



## In the Workshop with Charles Neil

Monthly Newsletter

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Welcome to all of our new subscribers!

Lots of finishing info this month as that has been the focus for the last four weeks or so.

## Unplug the Kids!

The young folks are missing out on the joy we all know of creating something with their own hands. Schools have removed shop class, Industrial Arts and other trade focused curriculum from their course of study, instead it all focuses on computer and other button pushing education and I do agree, it is the future, but not all kids are destined for computer and high tech



careers. Some are going to become plumbers, electricians and so forth, but a bigger issue is that the kids are not learning the value of those of us who do make a living

with their hands, or what we produce. Ipods, Playstations and the Internet have become the "parent" of a lot of kids, parents occupied, both working, it's easier to buy a new video game and not have to hassle with the kids, just plug 'em in and all is good.

Couple weeks ago we started looking around the internet to see if anything was out there pertaining to kids and we ran

across some projects and tool kits at Woodcraft, here is the link that takes you to the kits on the Woodcraft Site:

<http://www.woodcraft.com/depts.aspx?deptid=1024&topnav=true>

We got some and got the grandkids and some others together and built the kits, they had a blast and are wanting to do more, wanting to add tools to their kit. We talked about safety, measuring, taking care of and respecting their tools. It was a great and rewarding afternoon for both us and the kids. We filmed the event and have a clip on youtube.com, here is the link if you haven't already seen it.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrkZ-1te-MQ>

After seeing the video, David Pruett (Portland, Oregon) emailed me about his efforts with kids and helping them get "Boy Scout Merit Badges." David also recognizes the importance of sharing our time and skills with our youth.

The schools are no longer a source for introduction so it is up to each of us, so help a kid, share your woodworking skills. Here is a link to David's post on the Lumberjocks.com



forum and his time with the kids, take a look, says a lot about David. Thanks David and thanks for sharing.

<http://www.lumberjocks.com/jocks/David/blog/series/129>

Visit David's Blog at:

<http://foldingrule.blogspot.com/>

If you would like to share your experience with woodworking and kids so that others can get ideas, please email me so we can post it on our website. It's about the kids.

## The Finish Line

Well, I'm about ready to finally film the Finishing DVD I've wanted. I've gone through so many different products and techniques I still feel sticky and I am tired of watching stuff dry...but to that end, we have narrowed it down, we are going to do:

- Stains: Water & Oil Base - Lacquer
- Dyes: Water, Alcohol & Oil Base
- Controlling Color - Blotching & Toning
- Oil Finishes - Wipe On
- Petroleum Finishes (Lacquer Conversion Varnish)
- Painting
- Water Based Finishes
- Finishing MDF

We are going to do wipe on, brush on and spray on. The purpose of this DVD is to bring to a conclusion, good schedules of finishing as well as address what to do when it goes "South." We are going to do it product specific in that I can only do it with products I know and have tested to insure correct results. I will be the first to tell you that the products we use are not the only ones out there and we will tell you why we

are using a specific product, i.e. dryers, resins, solid content, etc. but its not about giving a chemistry lesson, there are enough books about that. Our goal is to tell you what time it is, not how to build the clock. Our hope is to give you a watch so you will always know the time for yourself and should someone ask you the time, you will be able to tell them.

Next week I'm doing a finishing class and while doing it we are going to film the blotching part and put it on youtube.com. It will have to be in two or three segments and could go to four but it is the only way I can cover it completely.

## What's Your Story?

Colleen Tanaka, Aiea, Hawaii

Charles, about me and woodworking..... I've been woodworking as a hobby for about 7 years now. There are very few people teaching woodworking. I was lucky enough to learn from a friend who is a cabinet maker and a wonderful teacher. Currently he teaches cabinet making to about 10 other women. The type of cabinet work that I have learned utilizes primarily plywood sheets and solid wood trim. I have made things like dressers, kitchen cabinets, a bathroom vanity and counter top, a koa hutch, etc. Currently I'm working on building rocking chairs. I absolutely love wood working! I want to expand my woodworking skills to build period pieces such as a Massachusetts High Boy with flame finials, swan neck moldings, cabriole legs, and dovetail drawers. I know a lot of this work is done in solid wood.....vs. plywood....so I have a lot of things to learn.

