



SHOP HRS.
 OPEN - MOST TIME
 CLOSED - SOME TIME
 BUSY - ALL THE TIME
 ON SCHEDULE
 NONE OF THE TIME

In the Workshop with Charles Neil

Monthly Newsletter

No. 6

December 2007

Welcome to all of our new subscribers!

Hey to all and may I wish you a very Merry Christmas and the best of Holidays.

Peter Parker, aka Spiderman

I would assume you, like me, thought Spiderman was a fictional comic book and television character, not so, he is alive and well and lives in Parkersburg, WV and happens to be the Retail Advertising Manager for Woodcraft.



I just returned from Woodcraft where we did some filming stuff (more later) and the camera

man was none other than Peter Parker (the character's given name). Peter wears a Spiderman watch and has a costume he uses to entertain some times, like handing out trick or treats. He makes use of the character pursuing his passion, children's ministry at his church.

A soft spoken, gentle man, who for me was a pure pleasure, not only

to work with but to simply be in the company of! So to Peter Parker, aka Spiderman, I say thank you for being a blessing to us all.

IMO - Cutting Boards

In my opinion, yeah, I know everybody has one, I've touched on this but it is time to hit the nail on the head, really hard. I've tried mineral oil, you know, the food safe stuff which is actually used as a laxative. No doubt it needs to remain the latter. Folks, it may be the traditional way, but it is not good, it simply wets the wood and that is about it. We did a test while

filming the finishing dvds, I took a piece of end grain white maple cutting board, about 8" square, on one half I put mineral oil, second half I put *General*



Finishes "Salad Bowl Finish," on the other side I put boiled linseed oil, aka BLO, and *Waterlox*. I let the oils soak in good, wiped the excess off, let them dry a couple of days, then took some water base dye, wet a sponge and wiped everything evenly. The mineral oil splotched and soaked up the dye, the salad bowl barely colored and the same with the *Waterlox*, the BLO didn't do a lot better than the mineral oil. Now lets understand why, the salad bowl and waterlox both have resins and



driers, no lead, and when dry and cure, they are totally food safe so the resin filled and sealed the pores, the driers hardened it and I had an internal film, sealing the wood, that has been about 8 days ago. The mineral oil is still wet and the BLO is gummy so it's up to you, but think about something, suppose that dye had been a chicken or something.

I use either *General Finishes Salad Bowl Finish* or *Waterlox* on my cutting boards, let it dry for about 24 hours then re-coat, let cure about a week before using. I have boards I have been using for years and have no issues with them. The theory that this finish will chip with the use of knives is unfounded as there is not enough coating to chip off, just seal.

I still like to clean them with a 50/50 mix of water and bleach just to be sure.

Video & DVD Update

As most of you know, we are doing the Finishing DVD set and I'm very pleased with the results. We are far from finished but we are making a lot of progress. We had planned on completion by now and delivered by Christmas, I know that the entire set is not going to make it without cutting it down a lot and I ain't the cutting down sort. I ain't skippin' squat. I've worked my butt off for 40 years to do this thing and I ain't short cuttin' nothin' so what we are gonna do is ship the ones we have complete and the rest as soon as complete, there is simply too much stuff to cover, sandpaper, sanding, building for finishing, lacquers, oils, dyes, stains, rubbing out, brushes, spraying and spray guns, turbines, water bases, do's and don'ts, what is compatible with what, colors, tints, repairing, fillers, finishing veneers, well, you get the point. As my sign says, I seem to never be on schedule, I try my best to write down what I want to put in a segment but in 5 minutes I think of something else. In the Adventures of Bob and Charles, we were dovetailing the

boxes, next thing you know we're off making drawers, and so it goes, great stuff, but what started out as four dvds, turned into seven, oh well. I'm only gonna do this stuff once and I want it right, understandable and to be the best finishing stuff ever done.

So all of you who have ordered it, we'll be getting out several dvds of the set by Christmas and a ton more following, at this point we have 12 discs but may turn into 15.

One of the things you will find in my videos is that I really don't go for a lot of the common box store stuff, sure it is easier to get and usually cheaper, but it simply doesn't work all that well, higher end, commercial products are designed to perform, they have to be. High end production manufacturers don't have time to fiddle with poor coloring and extremely slow drying products and by the same token, they have to have finishes that hold up.

