

Steve Thomas, President
Sandy Kramer, Treasurer

Officers and Directors

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

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 Trouth: 583-2683. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

May Meeting Highlights

The shop of Jeff and Mary Cormier was our meeting place this month. We are always pleased to be here and Mary made some of her great sausage biscuits. Thanks to both.

Steve Thomas started us off with a discuss on table saw safety. Particularly when your saw blade is at an angle, you should hold down both ends of the work piece as this puts a great deal of stress on the piece and can cause kick-back or at best, the piece can climb the blade. Of course there are also good tips regarding table saws. Wear safety glasses, goggles or a face shield at all times while using the saw; if the cutting operation is dusty, wear a dust mask; the height of the blade should be set just slightly higher than the stock being cut. It should never be more than 1/2 inch above the height of the stock. This is to ensure that if your hand slip you only receive a slight cut and do not lose a limb. There are lots more tips found at <http://www.tru.ca/hsafety/workinglearningsafely/work/tablesaw.html>.

Mr. McCorquodale told us about leaving bark on a piece should you need. Choose wood cut in the Winter. He said that the cambian layer of a tree dries in the Summer months. If cut in the Summer, logs can drop the bark but a Winter cut will not. At least for the most part.

Steve Thomas also showed us some finishing techniques that he had prepared comparing both a water-based stain vs. an oil based stain onto a work piece for the same color. Of course, oil-based stains stay largely on the surface of wood whereas water-based stains soak into the wood. The issue is that water-based stains raise the wood grain and you must carefully sand to remove the burrs. To avoid this, pre-wet the wood, sand and then coat with the water stain.

Mr. Rock suggested something that is important. Almost all water-based stains (alkaline) can be mixed with alcohol instead of water. This means that there is no grain rise during application. You must use pure denatured alcohol rather than so-called rubbing alcohol (this contains lots of water). In fact there are many water-based dyes that can be used with alcohol including those from the normal sources such as WoodCraft as well as your local grocery store (Ritz). Ritz products also gives you more than 250 colors. In fact almost all dyes for cloth work very well for wood.

For Show and Tell we began with Mr. Eltee Thibodeaux with a scroll work of religious nature. J.W. Anderson brought us an old jig saw and a cool file with a clamp-on handle. J.W. also made some toast tongs that he gave away.

Bubba Cherimie showed off pictures of a deck chair he recently built of cypress. He used Thompson's seal product to finish this for outdoor use. George Carr came with a bass wood chip carved piece. He used colored pencils for color and generally uses three or more coats of poly for a finish. George said he would like to do a presentation in the future regarding chip carving. We really look forward to this. George also discussed a recent workshop he attended in New Braunsfels with Wayne Baston.

Ray Kibodeau did a bowl of magnolia finished with his mix of boiled linseed oil, shellack and alcohol. This can be an excellent finish and with the addition of a small amount of Japan dryer, is great. Ray also had a nice jewelry carving.

Joe Comeaux finished his wonderful Texas Star piece made of mesquite, spalted pecan and walnut and Steve Thomas showed a photo of a computer desk of oak as well as some of his recent cedar bowls and the Bring Back of beech, basswood, purple heart and walnut.

Gary Rock had an elm splated bowl with flutting and finished with wipe poly he called a 'dog' bowl.

George Carr and Steve Thomas won the Show and Tell gift cards while Ray won the Bring Back drawing (Steve Thomas's bowl).



Coming Up . . . The wonderful shop of Joe Comeaux. Saturday, June 8, 2013 at 9:00 A.M. Please join us at Joe Comeaux's shop for a great meeting.

Rolling Around in Your Shop

If your workshop isn't quite large enough -- and whose is -- you can alleviate a lot of annoyances by making shop equipment mobile. Need to make the best use of your limited space? Want to handle materials more easily? For these and many other problems, the solution just might be as simple as putting something on wheels. My band saw and table saw are on wheels and thus I can keep them mobile and moved out of the way when needed particularly for large projects.