I really enjoy your common sense approach that comes with learning from experience. What I really enjoy is your videos give me an opportunity to see how a professional woodworker does things on the job. You

know, without very expensive huge machines....in other words, with equipment I can obtain from local stores or on line.

## Craftsman Profile

### J.D. Lohr,

About 2 weeks ago, Woodworker's Journal ezine did a profile on Jeff. Jeff has taken Arts and Craft furniture to the realm of Art, no doubt.

I've never talked to Jeff but I'm gonna, some of my students have been through his

classes and if word of mouth means anything, he has it going on. One student told me how he got the flu and missed several days but Jeff stayed and helped him and made sure he left with his project. He called him a "Sweetheart of a Guy" and all of his prior students have really nice things to say about him and his class. Here is a link to his website.



I hope in the near future to get up to J.D.'s and meet him and do some filming and get his talent on tape and share it with you. My kind of guy, good folks doin' good things.

<http://www.jdlohrwood.com/>

## Going Stupid

When Bob Kloes came down the two of us had a blast and if you think what's on youtube now is good and you obviously do, as I've gotten tons of emails saying so, just hold on - Bobby/Neil's is back in business. Bob's coming back down and we are going to do a bunch of youtube and DVD stuff, I'm talking serious stuff, well the content will be anyway and when we're done, I'm goin' to Wisconsin and I'm taking the camera. When Bob and I get together, something "Magical" happens. He's north with that Canadian/Wisconsin accent (no hair) and I'm south with NO accent (and hair) and the jokes and humor never seem to stop. So its coming folks, make sure you are subscribed to the youtube videos - We're gonna do a lot of projects so stay tuned.

Hey, maybe we can cruise by Pennsylvania and J.D. Lohr's on the way to Wisconsin, neither of us are too good on directions, sounds reasonable to me.

## Youtube Update

One of the projects upcoming to utube is "Carving a 32" Pie Crust Table Top" and if you think we're gonna do it with chisels, you're wrong. We're going to do it with a router and some bits and a cool technique you will like a lot.

About two years ago I had to carve one and had about two days to do it, get it on the base and finished. I made it. I had always hand carved them before, but time ran out so out of desperation and necessity, I came up with a technique to do it and we're going to show you.

Sherri has categorized our youtube videos on our website at

[www.antiquesbuiltdaily.com/tips.htm](http://www.antiquesbuiltdaily.com/tips.htm)

for those of you who may find it easier to view from there.

## Finish Stuff (Sanding)

As I have said so many times before, finishing starts at the beginning of the building process, not at the end of construction. Sanding is part of finishing and you have to think about it as well. Sanding is like building a road, you bring in the bull dozer and graders first, i.e. course sandpaper, we call this construction sanding, that's where you level, flatten and final shape. Then move up through the grits, 40 to 60, 60 to 80 and so on, never jump more than one grit or you are asking for problems. Remember, sanding is moving from shaping/leveling to smoothing and preparing for finish. If you sand the wood with too fine a grit, such as 220 and up, you will begin closing the grain where the stains/dyes etc. will not color the wood. You must be careful here and know when enough is enough. Your goal in sanding is to shape and smooth the wood.

If you try to sand dovetails flush with say 150 or 220, you are not going to get them level unless you hand block a lot. A random orbital sander won't do it either. The end grain is harder and won't cut at the same rate as the flat grain. Same thing with pines or any wood that has soft and hard grains running through, often called winter and summer grains because of slower winter growth, creating a harder or denser grain and summer creating faster, softer growth.

