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### FEBRUARY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The phrase "Lowe's Knows" had special meaning to the LC WW Club this month as we gathered in one of the Lake Charles store's training rooms for our monthly meeting. Lowe's employees Amy Endenfield and Teri Beard were our presenters.

Teri started out telling us about Lowe's in general and some of the history of the company. Founded in 1946 in North Carolina, the company now has more than 640 stores, 100,000 employees and over \$15 billion in sales annually. Lowe's encourages continuing education by employees through awarding pay incentives to those who master special areas and pass required tests. Specialists include outdoor equipment, gardening, electrical, plumbing, lumber, tools and many more.



The Lake Charles store opened in 1977, moved to a larger store in 1991 and to their present facility in 1998. Teri mentioned a new program for children that they have started — Kids Clinic. On a Saturday, parents can bring their children or grand children in the store where employees show them some basic home care skills such as nailing, sawing, painting and more.

Amy Endenfield is a tool specialist for Lowe's. Her background includes over 10 years experience with hand and power tools at Flor Daniels before joining Lowe's three years ago.

Amy discussed and showed several new cutoff tools on the market from Dremel, DeWalt and others. Especially popular is the RotoZip product. Several members have the RotoZip and members discussed some of the pros and cons of their use.

Most of the manufacturers and especially Dremel, have accessories that add functionality to the tool. The Dremel line, for example, has a router kit, drill press unit, grout removal kit, chain saw sharpening kit and others. By the way, most Dremel tools (Models 395, 285, 275 and Multipro) fit Chuck Middleton's great Mini Router Table design (August, 2000 issue and in August 2000 Wood Magazine).

Another tool that was of interest is the Drill Doctor from Darex Industries. Darex is a professional tool sharpening company specializing in industrial cutting tool sharpening products. In 1996, they released a consumer product designed to sell for under \$150.00. This drill sharpening system comes in several models with the high-end one (Model 750) at \$149.00.

The Model 750 handles 3/32" to 3/4" drills with both 113 and 135 degree angles. The Model 550 can handle up to 1/2" bits at the same angles. The unit can sharpen standard, masonry and split point bits. All will sharpen HHS, Cobalt, Carbide and TiN Coated drills and even restores broken bits to like new. More information can be had at the Darex web site at [www.drilldr.com](http://www.drilldr.com).

After the tool presentation, the group went to the lumber department where Chuck showed us some of the standard lumber products available at Lowe's. He mentioned that many custom items can be ordered through the lumber department including custom cut cypress.

A membership list for the current members was provided to Amy. She will use this to add each member to the Lowe's Woodworking Newsletter that goes out monthly. This full color newsletter contains lots of tips and techniques for woodworkers. She also asked that members contribute to this newsletter by sending in an article or two. Barry Humphus said he'd be happy to help any member that wants to try his or her hand at this. Also, thanks to the Lowe's folks for the hats, yard sticks, travel cups and literature (and the donuts and coffee).



For Show and Tell, Rod Nunally brought one of his beautiful scroll work pieces. This one was a portrait of movie western actor John Wayne. It was so appreciated by Lowe's employee Chuck, that they made a deal on the spot. So bring your work and sell it to the presenters! Plus, Aaron Andrepoint said he has patterns for Al Gore and George W. Bush!

Rick Haught brought a large bag of syringes to give away. These make a wonderful applicator for glue. He said that the easiest way to get the glue into the syringe is to use a small plastic tube attached to the tip with the other end in the glue bottle. Then you just draw the air out of the tube and suck the glue into the syringe. The glue stays fresh by using the supplied cap. Fill up several and put them away for quick use. Rick said he would bring more to the next meeting as these were all quickly grabbed up by members.

As you know, many a woodworker regularly carries a knife. Lee Frazier found that this got him into a bit of a fix at the Washington D.C. airport as knives over a certain size are against the law there. So if you are traveling by air, take Lee's advise and leave the big one at home and carry the pen knife.

### COMING UP.....

March 3, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. — C & L Blacksmith with Larry Carlin. Note the date — a week early this month.

## USING WOOD PLUGS



Woodscrews are a sure-fire way to assemble a project securely. The problem is there are times when you don't want the screw heads to show. Simple problem right? Just counterbore the screw hole and then use a wood plug like the

ones shown to cover up the head of the screw.

The type of plug you use and how you install it can make a big difference in how it looks. For instance, most store-bought plugs are cut from the end of a dowel. So they absorb stain or finish like a sponge. This makes the plugs darker than the surrounding wood so they end up standing out like a sore thumb.



An easy way to get around this is to cut your own plugs. This way, you can cut a face grain plug that will absorb finish more easily. Another advantage is that you can use the scrap pieces remaining from a project to create an almost invisible plug, as shown in the photo. Or maybe you'd like to highlight the plug by using a type of wood that contrasts in color.

