



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. 15

September 2008

Welcome to all New Subscribers!

## What's New?

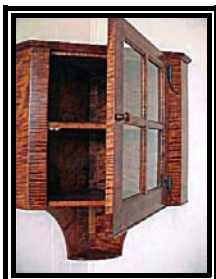
Well, I'm going to leave a lot of this newsletter to Sherri. She's got a lot to tell ya but I do want to bring attention to the new "Blog" I've been doing every day since mid August. It is an insight into my world and daily activities here at our workshop. Check it out, there is a link on our homepage and you can also subscribe to a daily feed from the blog.

I'm planning our second "full project" video series but I would love to have some input from you. I need to know what will help you, that's what it is all about. It's not only about the project but the techniques we use. I have a couple in mind.

Here are my thoughts:

### Hanging Cupboard

Features a raised panel door, some dovetails, blind dados and some scroll work, rat tail hinges, shelves, etc.



Hanging Corner Cupboard  
 Features a glass door, techniques for making a corner cupboard, shelves, rat tail hinges and more.



### Pouting Chair

Great little project for the little ones (children or grandchildren) and has basic techniques like gluing panels, pattern cutting & dados.



### Hancock Shaker Clock

Teaches case construction, dovetails, glass door, magnetic catches and more.

I'm more about the techniques than the project itself. When I think project, I think of the instructional value but also I like neat, non-typical things. I want you to learn and also enjoy a useful project. So just remember this, it's about you, not me so tell me what you want. Where can I help?

You can vote for your choice on our website.

[VOTE NOW](#)

We really need you to click on our sponsor's links. They need to know you are out there and seeing their products. Without them, our "Free" videos would not be possible. Let them hear from you and support them like they are supporting you.

## My World

Well, it certainly has been a busy mix for me this past month. Trying to get a lot of projects done, had to re-film some of the Router DVD material, now seems might have to do a bit more. Prepping for the turning DVD, told ya about the garden thing, so it's been interesting.

The internet has been sort of quiet, but with school starting, vacations and all, it's normal for this time of year. Fall is coming and then Mr. Winter and we start to move inside and our shops, so woodworking starts to become our focus again. I love working in the shop in the Fall, with the cooler temps and thinking on neat projects to make.

The summer has been way off for anything wood. Tool sales, lumber, anything. So the folks are hungry and now is really a good time to look at purchasing tools and materials with Gustav doing a lot of damage, prices are definitely going to rise. Remember, the early bird gets the worm. I was in one of those box stores and looking at some plywood, it's the lowest I've seen in a long time. I'm gonna stock up now, before the hurricanes and rising fuel cost drive the price up.



Rising fuel cost, who knows, one says yes, the other says no, but either way, I'm gonna do something different, just to not be dependent. Now I have a very big advantage over most. I've got wood and access to wood, fire wood, so I'm thinking I'm going to build a wood fired boiler. We heat the shop with hot water (radiant heat). The water is heated, pumped through the radiators and you have heat, pump the water through an efficient wood stove and you get heat from the stove and it heats the water at the same time. I've

made mention before, I can weld so I'll just make one. Think I'll keep the oil boiler in place for back up but hey, beats buying oil and I like that independence. Maybe it'll save enough money for a new table saw. Table Saw....Tank of Oil....now that's a no brainer.

## In My Opinion

### The "Blog" Thing

This blog thing is a good thing. It gives an insight into my world and how we do things. It allows you to experience the progression and too often the lack of....it's sort of a daily report of what we are up to.

I first thought it would be just too much to tackle on a daily basis but it has now gotten to be a "morning cup of coffee get-together." I'm enjoying doing it, hope you are as well.

Let me hear from you and comments are always welcome, you don't always have to agree or you may have a better way of doing something easier and better than me. Shout it out and if ya have a question, I'll do my best.

I was also thinking all of our sponsors are, as you know, my personal choices and through all of this I've gotten to know the "Big Dogs" in these companies. The owners, the designers, etc. and I have asked a lot of questions of them and they have always gotten me an answer, so my thought was, if you have a question or a wish to say something to the guys who help us do what we do, or have a question or concern about their products, or a suggestion, drop me an email and I will get it to the right people.

The blog as I said is just a daily look at what I'm doing and when I can, how I do it. It's not being done to be "super instructional." Some have said it is over their heads, I do understand, but its how we go about making a living so we got to move. If ya don't "get it" ask, don't be bashful.

