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NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Dick Troth's great shop was our meeting place this month. His Jet micro-lathe did a good job as he demonstrated the techniques of pen turning.

Making pens is a quick process, especially considering all the small parts. But pen kit makers have done a great job supplying you with everything you need. Dick started the demo by cutting a couple of blanks to the proper length on his bandsaw. Note that all kits are not the same, so study the instructions that came with the one(s) you purchased. You can also purchase pre-cut blanks from the pen kit supplier if you want to work even faster.

Dick mounted each blank in a home-made jig at his drill press to bore the center holes. The jig simply lines up the blank so that the hole goes right through the center. Use a brad point bit as this reduces tearout and drill quickly to avoid heat buildup in the blank (which may cause cracking). Once drilled, he applied a small amount of epoxy to the brass tube inserts that are part of the kit and inserted them into the two blanks he had drilled. Take care that the tubes are not protruding from the blank. Dick uses a 5 minute epoxy as this gives you some adjustment time.

Dress the blank ends with a disk sander, leaving the tubes very slightly exposed. Use a pen trimming tool to clean excess glue and to square up the tube. If the blanks are too long or short, the pen tip will not be correctly exposed when assembled.



To turn the blanks, you need a pen mandrel (available from pen suppliers) mounted in your lathe's head stock. The mandrels come with standard Morse tapers and others. The mandrels come in different diameters depending on the kits you buy. The cost of the mandrels range from \$15 to \$28

from Woodcraft and others.

When tightening the tailstock, take care not to put too much pressure causing the mandrel to bow in the center (caus-



ing the final pen shape to be oval). Turn the blanks to the desired shape and level with the mandrel bushings mounted on either end and in the middle between the two blanks. Sand until you are satisfied. For a finish, Dick uses a sealer, a high build friction polish and finally, beeswax in successive applications. Work lightly with the sand paper as you don't want to over heat the wood (it's only about 1/16th inch thick or less at this point). For woods that change color under light, you can use Amorall as the first coat.

Reread the pen assembly instructions because this is a critical step. The parts are pressed together (not glued) and you can use a special tool or just a Quik-Grip clamp. Both work equally well. Carefully match the grain orientation when assembling and enjoy the luxury of using your hand made pen.

The door prize this month? It was the walnut pen Dick had just made and it was won by brand new member Kenneth Kennedy. Welcome to the LCWWC, Ken.



BURL VINCENT

The LCWWC lost a fine member October 31st. Burl joined the LCWWC in 1991 and was a frequent contributor to our activities. Besides being a 37 year veteran photo-journalist for the *American Press*, he loved woodworking. Those of us who visited his shop admired all the projects he had on display: toys, banks, pens and other fine items. He was a collector of antique and unusual tools which are displayed about the shop.

He loved children and built literally hundreds of toys and furniture over the years for friends, neighbors and relatives. Any child who received one of these fabulous items has a masterpiece and now, an heirloom.

Burl contributed much time to our Club and to other organizations in the community as well. He contributed his immense talent when he donated his shop, skill, and time to the construction of the 34 cypress signs for the Millennium Park project in 2000.

We will all miss Burl, his fine sense of humor, his wonderful skills, his love for children and his commitment to our community.

IT'S TIME FOR 2002 DUES

Lake Charles Woodworkers Club Treasurer Dick Hopes reminds members that 2002 dues are due now. Please send your 2002 \$20.00 renewal to Dick Hopes, Treasurer, 1139 Green Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611.

VISIT OUR NEW WEB SITE LOCATION

<http://woodworkers.lightwire.net>

COMING UP.....

Saturday, December 8 — 9:00 a.m. Shop of

Mickey Hart for our annual Christmas feed!

DOVETAIL SAWS

Dovetailing can become something of a religion among woodworkers, with passionate true-believers in one approach or another. There are many tools and techniques that work, but when it comes to the saws, there are two types: Japanese and Western.

Japanese-style saws cut on the pull stroke, have fine, thin teeth and produce a very thin kerf. This means less effort, and consequently, more control for many people, especially beginners. Western saws cut on the push stroke and produce a thicker kerf. They have either a pistol-style handle, like the Lie-Nielsen saw shown at left, or a simple straight handle like a chisel. Prices range from \$15 up to well over \$100.

A good, sharp saw of either type will allow you to cut perfect dovetails. But sharpening can be a problem. The teeth on these saws are very fine, and sharpening them by hand is no picnic, and doesn't always work. Be sure your local sharpening shop can handle saws like this. Inexpensive Western saws, in particular, are not at their peak right out of the box; they need further sharpening and setting. Japanese saws work right out of the box. There are some very appealing Japanese saws that require no sharpening; they use inexpensive super-hard replaceable blades.

