



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. 16

October 2008

### Welcome to all New Subscribers!

*As you are all aware, we have a longtime passion for woodworking and now have pointed that passion toward education and simplifying woodworking to help everyone enjoy and be extremely proud of their accomplishments in woodworking. As we have grown over the past 18 months, there have been so many people and companies that have supported us and continue to do so. I have never wavered from giving you the truth about anything I do and will continue to do so. When I include a product or company in my columns, it is definitely because I have a loyalty to them, but...it is not a loyalty that they pay for, so please, never be confused on that.*

### Makin' Boards

On a recent trip to Pennsylvania, we stopped in at [Good Hope Hardwoods](#), a specialty lumber mill. I have done business with them forever. Norman and Skip were gracious enough to show us around and give us insight to how trees become lumber and what's involved. We spent about four hours and did some filming. [Click Here to watch "Visit a Specialty Lumber Mill."](#)

We took Friday and Saturday away from the workshop. On the way to Pennsylvania, we stopped in at the [Woodcraft - Towson, MD](#) store in the greater Baltimore area. As many of you know, Woodcraft is our choice of woodworking retailers. We have always found

them to be well stocked, have the latest in tools and equipment, price competitive and great customer service. I know from watching the forums that some of you have said that your store may not be as great as others so please realize that they are a franchise and things do differ from each store....but, if you truly have an issue, let [Woodcraft Corporate](#) know, they do care and will take care of you. Ya

know what else? Compliments are nice to get as well. Ya got a good Woodcraft in your neck of the woods? Let everyone know! Now, we have visited this store for years and found it under new ownership on this visit with a new staff as well, these guys were great. They told us that the new owners of that store are also the owners of the Woodcraft stores

in Harrisburg and Allentown, PA.....so, on our way home, taking a 30 mile detour, we visited the [Woodcraft - Harrisburg, PA](#) store, our first visit. It was a great opportunity to get out and meet some new folks. Ray Winkler and his wife Mary own these three franchises and Ray



Woodcraft - Towson, MD  
(From L to R) Byron, Gary (Mgr), Charles, Brad and Leonard



Woodcraft - Harrisburg, PA  
(From L to R) Dan, John, EJ (Mgr), Charles, Ray (Owner), Mike



was there when we arrived. Waiting on customers when we arrived but a very gracious host. EJ, the manager asked

me to sit down and autograph some of the DVDs they had in stock.

So, visit your local Woodcraft even if you aren't buying, just to see what they have, get familiar with the staff and enjoy your woodworking. Woodworking education is one of the corner stones of Woodcraft from the very beginning, 80 years ago so most Woodcraft stores offer classes and clubs so check them out! Also, many of you aren't aware that there is a good woodworking magazine published by Woodcraft as well. If you haven't seen it, you might want to check out [Woodcraft Magazine](#).



We had a great trip that was highlighted when we stopped in these stores and met the folks....so we we're brain storming, and if we can, we think we're gonna take a week or so off and map out a route where we can stop in lots more stores and visit with you guys if we're in your area. Thinking we might want to have a Lobster dinner in Maine! If we decide to take off, we'll keep you posted in my daily blog.

Yep, we like Woodcraft and if ya get to know them, you'll find they are a valuable source of woodworking education.

We filmed quite a bit last week so there will be some new videos showing up in our [Daily Video](#) as well as our [Video Tips & Techniques Video Player](#).

## My World

Well, busy is an understatement but what's new. We got a ton of filming and work to do (some income generating, some not), but got a lot done as well. All of it needs to be done. I've been trying to keep my focus and stay the course, balancing both and trying to not let all of this economic and political mess bother me. While it concerns me, I'm not going to let it slow me down, Life's Too Short!

Making a living at woodworking today is super tough, we have had some folks who are scared, cancel their orders, others place them. Most are like me, "The Sun WILL Shine Tomorrow." Franklin Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." He hit the nail on the head.