Nobody can ask stupid questions better than me and I'm pretty good at answering them too.

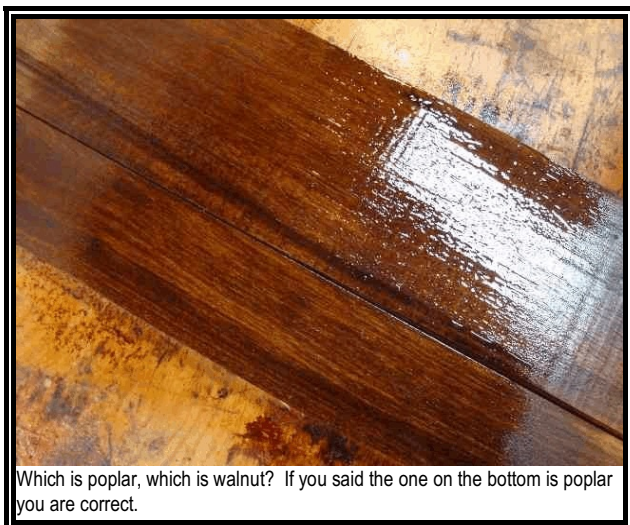
Just know this is about you and sharing knowledge.

[Visit My Blog Daily - Feed Available](#)

## The Finish Line

I've done a lot of finishing in the shop the past month, getting a lot of projects completed and out the door. That's a good thing.

I did the quilt rack video and used some poplar, made it look like walnut. If you've been following my daily blog, I'm now doing a step back cupboard of walnut primary and used poplar for the shelves and some aspen for the backs. On the step back I'm going to use a different technique to make the poplar blend with the walnut versus the technique that I used on the quilt rack but I want to share both with you. Recently I ran across a thread on a forum and the poster stated that you can't make poplar color like walnut and that aspen is trash. Hmmm.....I have found neither statement to be even remotely correct so I'm gonna share with ya what I know and have used many times. It's not complicated. Let's start with the quilt rack. I used some



Which is poplar, which is walnut? If you said the one on the bottom is poplar you are correct.

[General Finishes](#) "Amber" water base dye (4 coats) then two (2) coats of Bartley Gel - Jet Mahogany. Check out the photos of the quilt rack on the [project page of our website](#) or last month's newsletter.

I'm taking a different approach on the step back cupboard. I'm using [Gemini](#) #55 NGR Dye as a base coat. I'm following that with #938 Soya Bean wiping stain. I will use it on the entire step back and it matches perfectly.

For the aspen backs, because aspen blotches, I'm using a 50/50 mix of water base finish and water as a wash or barrier coat to prevent the blotching. Poplar can also blotch a little so I could use a barrier coat on it as well but since I'm going to be spraying several light coats of dye, it's not necessary. Spraying allows you to lay down even coats and helps prevent blotching. Wiping allows the softer portions of the wood to absorb more, simply put, spraying in light coats doesn't provide the material for the soft grains to soak up, therefore no blotching. After I have the color where I want it I will proceed with my clear top coats.

## Re-Sawing

### *Backs and Drawer Bottoms*

In our blog this past week we showed how we re-sawed some aspen then clamped it back to back (outsides in) to allow the sawn sides to dry. It is always wetter

than the original outside and when it dries some more after being opened up, it cups. As it dries, it shrinks and thus pulls itself into a cup. By simply clamping it back to back and letting it dry for three or four days it reduces the cupping. I sometimes add moisture (damp wipe) the



original outside. This helps because it assists in balancing the moisture. You can tell if you need to do this based on the amount of dampness you can feel on the inside of the boards after you re-saw them.

If you are doing multiple cuts it is different. Again, the outside is drier and as you progress inside the piece the moisture increases. So once you get two or three pieces in, where the moisture on both sides is similar, sticker flat and clamp it so it dries flat and dries equally on both sides.

I have re-sawn stuff and had it cup as soon as it came off the saw and when this happens, I add a 1/4" thick strip down the middle when I did the back to back clamp thing. It causes you to over bend the material in the reverse of the cup.

No matter what you do, re-sawn material is going to move some so always saw it as thick as you can to allow for later processing.

## The Weather Report

This has been a very different August than I ever remember. Told you we had a hail storm the end of last month. It shredded my garden. Lasted about ten minutes, size of dimes, nickels and quarters. Since that storm, it has been in the 80's, low humidity, cool nights. Feels like October in August. Normally this time of year we are cookin'.

