



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. 18

December 2008

Welcome to all New Subscribers!

with some nice crown molding router bits or what ever you like and your in business.

Extra \$\$\$ from Your Shop

This title could almost be classified as a joke in today's economy....but we are still taking orders.



Now, what prompted me to write this is I just did some picture framing clips for Woodcraft, now, I'm not going to do any links 'cause this isn't about products, but rather trying to think of simple ways to help you use your woodworking to maybe supplement income.

I don't know about you, but I always thought this "picture framing" mirror making thing looked kind of complicated, all those miters, clamping, cutting, matting and all that stuff....it isn't.

I used one of those "Nolan" matt cutters and they have a circle/oval cutter as well. Not super cheap, but I cut perfect matting, ovals, all beveled edged, first time. I tried it, they have a nice DVD as well, but the point is, you use a simple "V" nail, a simple clamp, little glue, put your frame together, cut your mat and using a neat little gun (like a staple gun) you shoot a spring steel arrow head nail into the side of the rabbet that holds the glass and photo and all and your done! Combine that

You can also buy pre-finished frame stock and matting from most craft stores, but then, where would your woodworking come in?

My point here is that it is not difficult at all and with all the computer generated photos being done as well as not requiring much space, it could be a good thing to look into.

Second one is sign making. You can use one of the sign maker kits to make about anything you want, pretty inexpensive and with a router, you're in business. House signs, mailboxquick, fast and easy.

Lazy Susans....these are always a winner, couple of circles, an inexpensive Lazy Susan bearing and you've got it.

If you have a Tormek or Jet Sharpening System, get the scissors/knife jig and well....where can you get a pair of scissors or a kitchen knife sharpened? Not to mention doing chisels/turning tools, plane irons for other woodworkers.

Cutting Boards....also look up "Tavolini" pastry boards. Both are huge hits. You could also turn rolling pins and carve wooden spoons.

Just some food for thought and inexpensive products that sell.

My World

Well, it's been interesting to say the least. When you read this, the router DVD set has either arrived or is in route. I can't think of anything that has been as overwhelming and frustrating as this has been. Fix one problem, find two, but we did it and it's done.

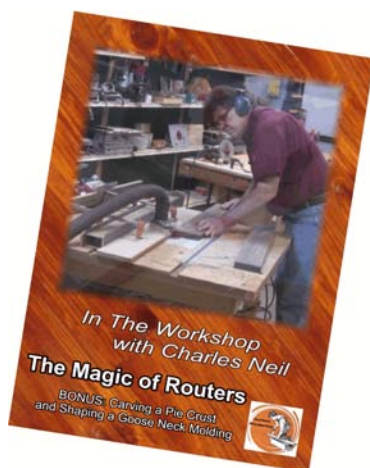
I think the router DVD will be as popular as the Finishing set. I don't know what else I could have done. One thing I had initially planned was to get into the dovetail jigs pretty deep. I quickly changed my mind, we went through them explaining the differences and what they do, but to have done all the instructional setups would have taken ten discs more. What I did was to as simply as I could, have you understand how to use a router to do anything and I mean anything to do with cutting and shaping wood.

I showed you how and why and we built and showed a ton of jigs. Simple, inexpensive way of getting difficult and complex jobs done. I will be anxious to see the reviews.

I have been quite pleased with the economy such as it is with not only the DVD sales but the orders we been receiving for furniture, that's a good thing, I like to eat.

So, with the router DVD done, four months, yep, four months of pure frustration, over, I can now focus.

I just can't express how sorry I am it took so long, but believe me, between the rendering companies and Sherri's health issues, and having to build furniture to sustain, it has been interesting and I will never be placed in this position again.



Nothing will ever be sold on a pre-release again, even though we now have the equipment and knowledge to do them totally in house, I refuse to put this much pressure on us again.

I got about 15 emails asking when it would ship, I got 2 chastising me pretty good, I refunded their money with interest. Glad it's behind us.

Just so you know, we have several smaller titles we have filmed and will release in early 2009. We will get the Clock out as soon as possible, it was set for September or October but the router set changed that, along with Brightcove's announcement that they would no longer host except at \$6K a year. Had to take our resources to find an alternative before we post it only for it to shut down.

I'm back in the shop for a few weeks working on projects for anxious clients and will blog and post these projects the best we can.