In my world where I make furniture for a living, I can't wait for two or three weeks for one coat of something to dry only to not have it dry very well then, I have to get it finished and quite well I might add, get it delivered and not have it return. Imagine shipping something to California from here in Virginia and have it have issues when it arrives. Since I guarantee my stuff for my lifetime, I would have to have it crated, shipped back, redo it, re-crate it and re-ship, I can't stand that so the products we use have to get the job done and keep on doing it, and they do. It is to this end my videos go. It doesn't matter if you are doing bird houses, cutting boards or turning pens or high end reproductions or MDF, it all deserves a good and durable finish. It after all is what ultimately reflects your craftsmanship. From paint to exterior, oil to water base, we're covering it and covering it well, I promise. In addition to the DVD set a companion book will accompany the set with sanding schedules, compatibility charts, color suggestions, product reviews, the book is

designed to be a reference for what was used and where to get it.

A quick note, many are thinking yeah, but that commercial stuff is expensive, not so, when a quart of good stuff does three times what the cheap stuff does and when a gallon of finish has 32% solids (that's what's left when all the solvents have evaporated) vs. 10 or 15%, well you get the point and then consider it is far easier to use and holds up ten times better, it is a no brainer!

The Finish Line MDF

If you are a user of MDF (medium density fiberboard) and a lot of you are, I use it for jigs, that's about it, but a lot of guys are using it for built-ins and a ton of things, it is usually painted and the machined or routed edges pose a real problem, they soak paint like a sponge and are hard to get smooth. In the finishing videos I use a chest made of MDF and "burl" grain it, as well as marblize and a crackle finish as well.

I've found several ways to "seal" the cut edges and machining. One of the first things is to sand it very smooth, try this:

Start out sanding the edges with 220, then 320, move up to about 600 using the black, wet/dry silicon carbide paper, use it dry of course.

Use a shellac seal coat which works really well or any good blond de-waxed shellac. The spray can stuff is de-waxed, another product that works well is General Finishes "Under Coat," which is like spraying sheet rock mud, you will need either a large nozzle on your spray unit or simply use a synthetic brush, paint pad or even a foam brush, comes

in black or white. Zinsser makes a primer sealer, it's white, can also be applied same as the Undercoat, works well.

Now, this brings up another subject, brushes. I'm sure most of you know this, but just in case.

- Natural Hair - Badger, China, etc., don't do well with water, it causes the brush to deform and wimp out, just like water does to your hair, but they are the perfect choice for shellacs, lacquers, varnish or petroleum based polys.
- Synthetic - Usually nylon, work best with water base anything, also try the painters pads and foam brushes.

The finer the bristle in a brush the better it performs, it lays down more finish and does it smoother, always clean and wrap your brushes to help them keep their shape.

Quick Note, Styrofoam cups and foam brushes cannot be used with shellac or lacquers, the solvents will dissolve them.

The Weather Report

Cold, gettin' colder, wish I could mix June, July and August with December, January and February like I mix finish stuff. I think I could make much better weather, but just like finishes some things you just can't mix together.

During the cold months, keep in mind that your wood will be drier so you can't build as tight as you do in the summer months or come next summer, drawers are gonna be stuck.

Also, make sure your finishes and glues are stored so they don't freeze!

Craftsman Profile

Matthew Pruett

In his dad's words, Matthew is a burgeoning woodworker. He and his dad have had a lot of fun in the shop together. His first project



was a birdhouse that they built together. According to dad, the birdhouse hung with pride from the limb of a large pine tree in the front of their first home.

Since that first project, Matt continues to learn about woodworking and having fun in the shop with his dad. Other interests include Boy Scouts and History, Matt is a real history buff and will be working on a special project from scraps from the "Stonewall Jackson Prayer Tree." He promises to send us photos when he completes this project.

You can read a little more about Matthew and woodworking on his dad's web page,

<http://web.mac.com/usnerdoc/Woodworking/Welcome.html>

Stuff You May or May Not Know

Sandpaper Grading Systems

Sandpapers are graded using about four different systems, US is called CAMI, European or FEPA (denoted with a P prefix), Micron and Generic. Micron grits are reverse of typical grades in that the lower the number, the finer the grit. US and Euro (P) remain about the same up to about 220 grit, then they change, a US 600 grit is equal to a P1200

Euro. US vs. Euro pretty much doubles after 400, for example, US 400 is P800, US 500 is P1000, etc. Micron runs from about a #8 which is a P2500 to about 400 which is equal to P36 grit. I know it is confusing but we are doing a chart and there are many available, check your finishing books and you'll probably find them, if not, drop me a line and I can email you one.

Steaming Dents

Many times a dent will steam out of wood. I'm not real crazy about using a steam iron, I like to microwave some water to boiling then drop a little in the dent with an eyedropper, now be careful, the container as well as the water can scald you. Steam irons often leave a large water mark, if you have a lot more sanding to do, then ok.