The freezers are full. I re-planted some stuff and planted some cool weather stuff. Beets, turnips, spinach, broccoli and cabbage. I re-planted some zucchini and cucumbers, hope the weather doesn't get too cool too fast. My garden is my escape and I do like the independence it brings.

## Craftsman Profile

*What's Your Story Nancy?*

I met Nancy via email and have had a lot of nice conversations. Nancy is a pure pleasure and one of the things I found out about her is she isn't afraid to tackle anything.

I just love people who aren't afraid to challenge themselves and Nancy is definitely one of those people.

Now, I'm not going to embarrass her here but Nancy is a giver, a caretaker. Nancy thinks more about what she can do for others rather than herself. WOW, my kind a gal. So here...in her own words is a "Sweetheart with an Attitude" (I love it!)...Here's Nancy.



Nancy (right) with daughter at graduation.

Ahhh Woodworking psychology 101. Mr. Neil asks, Yes Nancy, what is your first memory of woodworking....hmmm m? Go back, back in time.

Well, I remember sanding my wooden teether with my bare gums as an infant...no, not that memory, there

must be another - there was that issue with the splinters in the potty chair - no, not that!

Ah-Ha! I know, I will tell about the first house I built and how I had to beg all my neighbors for lumber to build it. Well, it was, in fact, a tree house, but what a fun summer that was learning to hammer and saw and smash my thumb without screaming. I did learn a lot about strength, angles, planning and design, but the most I remember was that fantastic smell of newly sawn wood and the pride of accomplishment - things that are still with me in force.

As I got older (I am intentionally leaving out the term grew up), I was a good girl and got married, became a nurse and a mother and tried to avoid those Tom-Boy traits of woodworking, riding horses and driving too fast which horrified my mother. Despite this, I was the family member that everyone came to when the flat box that they got at Walmart said "some assembly required" and the directions were in several languages other than English. So, I put together a lot of furniture before I learned to build.

I finally realized that while the other girls in my family were shopping at Saks 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, I was spending my time in a hardware store - and gave into my passion. I have a long way to go to be a creator of fine furniture, but I will get there. Along the way I will leave a legacy of beautifully polished wood items that my great-grandchildren will fight over.



Grandson - Tony

I live in Wolfeboro, NH, near the shore of beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee, the major lake in our beautiful State. I share my home with my 5 year old grandson Tony and his

Nana Cindy, three full-time cocker spaniels and a current litter of five puppies.

My oldest daughter just got her RN and my son Mark owns Clean Cut Construction and builds exquisite homes around this lake region in New Hampshire. Most of their owners call them their summer cottages on the lake, but they would make a great home for anyone :D. My youngest daughter needs a bit of help and fortunately the flexibility of self-employment in woodworking allows this.

Other hobbies - well, I love to do many types of crafts, ride horses and play with cars. I am a good nurse, but this gosh darn woodworking

thing just seems to take over! When I wake up in the morning excited that I am going to go see some birds eye maple, I really start to worry.



I have played a great deal with Adirondack furniture, in and outdoor holiday decorations, wooded sculpture and specialty items and signs for our lakeside friends in this area, but my fascination with

antique American furniture has led me to Mr. Neil and I will continue working at creating furniture reproductions until I get it right :D. Hopefully, I will then have enough energy left to sell some. By the way, does anyone know where I can buy that nifty Kangaroo woodworker's vest that Mr. Neil wears?

If you missed the video on the Kangaroo Vest, [click here to take a look](#). We had a lot of fun with this video and we think you'll enjoy it as well.

## The Tool Crib

### [Wixey Digital Protractor](#)

How close is close? This is a question posed on our forum a few days ago by chpcvr, after seeing my Wixey Digital Protractor.



That is a very good question. Having used this tool I can tell you this, it don't do close, it does exact. I used it to check my squares and tools, WOW, 89.7 degrees is not 90, 90.4 isn't either. I've got to tell you that I went through my

shop and re-set all of my tools. It was amazing how those slight out of square tolerances were affecting my work. Once I set everything exact, just seemed everything worked better, fit better and I knew I was dead on.