Glue covered, stain splattered sweat shirts, saw dust and scrap covered floors as well as fourteen hour days are surely looking good right now, it's what I do and who I am.

In My Opinion

It would seem that in light of this economic downturn we are seeing a mass of good deals show up. Manufacturers and Retailers are being quite creative to keep sales moving. That's a good thing and if you can swing it, you are going to be seeing some really good deals show up, so now is the time to look at buying some things you've been needing and a little want would be nice as well.

The other thing I see is that folks are looking around to see if there is "alternative" markets

or if revenue is being lost by not addressing changing trends.

Since I last wrote, we have been approached by most of the magazines about videos, projects, articles, etc. (I touched on this in my blog).

Most of them are looking to utilize the video combined with the written word, a dual media if you will. I think that is an excellent idea. I have said it before, the picture is worth a thousand words thing, well a moving one is worth a zillion words. It just works. Seeing something done just can't be topped in words alone, but by the same token, procedures, formulas, and still close detail as well as patterns and references are best in written form so combining the two could make for some very good instructional and informative media.

I would also not be afraid to say that in today's world, there are more watchers and listeners than readers and as technology advances, it will grow dramatically and it will open new sources of revenue generating coupled with global market positions. We have as well considered looking into our DVDs to be downloadable to reduce cost and shipping, it just makes sense. So in my opinion, I think in 2009 you are going to see at least a lot of companies whose products are information and educational based, start leaning towards the internet as a major source of distribution.

I further anticipate a dramatic reduction in free videos as companies who have utilized the free hosting services start to understand that the cost of hosing such a mass amount of videos is prohibitive and that they are missing out on a source of revenues. So in my opinion, we are going to see a reduction in free video hosting.

Another point on this is that the free "hosting" has served it's purpose to demonstrate, not

only it's value and popularity, in both educational and information but it's immense value in advertising and with the point thus made, free isn't going to be free much longer (I have written about this before, but now we are really seeing it come to pass).

One last thing, I think we now know what too big to fail means. All the big guys the governments all over the world are going to bail them out. But the little mom and pops, the small guys, like the animals, are ignored. If you and I don't support them....they're gone. With them gone, big business will dominate, they already do, if you don't support the "little man" no matter what part of the world you live in, big business is going to do to you what big oil has done. We're gonna get swallowed up like a worm by a big fish and as long as big business get's theirs, no one is going to give a damn. If you think not, look at all the big banks who got bailed out with our money, they aren't lifting a finger to help us, or our neighbors and guess what, they're not going to. We have become a world of "Look Out for #1" and guys, it has never worked and it isn't now.

I'm gonna tell this one more time, help ya neighbor, give till it hurts, it's an economic plan that was put in place about 2000 years ago and I can personally tell you it works.

Here is a Christmas suggestion, go buy gifts and groceries for a family in need, drop a nice check by the animal shelter and do it till it hurts, you will feel better, sleep better and what happens next, you won't believe. It never, ever fails - I promise.

One more opinion, (Yeah, I know) as far as the big three auto makers go, it's hard for a guy making \$15.00 an hour to buy a vehicle made by a guy making \$40.00. No offense intended, but think about it....every thing has to have a balance, even something as simple as a see-saw.

The Finish Line

Some time back, right after doing the quilt rack video, I was getting a lot of emails about coloring poplar and other light colored, less expensive wood.

I called the guys at [General Finishes](#) and I asked if they would be kind enough to do me some samples, on poplar, using a dye base with a stain over, they did. Here are some photos of the boards they did. I think they did about every dye and stain color, the results are pretty remarkable. You may click on the photos for a larger view and the labels will be legible, however, keep in mind that colors on the computer may differ in real life!



[Enlarge Photo](#)



[Enlarge Photo](#)



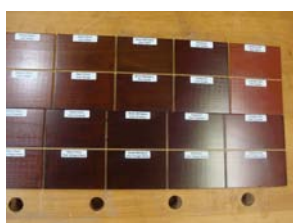
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They must have thought so as well, I think they are trying to figure out how to get the colors and samples in some sort of public arena.

But my point is that we have been doing this for years and as I have written before, it is how almost all the furniture manufacturers color their wood. Now I feel sure you have seen “Solid Hardwood - Cherry Finish” or something similar. These guys use the most inexpensive woods they can get to do a “layered” or double colored system to get the color they want. The key to it is that the dye which is strong, creates a uniform base color. It is typically sprayed, but you can wipe it as well. Then stain over it, it gives you an even color and because dyes do not hide the grain, it gives a much cleaner and clearer color. Really enhances the grain while giving color. While it is not the cheapest or even the easiest way to color wood, it is the best.