Problem is the same, fine grits simply don't cut the varying densities at the same rate. Coarser grits do. Just like the bulldozer doesn't care if there are trees, dirt, rock - it just pushes it all. Now the 36 and 40 grits will, now and then you gotta dynamite a mountain down - to just rocks and dirt.

Now, once the bulldozers and blasting crews are done, you bring in the graders and smaller equipment to start smoothing, the 100 and 120 grits. When they are done now comes the gravel and asphalt, the 150's 180 and 220 grits. We rarely sand past 180 unless we are trying to help seal the wood to help with blotching, in which case we go to 220 on cherry, maple, alder, aspen or any other wood prone to blotch, end grains on every thing, especially raised panels, they are sanded with 220, then 320 and most cases 400 to 600 to help prevent so much stain absorption from the end grain. A lot of times I'll wipe a light coat of 1/2lb. Cut de-waxed shellac on the end grain then sand it lightly with 320. Take care not to get it on the flat grain, then stain as normal.

## Layering Wiped Finishes

Spraying on color and mid-coat sealers is the best way to "layer" a finish, that is where we need to get several coats on to get the color we want. Wiping is the worst because spraying allows us to lay down a color that is laying on the surface, then seal it in and on the wood without disturbing the color, wiping doesn't, wiping removes any excess, where as spraying leaves it. Brushing lies somewhere in between, it is still hard to get the color laid out even.

I've been using water based stains and I like them a lot, not near as prone to blotching and color retention is much better than oil stains and they bite into shellac and dry quickly.

So what I have been doing is wiping on a coat of stain, let it dry, do it again. If my color is good, I'm done. If not, then I wipe on a coat of 1/2lb. cut de-waxed shellac, let it dry. This seals in the color I have and presents itself as a "new" surface which a good water base stain will "bite" into and I stain it again. I did a thing on youtube where I used a glaze over a 50/50 water base, what I'm talking about here is the same thing except for using stain and shellac. Keep building stain-shellac-stain=shellac until you get the color you want. Now, if it takes over 2 or 3 times, I suggest you look hard at the stain. Cheap stains use cheap pigments and not much of them. Water or oil is cheaper than good pigments. It all depends how much of what goes in the can!

Footnote - Do at least one shellac-stain-over your base color, it will act like a glaze and really deepen the color, works nice.

## The Last Month

The past month has had me very busy with classes, the last class for 2007 is next week. In the meantime I was able to film a little and work on some furniture pieces.

I had the opportunity to do a historically significant piece too.

A client who is on the Board of Directors for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation asked me to make a gavel and a dovetail box from a limb pruned from the Stonewall Jackson Prayer Tree.

OK...the story goes that after the close of Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign...and his victories at the Battle of Cross Keys (June 8, 1862) and Port Republic (June 9, 1862), Jackson and his men camped near Mt. Meridian (between the Middle and South Rivers)... to let his men rest for about a week or so (his 'foot cavalry' had marched over 350 miles in about 30 days...and were able to defeat the Union Army, who were twice their size, in five battles). Legend has it that Jackson would ride to a nearby brick home (still standing today) every morning for breakfast, but would stop at this tree on the way, get off his horse, and pray.



A small project, but a very meaningful one.



# You Might Be a Woodworker If...

*(back by popular demand)*

...you are sitting in church wondering what you could make from all those pews of quartersawn white oak. Allen, IL



...your wife recognizes 10 different woodworking tools by the sound they make. Curly Cherry, MN



...people see an old barn; you see furniture. Daddo, TX

...pockets full of sawdust instead of loose change. Eightfingers, MO



...your homepage is a woodworking forum. gMike

...you can pronounce sapele, jatoba, and cocobolo without hesitation. K.L. McReynolds, KS

...you refer to a two car garage as "The Shop" Mags, AZ



...you can only count to 9 3/4. Mountain Wood, OR



...your friend pulls out a splinter and you ask if you can have it. Esanford, TX

Note: I am writing about wood blotching but it is too long for the newsletter. When you see the youtube video go up as I mentioned before, check the website for the written article that can be downloaded. CN