be factory installed in their jointers when initially purchased, and they are also available as a retrofit that you can install yourself. In my opinion they are superior to traditional knife-based cutterheads in nearly every respect, and the question of whether it makes sense for an individual to purchase one comes down to whether the incremental cost is worth it to that particular woodworker, given their specific requirements.

To evaluate whether or not it is worth the money to you, here are some of the key benefits to consider:

Spiral cutterheads utilize carbide steel inserts, while most knife-based cutterheads incorporate knives made of high speed steel. Carbide normally holds an edge for at least three times as long as high speed steel, and much longer than that in many cases. This translates to less time between swapping out cutters. Plus, the insert cutters for spiral cutterheads normally have four cutting edges on each one, so if one gets dull it can simply be rotated, and the jointer is immediately back in production. Depending upon the cost of sharpening and replacing knives, it is unlikely that this longevity advantage alone will ever single handedly justify the cost of the spiral cutter upgrade, but it is a factor that can offset some of the price differential, so it is worth consideration.

Depending upon the design of a given cutterhead, swapping out knives can be a cumbersome, time consuming process. With spiral cutterheads, the process could not be much simpler. Remove one screw, rotate the cutter 90 degrees to a fresh edge, tighten it down, and resume jointing. In fact this is a problem with my small Delta jointer. While I could retrofit it with a spiral cutting head, in my case it may not be worth the effort and expense.

Setting knives can be frustrating. This can take a while, and can lead to inconsistent results in getting the knives consistently set to the perfect height. Of all the factors to consider with spiral cutterheads, this one appeals to me the most, as I am not a great fan of swapping knives in a jointer.

Minimal disruption from knicks in knives. With high speed steel knives, if you nick one of your blades, you ei-

ther have to remove the blades and sharpen the set, or try to slide the knives so that the knicked portions of the blade no longer align. This presents either a cost factor, hassle, or both. With spiral cutterheads, you simply rotate as described above and you are back in business. Plus, since the inserts are made of carbide, the likelihood of getting knicks in the cutters goes way down in the first place.

The spiral cutterheads operate much more quietly than knife-based cutterheads as reported. Although I don't own a sound level meter so I can't quantify this, the difference to my ears is pretty dramatic as three reviews report.

If you have a requirement to joint man-made materials such as MDF or plywood, you can do this with confidence using a carbide insert cutterhead, while this is not recommended with traditional knives (although I will admit that I have jointed plywood with knives from time to time).

A minor benefit is that the smaller cutters on spiral cutterheads break the material into smaller pieces, so slightly less suction is required to extract the waste back to a central vac system should you have that.

Better surface on figured wood. This is the point that seems to get all of the attention around the internet. From my standpoint, I have used a jointer with HSS knives for over a decade and have had adequate results when face jointing figured stock, provided my knives are sharp and set properly, the jointer is tuned, and I always take light cuts with a slow feed rate. I don't rely on a jointer for a finish-ready surface, so even with a spiral cutterhead, you will continue to scrape or sand to a final surface. Having said that, the results you may see in so far using a spiral cutterhead on figured wood may be nothing short of spectacular. Always test this.

When looking into spiral cutterheads, you will hear the terms "spiral" and "helical" used nearly interchangeably, but there is a slight difference between these two designs.

Both designs feature a machined steel head with small square cutters placed along the surface in a spiral pattern. The primary difference lies in the orientation of each cutter. Spiral cutterheads position each blade so that the active cutting edge is perpendicular to the jointer's feed direction.

Helix cutterheads on the other hand operate more like a sheer or skew cut taken with a hand plane, as the cutters are positioned at an angle to the feed rate. In theory this shearing action should provide a superior finish, just as it does with a sheer cut on a hand plane. It is difficult to substantiate a claim that one is better than the other without employing some level of magnification. *From Woodworkers Guild edited by Barry Humphus.*