When we did the quilt rack, we did the dye, stain thing and it’s in the finishing DVD set and I have written about it several times, so I don’t want to keep hammering you on it, but I thought you would enjoy seeing the samples and perhaps give it a try.

The Weather Report

Might Cool! Not super bad but I wouldn’t go sticking my tongue on a metal pole, especially in the morning.

Remember, water based finishes and glues, don’t let them freeze, if they do, discard them.

Cold Weather & Wood

Hot and cold doesn’t affect wood much, it’s the humidity or the lack there of.

Winter is actually a good time for wood to dry, the cooler temperatures and lack of humidity cause it to dry slow, but very well if it is kept some place that doesn’t freeze.

Drying wood too fast causes it to case harden. That’s where the outside dries and the cells

close and the inside stays moist, same as cooking or baking something, crispy outside, moist inside. But in wood, it will cause a lot of issues, predominantly stress.

When cutting wood and it is bowing or twisting, it is often caused because it was case hardened. Sometimes however, it is simply a case of natural stress within the wood. Good idea to test a couple of pieces to see if it is an isolated piece or is carried throughout the pile. You can often skim plane it and let it sit for a couple of weeks and it will equalize, like cutting the crust off a loaf of bread and letting it sit. It will dry out equally, if not, either let it sit for a longer period of time or return it.

I wrote this again as I have had many emails where you guys are having issues. All wood will have some stress, it is normal. Take a 4" piece of wood and expect to get 4 - 7/8" wide strips of wood from that won't work. Cut them about 1 1/8" wide and then trim back to the 7/8" and your chances are pretty good. When wood is cut, stress is relieved and it moves, always cut wider and then ease into the final dimension. Especially on thin or narrow cuttings. Sneak Up On It! This is the best advise I can give you, even on cross cuts. I like to cut closer then do a light cut to final length, it makes for a much smoother and accurate cut. On miter cuts, it is a must!

Winter Heating

I know, not much need for heating in the summer! I think I say this every year, but it's just so helpful.

In my neck of the woods, we see a lot of wood stoves and other means of heating, but no matter what means you use, heat dries air and winter is especially dry. Ever notice how in the summer when humidity is up how much warmer it feels, well the same applies in

winter. To have a humidifier which adds moisture to the air dramatically helps in your feeling warmer. Also helps with dry skin or lips. If you don't have a humidifier a pot of steaming water helps immensely. Most of the folks who use wood stoves, pellet stove, etc., always have a big pot of water simply placed on it so that the water will evaporate into the air.

Boiling/scalding hot is not safe nor needed, just keep it warm, about the temperature of a warm shower, helps a ton.

I'm Bright!

Well - I am - but before you laugh too much, read on. As we get older, and we do, like it or not, our eyes don't adjust to light as rapidly or as well and in the shop, small pencil lines, knife marks or close measurements are hard to see. Just a fact. Reading glasses and bifocals don't help with the light thing. Additionally, in our world, we have to deal with lighting issues for filming.

Jeff Fleischer (aka chpcrvr) was by and he was talking about some light bulbs he had gotten for some photography things he was doing so he brought a couple over. Now my shop had a lot of incandescent lighting when we got it and we added the florescent but it seemed that no matter what we did, it just wasn't good enough, there is a huge difference in quantity and quality of light.



We installed the 2 bulbs Jeff brought over in the incandescent fixtures (we change these bulbs every other month) WOW, so we ordered enough to replace all of the incandescent. Without getting into all of the technical issues,

which you can read about on the web site, I must tell you it made a 1000% improvement. Actually, it then made the florescent look yellow. So I bit the bullet and got some of the daylight florescent . WOW again! I can see. Now the tubes are about double the cost and the incandescent replacements are about \$13 to \$20 depending on quantity, but the power use vs. the light output more than offsets and how long they last is remarkable.

Now, the florescent for the regular incandescent sockets have a large base right off of the threaded part so if you have reflectors, note this. The bulbs also need a "warm up." It takes a few minutes from the time you turn them on until you get the full spectrum, but given the light, quality of light and energy savings, it's a good investment.