Regardless of the look, you still want the plug to fit the hole like a cork in a bottle. To do this, follow the simple six-step process detailed below.

1. With a plug cutter chucked in a drill press, cut the plugs in a scrap piece from the project. Be sure to make a few extra. This way, you'll be able to select a plug that best matches the color and grain of your project.

2. The next step is to free the plugs from the workpiece. To do this, clamp a tall auxiliary fence to the bandsaw table and cut the plugs so they drop free.

3. With a pile of plugs in front of you, it's tempting to start gluing them in place. But take a minute to select just the right plug for each hole that matches the grain and color of the surrounding wood.

4. To avoid a big mess, don't apply glue to the plug. Instead, brush glue around the sides of the hole. Then tap the plugs in place. Just don't overdo it. The plug doesn't have to "bottom out." All you're looking for is a snug fit.

5. Now it's just a matter of removing the part of the plug sticking above the workpiece. To avoid scratching the workpiece, slip a scrap of posterboard (or plastic laminate) with



a hole in it over the plug as you saw off the waste.

6. With the excess waste removed, all that's left to do is sand each of the plugs flush with the surface of the workpiece. A block and some sandpaper make quick work of this.



## AVOIDING STRIPPING A SCREW

We're often in a rush to complete a project and "forget" to drill a pilot hole for the screw. Drywall and decking screws can often be driven without a pilot hole in softwood but when they break you're left with a problem. Electric drills speed up the process of screwing in a wood screw but tip the drill a little to side and you may be facing a stripped head. Let's face it, we've all encountered these problems in the past and have had to deal with them.

**Removing Broken Screws** —If the screw breaks above the surface of the wood it can usually be extracted by grabbing the end firmly with a pair of vice grips or pliers and wound out of the hole. If the screw is being used for holding power and broke below the surface it may be worth leaving it in place, patching the hole, and fastening another screw near the broken one. If you must remove the screw there are a couple of options. Broken screw extractors are available from most wood-working supply stores and some hardware stores.

The most popular design is simply a small metal tube with teeth cut into the end. The extractor is inserted into the drill and a "core sample" is taken from the wood around the screw. A wood dowel is glued into place and a new screw can then be fastened into the repair. Another option is to dig around the screw until you can grab the end with a pair of needle nosed vice grips or pliers. The remaining scar can be drilled out and a matching plug can be used to repair the defect. Use a plug cutter to cut a matching plug from a piece of scrapwood to match the grain of the wood. If you were trying to install a hinge and one of the screws broke you can probably epoxy the head into the hole. Most hinges will hold just fine with one screw missing. Don't try saving more time by drilling in a second screw next to the first. Often of second screw will twist in the hole or worse, press against the first and split the wood.

**Tips to Avoid Breaking a Screw**

1. Always drill a pilot hole in hardwood
2. When attaching a hinge with brass screws attach the hinge with steel screws first, then replace with brass.
3. Use wax or soap to lubricate stubborn screws.

**Removing Screws with Stripped Heads**

Using a drill to drive in a screw is often a great time saver but

care must be taken to keep from tipping the drill and stripping the head. If you do end up stripping a screw's head and can't back it out try using a pair of vice grips to grab the head and twist it back out. If the head is below the surface of the wood, use the correct size screwdriver and a hammer to firmly set the screwdriver into the screw's head. Then, with significant downward pressure, back the screw out until you can grab it with a vice grip or pliers.

#### Tips to Avoid Stripping a Screw's Head

1. Correctly match the screwdriver to the screw.
2. Take care to avoid tipping a drill when driving the screws.
3. Maintain firm downward pressure to keep the head seated in the screw. Pre-drill pilot holes for the screw. From *WoodZone*

### BLACKSMITHING AND METALSMITHING

March Meeting: Saturday, March 3rd

Question: How many Professional Blacksmiths are there in Southwest Louisiana? Answer: One. Our presenter for the March 3rd meeting will be Blacksmith Larry Carlin, owner of C & L Blacksmith in Lake Charles.

Larry Carlin has been a professional blacksmith for some 8 years and his shop at 720 13th Street, Lake Charles, will be the location for our March meeting NOTE: The meeting will be a week earlier this month because of a conflict with another event in Larry's busy schedule.

Because blacksmithing is hot work, especially in the Summer months, the shop is very open. If it is predicted to be cold on March 3rd, please wear warm clothing.

C & L does all of the traditional blacksmith work: tool repair, welding, iron forging and tempering and much more. For example, Larry does a great deal of work fabricating bush hog and custom mower blades.

Along with traditional furnace and forging equipment Larry has a wonderful collection of turn of the century machines he uses every day including a massive drill press rescued from the basement of the Charleston Hotel. The hotel once had a livery operation and they used the drill press for boring wagon wheel centers and more.

Join us March 3rd for a trip into the past from one of Louisiana's rare professional blacksmiths.