I wrote on the blog, got some more cabinets to do, a walnut bedroom suite (minus the bed, made that a few years ago) and next week we will be building the Hancock Shaker Clock and filming it as we go. We're also gonna jump right in with the Hanging Corner Cupboard, the two items ya'll voted for in our Poll last month. We're really looking forward to sharing that with ya and we have a lot more tips and techniques videos we will be broadcasting in the coming month. So....stay close and check the [blog](#), I think you will enjoy it, I am.

Sherri has been working on the companion pdf file for the Hancock Shaker Clock, materials and hardware required. She'll get that posted next week as we begin working on the clock so that when the videos are live, you can already have your stuff on hand. Our friend Bob ([Bob Kloes Hardwoods](#)) has set aside some really nice stuff for the clocks but does have a limited



supply. [Email Bob](#) for information on the price of these lumber packs for the Clock and what he has available. I'm certain it will be awesome stuff.

## In My Opinion

I've said it many times, I say it one more, too many opinions and not enough fact.

In the US, as we currently face economic challenges, selection of a new president and times of uncertainty, it's time for us all to look to ourselves for the solutions, rather than looking to the government.

I was truly encouraged by the "peoples" response to the economic bail-out. Finally, we saw some politicians actually afraid to go against the people's wishes. I think we should have responded much louder and done so a lot sooner. I hope we have learned our lesson, it would seem that, "For the people and by the people" thing has been forgotten, you need to remind them as well as I.

From a simplistic point of view, it would seem that the last time we saw this type of thing we "Declared our Independence" from such rule." Got in a pretty good scrap over it. Stood our ground and won and the things that were laid down then, hold true today. Below are some quotes from different folks which are often humerus but hold a lot of truth. Those of Thomas Jefferson seem to carry a message we all need to chew on a little bit! Before my next newsletter we will have a new president and I will turn 55. The latter I'm not real happy about. The first, only time will tell, but I do bid each of you to consider well and remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

"If you don't read the newspaper, you are uninformed, if you do read the newspaper, you are misinformed." - Mark Twain

"Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress...But then I repeat myself." - Mark Twain

"I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." - Winston Churchill

"Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." - Ronald Reagan

"No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session." - Mark Twain (1866)

"The only difference between a taxman and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin." - Mark Twain

"What this country needs is more unemployed politicians." - Edward Langley (1928-1995)

"A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have." - Thomas Jefferson

This nation needs a group of Woodworkers to Lead it because woodworking involves practical, simplistic common sense, something not in real abundance today. In one of my first newsletters I wrote that the UN needs a woodshop, now....so does Congress and the Senate!

Lastly, I think the media needs to report facts, otherwise, shut up. I don't need ten people telling me for two hours what I just heard with my own ears in a twenty minute speech. Just the facts please, just the facts.

Just MY OPINION!

## The Finish Line

In my [Rubbing Out](#) video, I think I went too fast and left some confusion as to what I did.

I started with some 1500 grit sand paper that

would give me a high semi-gloss. I then

dropped back to 1200 grit which is

what I used throughout. I wanted

less sheen than the 1500 grit. I stated to

stay off the edges,

that's a must or you will sand through them very easy, then I used a Abralon 2000 grit pad to "polish" it and I ran over the sides. In the video it looked like I was doing the edges, not the case.



Sanding and polishing are very different. The sanding leveled and removed any dust specs or imperfections, then the Abralon polished it up to a 2000 grit polished surface. I got a lower gloss, what I wanted. I then explained that I could use a Abralon 4000 grit to add a little more sheen (gloss) if I wanted.

Rubbing out is a great way to get those super nice finishes, but again I remind you, you have to have something to polish. One or two coats of oil isn't going to produce a sandable, polishable finish. You need three or four coats of a good "film" finish. Spray it or brush it. You have to have a good hard finish to rub so you must let it cure, otherwise it is like sanding and polishing chewing gum. Hope this cleared it up. If you haven't seen the video yet, [Click Here](#). If you still have questions, please email me.

3M has come up with another type of polishing pad. Got some on the way to check them out, I'll let ya know.