These lights made a dramatic difference in our shop and we want to share the web site where we purchased ours, we priced them locally and they wanted \$29 for the same bulb. So to see how you can be brighter too. [Here is the Link!](#)

The Tool Crib

In filming some "about and how to" video clips for Woodcraft I ran across their **170 pc. Drill Bit Set** - on sale for \$29.95 and free shipping.



I posted it on my Daily Blog, the special ran through the end of November. I asked if they would consider extending it and they did. [Here is the link.](#) The sale price is good through 12/31/08.

Now, when I saw this price I figured they couldn't be much of a bit, I was wrong. I drilled and checked fit, (dowels), tear out, all that stuff, they were

great! Now, what they did was give you 10 each of the smaller sizes and 5 each of the bigger, so they go from 1/16" to 3/8", brad point or split point. The special will end soon as well as quantities. Just thought I'd let you know and that [Woodcraft](#) has free ground shipping on all orders placed on line through December (excess weight charges still apply).

[Wood River Chisels](#)



Also a great buy is this chisel set at \$49.99 with free ground shipping. It's \$35.00 off. I can attest that these are super bench chisels and is the same set as we gave away a few weeks ago in our weekly contest. Nice set and great buy!

[Kehoe Jig](#)

Last month we featured the Kehoe Jig in our Tool Crib section, since we did a video on the jig and have been running it on our website.

[Here is a link to view the video until December 17th](#) when Brightcove shuts down. We'll be re-posting all of our videos but at publication time, the new link is not available.

From Our Forum

We share a lot of info and have a really good fellowship going on at our Forum, if you haven't joined, you might want to. [Click here to Visit.](#)

Let Your Tongue Slap Your Brains Out!

Mmmmmm Good. Rick (aka copperbasinwood) and his wife Debbie (aka Hummingbird), two of our forum friends dropped by my shop a few weeks ago while

traveling just to say hello. He gave us some of his special BBQ Rub. I asked him after trying it out to post it on the forum, [here is the link](#).

Man, this stuff is great! He had done good and even if ya don't Bar-B-Q, try a little in a salad or soup, it's got a really nice flavor.

I've been using it like salt & pepper. Oh, check out Rick's label. Now, he doesn't sell this stuff commercially, but just for us, he said to email him if ya would like to give it a try, It's good and I suggest you give it a shot!

Sherri's Update

Website

I've been a slacker this month, so overwhelmed with DVD production that I haven't kept up with my daily changes to the web site that I know many of you check for each day, sorry....I'll do better this month!

Full Length Project DVDs

The "Hancock Shaker Clock" Project will be out shortly. Check our daily blogs as that is where we will announce when it is live.

Classes

After putting out the feelers in last month's newsletter, we didn't get a very good response so we'll leave it out there just in case you missed it or were checking out your schedules but if you would be interested, please email us as soon as possible.

Our classes are one week long, Monday through Friday, we start at 8am and go until we're done. Saturday is always available for additional help if needed. We would hold classes in May and October of 2009 and the

cost would be \$800.00 each class per student, all inclusive and limited to 6 in the Finishing Class and 4 in the Woodworking Class each scheduled week.

We will not be offering project classes because they always seem to be more of a distraction than anything. There are so many questions and areas that don't pertain to the project and then there is the added cost of the materials.

Class Synopsis

Finishing A to Z: An intensive, hands on class taking you through preparation, sanding, hand applied finishes and sprayed finishes.

In the Workshop: We start with processing wood, cutting, squaring, move through using routers, dove tails, mortise and tenons, sanding and prepping, pretty much all core woodworking techniques, raised panels, doors, drawers. This will be an intense class where we hit the door running and keep plowing til' ya get what ya came for!

I will show you how to cut a hand cut dove tail in 30 minutes and have you fully understand it, practice will perfect it and you can practice at home. Several hours on a table saw and you will understand it....safety and a multitude of other things like jigs you can make. This will be a super class, sort of a buffet geared to where the students want to go.

We need to hear from you as soon as possible if you are interested in attending either of these classes. Please email us at workshopofcharlesneil@msn.com or call at 540-740-3620.