What kind of saw you use is much less important than having your wood flat, and using softer species like pine, and walnut. Then, just practice. Cut a bunch of dovetails before you try them on a project, and even if you've done them lots of times before, warm up (and remind yourself how they go together) with a test piece. From *American Woodworker*.

BUYING A BANDSAW

The family of bandsaws has two branches, floor models and benchtops. The floor models, are for general use. These stationary tools are more versatile than benchtop machines. Their large motors and heavy frames offer fast cutting and less vibration. Capacities are also significantly greater than benchtops. Floor models rest on an open frame base or enclosed base.

If you plan on doing mostly heavy-duty cutting (like resawing), with your bandsaw, have a look at the big brothers in the family. They've got guides, large tables and can handle wide blades. The motor also separates these workaholics from the rest of the family. At 3 hp and up, they're ready to handle the toughest resawing. You'll also appreciate the brake that's on many of these machines. No more waiting and waiting for those big wheels to come to a stop.

If your shop space is tight, and you only plan on using a bandsaw for light cutting in thin stock, a benchtop saw might work for you. They're less expensive and can be tucked under a bench when you're done with them. However, don't expect to do much heavy demand cutting.

Two numbers tell you a lot about a bandsaw: wheel diameter and maximum thickness capacity. Wheel diameter

creates categories within each family, 8 in., 10 in., 12 in., 14 in. and larger. Actual throat capacity of the saw, the distance from the blade to the housing, is always slightly less than the wheel diameter.

Maximum thickness capacity is the distance from the table to the upper guide assembly at its highest position, and tells you the thickest piece of wood that can be cut on the saw.

Three-wheel bandsaws offer greater throat capacity than the two wheelers, but there are some drawbacks. It's sometimes harder to track the blade and the smaller-diameter wheels put more strain on the blades, which can make them break more frequently.

A thickness capacity of 6 in. on a saw with 12 to 14-in. wheels will serve most woodworkers very well. If you'd like to use a bandsaw for resawing wide boards or roughing out large carving or turning blanks, look for a machine with greater thickness capacity. You can double the thickness capacity of some saws by adding a riser block. This increases their capacity from 6 to 12 in. It's an inexpensive (less than \$100) way to increase their resaw capacity from 6 to 12 in.

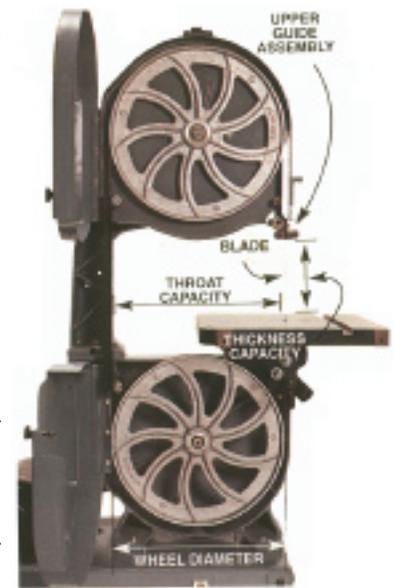
Saws with 3/4 hp or less are fine for cutting curves in thin stock, but will test your patience on thicker material. If you'll frequently be cutting stock thicker than 6 in., get a saw with at least 1 hp.

Heavy cutting, like resawing, can create machine vibration, blade chatter and even frame flexing. Frame style can help minimize vibration. There are two distinct frame styles: welded-steel and cast-iron. Welded steel frame machines do the best job of controlling vibration under heavy cutting.

Bandsaws produce very fine dust that easily becomes airborne. Good dust collection on these machines is a must. A 2-1/2-in. dust port and shop vacuum will suffice for general bandsawing. If you plan on frequently cutting thicker stock, look for a saw with a 3-in. or larger dust port, and plan on hooking it up to a dust collector.

Blade guides vary somewhat. So-called "cool-blocks" are the most common and can easily handle blades from 1/16th inch up to 1 inch. European-style guides, found on larger units for resawing, are best for blades of 1 inch or greater. These do not do well on smaller width blades.

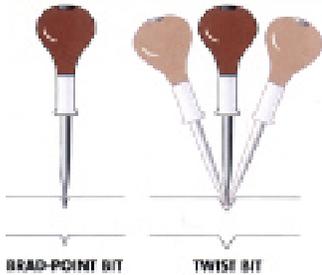
Height adjustment is easier on machines with rack-and-pinion guards. This setup also keeps the guard from crashing to the table when the locking knob is loosened. From *American Woodworker*.