There is an interesting article in [Woodcraft Magazine](#). They used some [General Finishes](#)

water based finish with the cross-linker to finish the floor of what will be their new shop. After it was done, they decided the sheen was a little high (glossy). They decided to get a buffer and knock the sheen down....NOT....didn't touch it. That's what I like, super tough finishes. Now, the cross-linker, fancy name for catalyst, it hardens and strengthens the finish.

General Finishes also has a new, pre-cat urethane. I got some the other week, gonna do a claro walnut slab with it and rub it out. Now this slab thing isn't just about big slabs, it's about table tops, kitchen counter tops, there is a big demand for these, it has become very popular and I want you to have the knowledge and be able to produce them for yourself or commissioned. While things are a little tough, folks are still buying unique and special stuff, and no matter, having that killer finish, just flat out is pure pleasure. Hang in there with me and you might just get to liking finishing. Keep your eye on the blog because there is always something there and more coming.

## Planer Dogs

I ran into something a few weeks ago when building those pine cabinets. My 20" planer has bed rollers and the pine boards were band saw cut which left straight saw marks across the boards. With the bed roller slightly above the bed, it would telegraph into the top, planed surface. So I set my bed rollers flush with the bed, waxed the bed well and it was much improved, but here is another trick I have found that works well.

Take a smooth surface anything, Plywood, MDF is great, or another board and by attaching a cleat across the back so the board being planed can't push off the other end, and having it act as the "bottom", you get a nice smooth cut. It also can act as a face jointer. If you build it rigid, where it doesn't have much

flex. I used ½" MDF and a torsion box design to make mine. Doesn't have to be pretty, just flat and smooth.

Smaller, lunch box planers usually don't have rollers so it's not an issue. The issue with them is that the infeed/outfeed tables are short. The planer dog, as it became known, will also help a lot. It creates a level surface that the board cannot escape from so it can't NOT plane straight. The only issue is that your hold down rollers can mash it flat, so light passes is the key here. I have also been known to tape a shim or two under a bowed piece to prevent the rollers from mashing it down to create as flat and level a board as I can get.

## The Weather Report

Well, cool nights, warm days in the 70's. My fall garden is doing well, got a lot of broccoli, cabbage, beets and got some zucchini coming on. Hope the first frost holds a while. I got gourds, I love them, all the varied shapes and sizes, pretty much useless, except for decoration, but I just love watching them grow. You never know exactly what you're gonna get. Forgot, I got turnips too. Now, I like turnips, most don't, but I grew some white ones that are quick growing and really sweet. I'll tell ya about them come spring. The sunflowers are done and the birds are feasting. It's cool to watch them get on top of the sunflower, whose head is hung down so as to protect the seeds, and peck the back of the flower to shake the seeds loose. Then they go eat them off the ground. Pretty ingenious. Of course, if ya ever looked at a bird nest, you soon realize we're not as smart at this woodworking thing as we would like to think!

The leaves are changing and here in the Shenandoah Valley with all of the mountains, it's nature at its finest. Simply breath taking. When the leaves are at their peak, perhaps I

can get some photos for ya and put on the blog.

So to sum it up.....Fall is here.

## Craftsman Profile

*What's Your Story Louis?*



While all of enjoy woodworking and its challenges and rewards, we all know the thrill of accomplishment when we step back and see what we have done. That's a

common ground thing among any creative people, it's what drives us, it's what sustains us, and then we constantly strive to better ourselves and our work.

I have been fortunate to be able to do what I love for a living, and no matter how hectic it may become, to be able to see what my two hands have created, is a joy. Sometime back, I ran into a wonderful gentleman, Louis Scrivani.

Louis and I exchange frequent emails and have spoken. I have found Lewis to be an extraordinary person. In our early emails we discussed woodworking, he got some DVDs, just woodworking shop talk. Louis' questions were, and still are, specific to a technique. Dovetails - Drawers - Legs - Whatever. Louis' questions were usually advanced in his knowledge of measurement, shape, specifics and that sort of thing. Then I learned that Louis is blind. Nothing else needs to be said here by me, for the accomplishments of Louis Scrivani pale anything I could possibly say and as will any "I can't's" from those who read this, I give you my friend, my inspiration, my fellow woodworker, an extraordinary man.....