I had squares that I had checked for square before and they were by all accounts "square." The protractor found a couple that were 89.9 and a framing square that was 89.6. Now, I'm not a 1/32-1/16 guy, with wood, that's a little crazy because wood constantly moves. Minute differences are always going to be there. To know that my tools and set-ups are "dead on" really makes for a good feeling and I don't have to hope the square is still square (metal moves too) or that my fence hasn't moved. A quick check and I'm positive. Now I have surely gone a lot of years without one, but I have also found with most things, tolerances have become very lax, even the high dollar stuff and to have something to verify with and is "easy to read." Well, it's definitely worth the money and every one who has seen it has bought it. I highly suggest you give it a look. Just removes that guesswork and uncertainty thing that always lingers in our minds.

[Click Here to Check Out the Wixey Digital Protractor](#)



Now, sometime back I told ya about Woodcraft, how hard working and just good, simple people who are woodworkers, just me and you type folks, how they took a chance and started carrying my videos. I told ya they have been my choice for many, many years and they have never let me down. If ya look in this months catalog you'll find some of my DVDs on page 152. Now, I'm not trying to sell you a DVD, but read the last line of the description, they have and still print my

website address knowing we also sell the DVDs. Maybe to you that means nothing but to me it says a lot, not because it's me, but because they are a company who isn't afraid to help a little guy. These guys have stepped up to the plate time and time again. They sponsor education and help woodworkers and have done so forever. It's not all about the sales, they give back. Maybe I am partial, but I got good reason to be. I've met them, I know the conversations I've had and I know these folks, not the big corporation, because that is not who they are.

Now I said all that to tell ya this. I've been doing a lot of their private label stuff, "WoodRiver and Pinnacle" and so on. Here is a case where they made or had made tools at a very reasonable cost that in all honesty, meets and in most cases beat the big brand names.

I recently got their [WoodRiver - 8 Pc. Set of Bench Chisels](#) and the [Pinnacle Cryogenic Turning Tools](#). I have some high dollar English turning chisels I paid a whole lot more for and bench chisels I paid 4x more for. The chisels from WoodRiver are better....No Joke! Holding an edge, comfort, all of that stuff, it's just the way it is.

Now, the turning tools, they freeze them or whatever they do, I ain't sure, but I don't care. I got some in and did a video clip about them ([Click Here to See the Video](#)) so I turned a bowl out of some hard as a rock maple. I never had to stop and sharpen them. I couldn't believe it, they just kept cutting and I wasn't being polite or proper. I got some "big name" chisels, I tried them on the bowl, there was no comparison. I had to sharpen the big name ones and the Pinnacle just kept cutting. I finished the bowl and never sharpened them. I then turned some finials and four table legs out of tiger maple. I have still not had to re-sharpen the chisels. The "burr" remains and that's just a fact. Now, all of that said, here is a case where you can actually get a lot more than you pay for.

Next time I'm gonna tell ya about some router stuff. Lifts, guides, tables and sleds they have come up with. I know the guys who designed and made these and these guys are right sharp and a lot they came up with is simply put, pure genius, and the quality is so far ahead of anything I've seen or used before it amazes me. The best thing is that they don't cost an arm and a leg.

One more thing, the guys at Woodcraft really do care, so if you try out a Pinnacle or WoodRiver brand and it does not live up to your expectations, they want to know.

## Sherri's Update

### Website

I've made a lot of changes on the website in the past month and many more to come. I would love to get feedback if you find a link not working or a suggestion for better page flow.

The [HOME](#) Page now has a Video of the Day and a Quote of the Day. These are changed every morning with the exception of some Saturdays and almost always Sunday.

The [SPONSOR](#) Page is now updated with all current On-Line Video Sponsors with banners and links to their websites. Please visit these sponsors as they are a big help in us being able to bring new and fresh videos to you on-line.

The first On-Line, Full Length Video is up, it is approximately 4 Hours Long and has five episodes. You can visit this page and video player from the main page by clicking [PROJECT VIDEOS](#) button.

[My Blog](#) - Charles has a daily blog of what is happening in his workshop, this too can be reached from the main page.

[Sherri's Blog](#) - I don't blog daily, only when I have news and happenings. Check to see if there are any new notes. This will hopefully allow me to make announcements and not send via email.

You can still visit our furniture gallery, etc. by clicking on the [VISIT MY WORKSHOP](#) button on the top and right of the home page.

Lastly, the [WOODWORKER'S PAGE](#) gives some new links and this is where you will find our video tip video player.

### Sponsors

Each video player we have has rotating banners for our video Sponsors. Again, please support these great folks. There is also a SPONSOR page dedicated to letting you know who is supporting you as woodworkers and giving back to the woodworkers.