The trick is to put the right wheels on your tools. The stem on a typical light-duty furniture caster snaps into a socket. Casters provide a great way to make equipment movable, but using the wrong ones can bring you to a screeching halt.

Begin your quest for the correct caster by determining the weight of the load you'd like to roll around. You don't have to accurately calculate the weight down to the last ounce and a realistic estimate is good enough. When you're estimating, though, be generous. For example, the manufacturer's shipping weight is a handy figure to use for tools and equipment. Take everything into account as you calculate the load. Include not only the weight of the tool, motor, and stand, but also the weight of any accessories -- outfeed rollers or table extensions on a tablesaw, for example.

Consider your usual shop practices, as well. If, for example, you routinely flop full sheets of 3/4" plywood or particleboard onto your tablesaw for cutting, figure on another 100 pounds of load on the casters carrying the saw.

Once you've determined the total weight, divide it by the number of casters you'll be using -- likely four -- to find the minimum load rating necessary for each one. If you want to put four casters on a tablesaw weighing 270 pounds, each will need to support 67 1/2 pounds. You'd be safe buying casters rated at 75 pounds, but ones tagged for a 50-pound limit probably wouldn't hold up well under normal usage.

Determining the caster load this way assumes even weight distribution. But, the weight may be biased. For instance, the headstock end of a lathe weighs more than the tailstock end. To put the lathe on four casters, play things safe by dividing the weight by two or three instead of four. Generally, you can't go wrong choosing heavier-duty casters for any application. Casters commonly mount with either stems or plates. Plates are best because they can carry much more weight. The style to use depends on the item you're mobilizing. Plate-mount casters are just the ticket for attaching to a solid flat surface, such as the bottom of a box or platform. Legs usually take stem-mount casters.

For example both my band saw and table saw are on platforms - 3/4 in plywood. This makes it easy to mount a plate caster.

For a steadier stance, mount the casters as far as possible from the center of the load. Often you can improve balance and stability by attaching them to outriggers.

To install plate-mount casters, simply position the caster, mark the mounting holes, and drill them. Then, attach the caster with nuts, bolts, and washers.

Plate-mount casters, available in fixed-wheel and swiveling styles, mount with either three or four bolts. Plate size, hole size, and hole spacing vary among different casters. Harbour Freight as well as Stines, Home Depot and Lowes have a great variety of these. Choose the ones that meet your needs.

To install the socket for a stem-mount caster, drill a hole the size of the socket's outside diameter straight into the bottom of the leg. Drill about 1/4" deeper than the length of the caster stem. Drive the socket into the drilled hole, then snap the caster into it. Non-socketed stem-mount casters fit into a hole the same size as the stem diameter.

There are three types of stems you'll find. One fits into a hole without a socket. The split ring on the shank holds it in place. The threaded stem screws into a 3/8 - 16 thread on many manufactured items, but could be installed through a hole with a nut and washers. The plain-stem caster fits a socket that has a retaining ring inside.

How easily your castered equipment rolls around depends to a great extent on the wheel diameter. Every wood chip, bit of litter, or imperfection in the floor poses an obstacle for small-diameter wheels. Bigger ones will roll right over such things.

As a general rule, choose casters with the largest wheels possible. Plan to use casters with wheels at least 2" or 2 1/2" in diameter to mobilize heavy shop equipment.

You'll generally find casters with solid rubber, plastic, or metal wheels. Any type will work for tool mobility. Rubber and plastic wheels roll smoothly across hard surfaces or even carpet. They are quiet and don't mar most floor surfaces.

Once you mobilize a piece of equipment, you have to keep it from rolling around when you try to use it. Luckily, that problem has some simple solutions.

Locking casters provide one answer. They immobilize the equipment by preventing the wheels from turning -- much the way setting the parking brake on your car locks the rear wheels to keep the car from rolling. Install a locking caster at each corner. Or just put a wedge under at least two wheels. Barry Humphus.