My Daily Blog

I know a lot of you are following the Daily Blog on our web site. We try to get as much up as we can and there is usually some good stuff

there, it basically follows the day to day happenings at my shop and I try to take you along on our projects and expand on points of interest. You may want to take a look from time to time and there is an RSS Feed link if that is easier for you. I have a lot of stuff to make so you are surely to find something that peaks your interest. [Click Here to Check Out the Blog.](#)

"In the Workshop" Forum

It's growing, ours is different, we're all friends, a little more of a comfort zone for everyone no matter what their skill level. We all share our views, our thoughts and our woodworking, our nonsense and our concerns. It's a fun place to be, spelling and grammar don't count and we have our Weekly Contest there too! Hope you join in, it's all free. [Visit Our Forum](#)

One Last thought before I close...

An Amazing Journey

I really didn't want this newsletter to be so much about us but so much has been happening and for me, this newsletter is like sitting down at the dinner table and talking with family, a good cup of coffee, a pen and you.

Those of you who have followed us for some time have watched the peaks and valleys. The aggravation and frustration but through it all, we have, by Grace, been able to keep it all together. (Well Sorta)

In the last 3 weeks we have been approached by almost all the magazines about doing articles, projects, videos, that's interesting and pretty cool.

Consider it from my view, I'm a country boy, out house or nice bathroom, both acceptable, of course then again, big rock or tree.....never mind.

Somehow I have had a fascination with fine furniture and how they did it, never had any training as such, just what I could scrounge up. The rest was pure trial and error, mostly error. No internet, no books, on my own, but by either being too bull headed to let it beat me or by enough determination to prove those wrong who said I couldn't do it, I arrived here. Now, I'm still unclear where here is!

I did some you tube stuff that Sherri asked me to do (Didn't know or care what it was) on a whim. I did my first video because Sherri wanted to see if she could edit and make one. She likes the internet computer thing a lot. So I did it. She put it out there and folks started buying it. My thought was, you got to be kidding! So I got out on the forums and answered a few questions (I didn't know they existed either), so Sherri convinced me to do another video, I did, just to appease her (shut her up is the thought I had). She was selling them as well. Some where along the line she convinced me to do the Finishing one. She bought books and got me to read them, and then asked what I thought. My thought was, very informative if you understand it, but if you don't, it's like a foreign language and very lacking at the same time. So if you have the DVD series, you see what I did. Took a year and now the Router DVD and more coming.

The point is, I never set out to be where I'm at but it found me any way. Intriguing and some what fun and obviously it has evolved. Not sure how or why.

Oh, I've had a few critics, usually about my hair - never got that it's my own and wearing shop clothes seem to upset a lot. Got some new shirts but the hair remains and they've shut up. Had some manufacturers and others say I needed to "clean up" be more professional, not as country. One was really honest and actually said redneck. I got a teary eyed laugh out of that one. He didn't get it, none seem to. I wasn't trying to impress him, I was trying to

teach him. Some said my language and speech is too common, I reply and say, "Yep, and who don't understand it?" Never got a reply.

Now as I often do, I told ya all that to tell ya this, these same guys want my videos for "Pay Per View" as well they want me to only answer questions through pay subscriptions. Geez. They sure missed me by a country mile.

I will simply tell you this, my objective was and remains not to impress nor entertain, it's to share with you, my experience and hope that you don't trip over the same rocks, 'cause I've kicked most of them off the path for you.

I will not compromise who I am and what I believe in for money, isn't me. To have what I have worked to learn for a lifetime be exploited isn't going to happen. Others may not understand this way of thinking but I think you do.

To close, the line in a country song by Aaron Tippin comes to mind, "If ya don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything."

Merry Christmas

Sherri & I want to wish you a very Merry and Safe Holiday and let's not forget the reason for the season.

I would hope that among all the economic mess and issues we face you would take the time and extend the effort to drop a donation by the animal shelter. I fully realize that there are a lot of needy folk, but our furry and feathered friends seem to be last on the list and they need our help as well. We can ask for help, they can't. This is an issue near and dear to my heart. Please help.

Catch ya next month!



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

We found a passion for woodworking a very long time ago and now have pointed that passion toward woodworking education based on our experience. We try to simplify woodworking so that even the novice may enjoy the hobby and be proud of their achievement and accomplishments in woodworking.

As we have grown over the past 18 months, there have been so many people, like you, and companies that have supported our endeavor and continue to do so. I have never wavered from giving you the truth about everything I do and will continue to do so. When a product or company is written about in my articles, it is because I have a loyalty to a good product or business, but...it is not a loyalty that is paid for, so please, never be confused on that.