*Sherri's Note: Louis shared so much information about his woodworking world that space doesn't allow me to include it all in this newsletter so I am putting all the information into a web article you will be able to read from our website.*

### Make Do and Make It Work by Louis Scrivani

I lost my sight when I was 24. At the time, I was starting a career as a plumber/electrician. While on the job, I was hit by a truck. I always enjoyed working outside and working with my hands and using tools. After the accident, it took a long time to get back into it.



In fact, it took 15 years for me to give it a try. I was very apprehensive about trying to do the work. After my accident, my father attempted to get me interested and involved but I was pretty indignant and didn't even want to put much into trying to make it happen. I thought, why even bother to try. I assumed failure and well, we all know what happens when we Ass-U-Me!

Finally, it was after I got married, that I decided I wanted something to do. I selected a few small hand tools and used part of the basement as my workshop. I started small; with bird houses and a few music boxes. With time and practice, I moved on to larger projects like a bookshelf, printer stand, and footstool. Now, I feel like I am back in the swing of things, well.....almost. In one respect, I was fortunate because having seen previously, I can still picture how things look and are setup. I find that having a visual memory helps me with safety issues and building, but there are other blind woodworkers who never had any sight. I am amazed by others who never saw and do it as well as I do, if not better. It's not so much a

competition, but has become more of a therapy. I love doing the work, and it keeps me busy. It's a self challenge thing.

If you ask my wife, however, it is the exact opposite since when I mess up she hears my yelling and swearing. My dog doesn't like it either because he thinks he's in trouble and runs for cover. My wife on the other hand has learned to ignore my outbursts. I have trouble understanding my wife, who is also blind and an avid knitter. She seems to stay calm when she makes mistakes. She just seems to redo it. I suppose wood is very different from yarn. Either you have to get it right or scrap the wood or change the plan! You can't just rip it all out and start over.

As a blind woodworker, I have to make up extra jigs to accomplish jobs, such as a safer miter gauge, feather board. But hey, those are things that fully sighted woodworkers do for themselves as well.

Really though, the one major difference is safety! The ol' saying "Measure twice, cut once" is especially true if you are blind. I measure twice, and then check and re-check that my hands are clear from the blade. Safety is prime. I have established certain rules for myself. Like if I'm feeling sleepy or under the weather, then I won't let myself go near the shop. My energy level starts to run low around three in the afternoon so that's my quitting time. Like any smart woodworker, I also use a safety mask and am aware of what I am wearing when I go to my shop, no long sleeves, no jewelry. Hearing what goes on is important to me so I don't use any of the protective ear plugs. This is one big difference.

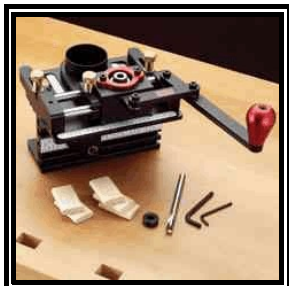
## The Tool Crib

I've been working on getting ready to do a mortise and tenon video. What I plan to do is to show you a ton of ways of doing them, it will

be a on-line video. We're working towards completing it.

### [JessEm Zip Slot Mortise Mill](#)

I got the JessEm Zip Slot, I filmed a couple clips on both the big one and the pocket version. Watch the blog for its release.



Now, both use loose tenons. The pocket size only does 1/4" the bigger one will do 1/4" and 1/2" and comes with the 3/8". It uses a regular hand held drill. I used my [18V DeWalt](#) these mortise mills do a nice job. It took me

a few minutes to get used to them and how they worked as well as how to set them up, but the learning curve was very short. I could then do exactly what the name implies. Zip through them. I was very surprised at how quick they cut considering the drill. The trick is to use the drill on fast speed and just let it cut. Don't push down real hard, just light pressure, stay tuned for the video.

### Gloves

I know, gloves are gloves, that is what I thought. Now...I wear gloves a lot, not only to protect my hands, but I'm always switching between finishing and woodwork and seems like when I'm finishing, my hands seem to get super slick. It's usually the talc in the gloves or the powder residue from sanding between coats, anyway, gloves help me with my grip, especially my left hand that doesn't quite close all of the way due to a table saw injury. My left hand gets cold very quick so I like and use gloves and I've got and have had about everything. One of my friends at Woodcraft told me about some they had come across and asked if I would try them out, I said sure, thinking, geez.....gloves.