Plunge Routers and More

For many woodworkers, a plunge router is like one of those deluxe TV remote controls that has lots of buttons and functions: Most people only use a few of them because they don't understand their full capabilities. Welcome to the plight of the plunge router. Too often this versatile tool gets pushed to the side in favor of its simpler sibling, the fixed-base router.

My main router has multiple bases. In other words, this is a router that has a fixed base and a plunger base. It is a Porter-Cable with two bases, a model 6202. It is a nice combination and rather easy to change from fixed to plunger mode.

I would like to have a fleet of routers at my disposal, (I only have three) but few of us can afford that luxury. So I went on a quest for the ultimate router: one machine that does it all. After researching a list of what's required for a do-everything router, I found routers that meet those criteria -- three dedicated plunge routers and six multibase kits. The good news is that these routers can perform each requirement well enough to be the only router you might need, but a few do it much better than the rest.

There are a few things you need to consider. Ample power to run any bit, even the largest panel-raisers is good. But consider that the best HP you'll get from 120 volt home power is 1-1/2 HP. A claim of 3 HP or more just does not happen regardless of what the manufacturer may claim.

A variable-speed motor with soft-start and electronic feedback for maintaining speed under load is very nice. Note though, if you have some experience with a router, a soft start is not actually required.

There should be a good balance and features for handheld fixed-depth routing and it should be smooth with easy-to-use plunge action and features.

Through-the-base bit-height adjustability for router-table use is great and if you use a router with a router table with adjustments, this is something you should consider as a feature.

There are often helpful included accessories for many routers such as an edge guide, dust-collection attachments, multiple subbases with different-size openings, guide-bushing holder or adapter, subbase centering cone, and a carrying case or bag for storage. When purchasing a new router, always look for these.

Most available commercial and name brand routers will do by plowing through handheld tasks without bogging down, even when you feed them faster than you might normally would. If they are rated at 1-1/2 HP or more (see above), they will work as expected. If your router is rated at at least 15 amps, you are good to go.

Slow speeds work better for larger bits and most routers low speeds bottom out at 8,000 or 10,000 rpm. But some router's lowest speed are 12,000 rpm. Always check this as you review router specifications. Although they may not create a problem I still prefer slower speeds when routing woods prone to burning or tear-out.

Kudos to the manufacturers that show actual rpm markings on their variable-speed dials and their specifications in their literature. Second best are those with a speed chart on the motor housing shown that corresponds to numbers on the speed dial. Worst are those where you must refer to the owner's manual to decipher the numbered speed markings.

Once you dial in the correct speed, it's vital that the router maintain that speed during a cut. Using a phototachometer, you can evaluate your model's ability to do that while routing for example on raised panels. Most of us don't have a phototachometer so you must rely on the specs. None should drop more than 1,500 rpm into a cut. However, that machine consistently pulled 12 to 19 amps during those cuts, causing it to warm up an average of 3° with each pass, which could shorten the life of your router.

Big or small, fixed base or plunge, you'll likely appreciate a router that adjusts up and down quickly for fixed-depth routing. Among the fixed bases in the kits, I welcome and prefer a rack-and-pinion adjuster. This is best because it has a quick release for coarse adjustments and a fine-adjustment knob. For example my Porter-Cable has this capability and it is very welcome.

Fixed bases on some models engage one of three detents on the motor body. You then get a limited amount of up-and-down movement before you must switch to another detent. If you select the wrong detent and run out of fine-adjustment range, you'll have to move to the next detent and then thread the rod all the way to the other end.

The ease of handling proves as important as being able to quickly adjust the bit depth. I found two beefy 3-hp plunge routers that seem to be bulky, top-heavy, and more tippy than some of the others in my research, especially when routing along edges and corners. Now this was when I handled them at the Home Depot, Stines and Lowes. You may find them different as you research these. And only one, the Bosch unit (and the Porter-Cable with the optional handle) has a handle-mounted power switch similar to those found on big plunge routers. I wish my P-C had a similar switch. With other kit routers you have to remove or adjust your grip on one handle to turn it on or off. Just be careful.

Barry Humphus.