Here is another on bare wood, drop a little denatured alcohol on the dent and touch it with a match, it will burn blue and will not scorch the wood, it may take a time or two on stubborn dents, I can drop a little hot water on the dent, let it soak a minute or so then do the alcohol thing, works well.

Ebonized Finishes

A lot of people like the "Ebonized" finishes, simply put, black. Using black dyes and stains work well and are far easier than chemical, but when dry they often look purple, as soon as you top coat they come back to black. In reality, the black is actually a very dark brown with red in it, thus the purple look. An alternative is water base India Ink, it is true black, thin with water to desired strength, you can usually find it at craft stores but one caution, it is permanent. Nothing will cut it, including bleach so wear gloves, it does a super job though.

Spraying Water Base

Many people have trouble spraying water base and it is a little tricky. See, the problem is that water base cannot be thinned to thinner viscosities so you have to spray a heavier base liquid, for example, milk or cream as compared to skim milk. Petroleum base can be thinned to water consistency.

The thinner the liquid the easier it is to break up (atomize) into finer droplets to lay on the surface. With a water base you have to adjust the spray gun to the liquid, petroleum you can adjust the liquid to the gun.

The way to adjust for water base is to work with the nozzle and fluid needles, with most every gun you can buy various tips, unfortunately, like sandpaper there is no consistent measuring system but as a rule, smaller tip sizes give you better atomization. Too small and you won't get fluid, it is a balance, in the finishing videos we use several turbines and spray guns and address this well and show the difference. A #1 in turbines seems to do well.

My Journey to Share Woodworking Knowledge:

Woodcraft is Walking with Me

When six or seven months ago I finally raised up from the work bench to see if I could possible turn a lifetime of woodworking into an instructional thing (a lifelong dream), one of the first things that happened at one of the first classes was that the students were insistent that some of our jigs and custom router bit sets needed to be made available to everyone, so we started to play with them some, made some, sold them to see response and if our stuff was worth manufacturing, it turned out that it is, the response and feedback was great so we started talking to various manufacturers and

pretty much what we found was folks who wanted everything and give nothing in return, they could care less about quality, safety, just \$\$\$.

What seems like a lifetime and I guess it is, I've done business with Woodcraft, they are closer to me than the others and I just always liked visiting their stores and dealing with them, a lot of on-line purchases. Nothing against the other guys at all, I've dealt with them all, I just always seemed to personally like Woodcraft, nothing more. So when we had become pretty discouraged about our jigs and stuff we decided to contact Woodcraft. We had already contacted a lot of the others and well, it wasn't good. Why I hadn't contacted Woodcraft in the onset, well, I don't know, guess I figured they were "just a store."

Well to make a long story short, they were very responsive and encouraging, come to find out they have a lot of "Product Managers." Folks who review products, test products, design products and insure products meet their standards and I can tell you they are tough. Now, I would assume that all the other guys have the same thing, just haven't had the chance to meet them yet, but one thing always seemed to stick in my mind, I remembered I had gotten something, don't remember what exactly, but whatever it was, something was defective and I needed it quickly. I called Woodcraft and they absolutely bent over backwards to help me get another one ASAP, it made quite an impression, I still haven't forgotten after all of the years that have passed.

Several months ago I sent my jigs and stuff to them to look at and see what they thought and as we speak they are working with them, but then when I started focusing on the finishing DVDs, I started hitting brick walls, I couldn't get through to the people I needed at finishing companies, spray gun manufactures, etc. so I took a chance and called one of the

guys who I had been working with at Woodcraft to see if I could get some contact information. I can tell you now that the finishing videos would not be what they are without the help Woodcraft has given me. They gave me contacts, made a phone call or sent an email on my behalf, they really went out of their way to help. Now they had been following the youtube and news letter so they knew what we were about. Never, not once did they ever mention anything about promoting their name, their products or anything, in reality, they gave me a lot of contacts for products they don't even carry.

So through all of this, we got to be on first name bases with a lot of the guys. Sherri was doing some shopping on the Woodcraft website and found the "My First Projects" thing for kids. We called and asked if we could use their name in the youtube thing, they said sure, later we got an email saying thank you and in turn we let them use the video on their website. We really had a great time that Sunday afternoon with the kids.