HAND TOOLS — THE AWL

The awl has historically been used to create starter holes in wood for brads and nails, and to create starting points for drill bits. The most common type of awl is the scratch awl. The size and length of the awl can vary greatly, but each has a cylindrical shaft that tapers to a point. Another type of awl that's very hard to find anymore is a brad awl. The tip of this awl comes to a chisel point, much like screwdriver. A brad awl was used in the past to create starter holes in tougher hardwoods, where the grain would often deflect a scratch awl. The chisel point of the brad awl was aligned with the grain at the mark, then pushed in and twisted to cut a small hole. These have been superseded by the centerpunch.

In the shop, use an awl as a centerpunch to mark hole locations. An awl is especially useful when marking holes using a template. That's because the thin tapered shank can pass through the holes in a template, where the blunt tip of a centerpunch can't get through.



To use an awl as a centerpunch or to create starter holes for nails or brads, nestle the handle of the awl in the palm of your hand, and then wrap your fingers around the handle. This grip positions the awl in line with your forearm so you'll transfer maximum thrust into the workpiece.

If you do use an awl in place of a centerpunch, you may or may not want to wobble the awl—it all depends on the drill bit you're using. If it's a brad-point bit, or a Forstner bit, a single thrust into the wood will do. However when using a twist bit, you can enlarge the hole by wobbling the awl the tip of the bit will have less tendency to wander.

But an awl can be used for much more than marking starter holes. It's also useful as a holder or a "third hand" and as a marking tool. You can use an awl as an all-purpose holder to temporarily fasten thin materials together, or as the pivot point when scribing a long, graceful arc with a thin strip of wood and a pencil. An awl is equally effective as a "third hand" when you're working by yourself with long boards or with anything greater than your arm span: Just secure the end of a tape measure or chalk line to a workpiece with an awl, and then stretch it to the opposite end to measure or snap a line.

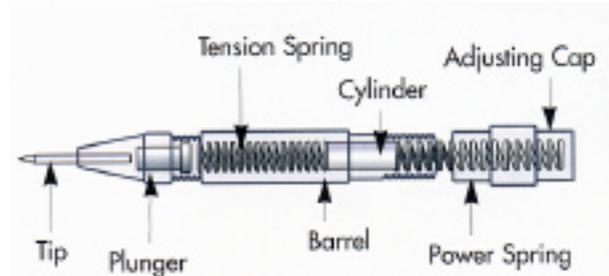


There are quite a few woodworkers who prefer a sharp awl to a pencil. The thin, tapered blades of awls make them particularly useful for reaching into tight quarters, such as when marking pins for dovetails. You can use one in lieu of a marking knife (bottom photo); just make sure to keep the point razor-sharp, as it will

tend to tear wood fibers instead of cutting them like a knife. From Rick Peters *Hand Tools*.

HAND TOOLS — CENTER PUNCH

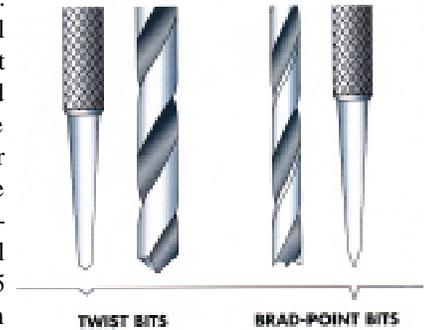
Although a centerpunch is often thought of as a machinist's tool, many woodworkers find them useful in the shop. When you have a lot of holes to mark for drilling, reach for a centerpunch or for an automatic centerpunch (top photo). Also, if you incorporate metal into the jigs, fixtures, and projects you build, a centerpunch is the best tool for marking hole locations.



You'd quickly dull the point on a standard scratch awl if you were to use it, instead of a centerpunch, on metal.

An automatic centerpunch has an internal spring that releases when the tool is depressed, forcing an internal plunger or anvil to strike the tip and leave a dimple on the workpiece (middle drawing). The springs on most automatic centerpunches are adjustable so that you can vary the depth of the dimple.

Depending on what material you're drilling into, you may want to have a couple of centerpunches, each with the tip ground to a different angle. If you're drilling into metal with twist bits, you'll want an angle somewhere around 60 degrees to match the angle of the twist bit. For marking in wood where you'll be drilling with a brad-point or Forstner bit, you'll find that an angle around 45 degrees works best. From Rick Peters *Hand Tools*.



Shop Tip: CHECK YOUR RULE

For a ruler to have any worth, it must be accurate. Check the graduations of your rules against each other. You may be surprised to find that they are different. This is an excellent reason to use a single rule throughout a project; if you use multiple rules and tape measures, you may inject errors that cannot be traced. Also check your rule for flatness. Set a rule on a known-flat surface. Place a pair of winding sticks (flat scraps) on the rule and sight along the tops to check for twist. Replace any rule that is not absolutely flat.

PEN TURNING RESOURCES

<http://www.wood-worker.com/articles/pen.htm>
<http://www.hutproducts.com/started.html>
<http://www.woodcraft.com>