### Full Length Project DVDs

The "Making a Shenandoah Valley Quilt Rack" is fully loaded and has been seen by hundreds. We have a gallery that we would love to share photos of your quilt rack when you complete the project. To view this video series, click on [PROJECT VIDEOS](#) from the main page.

Bob Kloes has put some quilt rack wood packs together, last check he had a few walnut and a couple tiger maple. Prices are walnut - \$50.00 and tiger maple \$65.00 plus shipping for either. [Email Bob](#) directly for more information.

### Newsletter Subscriber Savings on DVDs

This month's subscriber special!

Our woodworkers have been so successful in finishing their furniture and projects with the help of our Finishing A to Z:



Beyond the Books DVD set that we have racked our brains on trying to get it out there for everyone. The reviews have been great [Check Out This One](#) from our forum and there are others posted there as well.

[Read Finishing A to Z Reviews](#)

In fairness to the folks who also sell our DVDs, we don't offer them at a special price once they have entered the retail market outside of our website. We are making an exception just this once because we are now getting into the season where you will be getting back into the shop and this set can really help you.

For the next 10 days and 10 days only we are going to offer it at the previous special price of \$129.95 and hopefully you will pick up your set now, it will never be offered lower than retail again. If you have purchased the set at full price from our website or from a Woodcraft store or Woodcraft .com in the past 60 days, contact us and we will make up the difference with a refund or credit toward other DVD titles.

Charles and I make our living through handcrafted furniture and the sales of our DVDs, the sponsorships offset a very small portion of what it costs to produce the videos. We are certain that this video set makes a difference and we understand that it is pricey but we think you will find it well worth it and we stand behind our videos 100%.

[Click Here to Purchase at the Special Price This Offer Expires September 18, 2008.](#)

and if \$129.95 is still stretching your wallet, we have one more option to get this great set in your shop:

**Finishing A to Z: Beyond the Books  
Subscription Purchase - One a Month**

There are so many of you who are taking advantage of the low monthly subscription price of \$18.95 and receiving one video per month from this series for 10 months. It is a great way to purchase the set and not use your tool money for the videos! You can find details about the subscription and subscribe from our DVD store.

[Click Here to Check Out the Subscription](#)

### ***DVD Update***

Due to some technical difficulties we are still awaiting "The Magic of Router" DVD sets. We expect them any time and will keep you posted via email. The special price of \$49.95 will stay in effect until we receive this initial order. Thanks to all of you who have ordered and are being so patient.

### ***One Last Item about our DVDs***

I have struggled to keep shipping free for our DVDs, however, in May when the prices went up on postage it made enough difference that I had to re-think the shipping charges. Beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, there will be a \$2.50 shipping charge on all single title DVDs and \$5.00 shipping charge on all sets. We hate to do this but it has gotten difficult to absorb these charges.

### ***Ask Charles Neil Forum***

Lots of new members this month and I have done a little re-organizing on the forum to hopefully help find the topics you are interested in. Great place to ask questions or offer suggestions to our woodworking family and friends.

### ***My Furniture Making World***

As Charles' daily blog now covers everything that would be written in this section we are going to drop it from the newsletter. You can

follow his Furniture Making World daily from our website - Click on My Blog from the main page.

## One Last thought before I close...

### *Upcoming "Quick Videos"*

I'm getting ready to film some tips and techniques you have asked for:

Making Adjustable Shelf Brackets  
Making Rails and Stiles that Don't Warp & Twist  
Making Poplar Look Like Walnut  
Quick & Easy Way to Do Spline Dovetails

We will be putting these up on our website as we complete them and Sherri will post it in her blog. If you guys got something you want, let me know, or if you've got something your willing to show, let me know that too.

Don't forget to support our sponsors.

### Our Sponsors:

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Jet Woodworking Tools  
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Timbermate Woodfiller  
Turbinaire HVLP  
Waterlox  
Woodpeckers, Inc.  
WoodRiver by Woodcraft  
Pro Tool/Worksharp  
Painter's Pyramid

Pass the word around, together we can get it done.

If you have followed my daily blog the past couple of weeks you are aware that I have been tackling some huge slabs of bubinga being made into a kitchen island countertop. Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup> will focus on these bubinga slabs. Hope you join us and check them out.

[Go To My Blog](#)

That's about it for me this month, thanks for your voice and your support. Without you, this is all in vain. *Visit My Forum* and let's chat. . Catch ya next month!