Well....like finishes, not all gloves are the same. The ones I got are made by [Youngstown Glove Company](#) and they are super. Best I have ever used. Simply put, no hype, no bull. I put one of the insulated ones on my left hand. What I liked was how it wasn't super thick and heavy. Then I put my hand in the freezer, waited and waited, my hand stayed toasty. The carpenter style which has the short fingers in the thumb and index and third finger so that your fingers are exposed for better "feel" are my favorite in the shop. So, with winter coming, if you need some super nice gloves that are comfortable and durable and have a super grip, check them out, you won't be sorry.



## Sherri's Update

### *Website*

Still working on the web site, lots of pages still under construction. About the time I get it all finished, will find something else to change.

I will be posting the Louis' complete article and photographs on the web site so be sure and check it out. Should have it up next week.

### *Sponsors*

Our sponsors continue to support all of us and we have been able to initiate a Weekly Contest with giveaways provided by our sponsors. Charles and I keep asking you to support them, but the other day someone asked, what do you want us to do so here are some ways of letting them know that you appreciated them sponsoring Charles Neil videos and making them possible.

- Take time to click on the sponsor banners from our website. This way they know that you are visiting their website from ours. No, we don't want you to just click for clicking's sake! Visit their site, look around, join their email list.

- Drop the sponsors a note and let them know you appreciate what they are doing.

- When making a purchase, check them out first. Many of the sponsors are the manufacturers and may or may not sell their products direct. One thing for certain, if you want good information about the product, go straight to the horses mouth!

- After making a purchase, give them feedback, not just critical, but let them know what you like as well. This communication helps them know what helps you.

We have worked with these sponsoring companies and yes, they are businesses set out to make a profit, but....the people, employees and staff.... need to know how and when they can help you. They get better at their jobs when you tell them what your needs are, they do strive to meet them as best they can.

Just a few ideas.

Our Sponsors:

[Bartley Gel Stains](#)

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[Eagle America Router Bits](#)

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[WoodRiver by Woodcraft](#)  
[Pro Tool/Worksharp](#)  
[Painter's Pyramid](#)

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

### ***Full Length Project DVDs***

The "Hancock Shaker Clock" Project will be live in 7-10 days. We haven't filmed it yet, will take 3-4 days and then my editing and broadcasting. If you want updates, check our [Daily Blogs](#).

### ***DVD Update***

The Magic of Router DVD will be shipped in 3 weeks. Frustration level reached an all time high so we have purchased equipment to produce them ourselves. We have never in the past had so many issues. As soon as the equipment arrives we will be in full production mode. More details are available on our forum.

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

Just a reminder that our DVDs no longer have shipping included in the price. 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. 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 and many of our contests are hosted here. [Check It Out!](#)

## One Last thought before I close...

I hope you are checking out the blog from time to time. There is some folly there but some good woodworking stuff as well.

Same with the forum. We've recently added a forum topic, "Sounding Off." It's just a place for you to do that. No politic specifics or religion please, but just where if you feel like sharing your thoughts or opinions on pretty much anything, you can. Be polite, be clean and respect others, that's all we ask.

I wrote this in the blog, but I am enjoying doing it as we go through our various construction of varied pieces. Often something shows up that normally I would just "take care of" and move on, but with the blog, I am able to show you some of the "how to's" and sometimes some of the "how not to's" as we encounter them. It's a good thing, hope you take time to see it.

[Go To My Blog](#)

*Upcoming "Quick Videos"*

Tour Willow Run Custom Mill  
Splining Door Stiles & Rails  
Woodpecker "Router Lift"  
Kehoe Dovetail Splines  
Mortise & Tenons (so many ways!)  
Prepping Wood

Catch ya next month!



PS. Buy something you normally wouldn't, WE ARE the ECONOMY! Buying products stimulates it, think on it!