So in working on the finishing videos we got to talking and together thought it would be good to maybe film some stuff for Woodcraft to put on their website, not so much as a sales pitch for Woodcraft's benefit, but for your and my benefit. How might you ask? Free video information on products and tools that help you in your woodworking and name recognition for me to help me reach my goal of teaching as many as possible my woodworking experience and knowledge. So I just returned from a trip to Parkersburg, WV to do some info-videos they will be airing on their website, if you don't currently subscribe to their email newsletter, you might want to get on their list so you will know when these videos will be available.

I can assure you there are no cigar chewing, laid back executives at Woodcraft, these folks are just me and you and guess what, they are

honest to goodness, down home woodworkers, you may find a band-aid or two and if ya wanna talk woodshop, you're in the right place, that is, if you can get them slowed down long enough, these folks are going a hundred miles an hour into a head wind, Sherri says they are running in a squirrel cage.

Seriously, this is the hardest working group of folks I've ever seen on a corporate level. Of course their company seeks to earn a profit, that is what is great about a capital system like we have in America, but what we noticed the most is that these guys take every product and every customer seriously and want the best for both. I will stake my name and reputation on this statement, "You would be hard pressed to find a company with higher moral standards and values of what they bring to their customers." If you think you are particular about your tools and equipment, you ain't seen nothin'.

I filmed about fourteen videos over the two days I spent in Parkersburg, no endorsements, no commitments or strings attached, just good information and a way to get it to the woodworkers.

When we left Parkersburg, I didn't feel that I was leaving some corporation and a business meeting, but rather, a group of new found friends with a mutual goal and respect for



each other, I look forward to returning. Their logo says a lot and I hope you take a look around their site and give them the opportunity to serve your woodworking needs, they are a great company. Visit the Woodcraft website:

<http://www.woodcraft.com>

You Might be a Woodworker if

...when a box is found on the front step from the UPS man, the kids just groan "another tool for dad! CurlyCherry, MN

...you've been caught by your wife trying to dry some green lumber in the kitchen oven! Duff, VA

...you are driving along a street and recognize the sound of a router being used. K.L. McReynolds, KS

...your wife swears that you appreciate the tools more than her, and she is right. Mags, AZ

...when you go into a restaurant you look at the woodwork instead of the menu. Phydeaux, NH

...your hair color of the day depends on what wood you've been cutting. Poppie, KY

...even if pencil sharpeners abound in the house, you'll choose a utility knife every time. Rog, MN

...when invited to a bonfire you keep one eye on the pieces being put into the fire. Router Jim, WI

...you get home at 5am and somebody has left a log in your driveway. Sir Chiz, Mass

...sometimes kindling has finish on one side. Wild Turkey, KY

...the smell of linseed oil is erotic. Wing Nut, PA

...if you know the PC690 is a Porter Cable router. Arch 55, AZ

Sherri's Update

We now have a video player on our website which has the videos indexed. These videos are in Flash so the quality is better. It is taking me some time to get the older ones archived onto the site, but you can view them at: <http://www.antiquesbuiltdaily.com/tips.htm> there is also a link from our splash page.

I will continue to put the videos on youtube as well.

I have set up a forum that will be linked from our website, will probably go live after the first of the year. We are members of several existing forums and will remain active there. This forum is being set up for direct sharing between you and us, for example, a place to ask Charles a direct question about an issue or a problem you are having, this will be much easier than sending emails back and forth and allows others to see the problems and issues as well as the answers. We still welcome all of your email questions as well.

DVDs are ready to go out as soon as ordered now with the exception to the finishing dvds as they become complete so you might want to check the DVD store often. I have also put a player on that page which allows you to preview a DVD before buying. If you click on the slipcover to the left of the DVD title you can read the actual slipcover from that DVD.

If any of you find issues with the website or links that aren't working, just email me and I'll try to get it fixed promptly.

Have a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of our new friends we have found in 2007.

Time to say Goodbye for this Month

Well, that's about it for now, I've got to get to the filming, spraying, smearing, wiping and so on. My intent is to teach you how to finish, not just about finishes and finishing. It will take you days to watch it all and months to comprehend it all. It's bringing together my 40 years and Bob's 25 years of experience and talking with every expert in every field we can find. Test driving tons of products and like I said, we ain't holdin' nothing back, no one is paying us to make this DVD set, we are on our own, as it should be, we can tell it like it is, no holds barred. The products we are using, simply work and work well, don't care who makes them.

Sherri has agreed to hold the pre-sale price until Wednesday, the 19th, then it has to go up and I think it will go beyond our initial full price as the number of dvds has increased as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherri', written in a cursive style.

P.S. Do ya know how to create a finish with plastic wrap? Aluminum foil? How about crumpled newspaper? Or a rolled up rag? I'm gonna show ya, oh yeah, how about a feather?