



P.O. Box 68343
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JULY 2009 NEWSLETTER

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The Cumberland Furniture Guild's Summer Meeting

**will be on Sunday, August 9th, 2009 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. at
at The Knoxville Museum of Art in Knoxville, Tennessee.**

*The program at this meeting will be a walk-through and discussion of our exhibition pieces presented by a **Surprise Guest**. This will be a **joint meeting with the East Tennessee Woodworkers' Guild** and will be followed that evening by a **Party and Bonfire** at the lakeside Hostel of East Tennessee Woodworkers' Guild member **Ed Decker**.*

Directions to the meeting:

The KMA is at 1050 Worlds Fair Park Dr., Knoxville, TN 37916 – The phone number is (865) 525-6101.

Eastbound on I-40 or Southbound on I-275 at I-40 interchange

Take Exit 388 onto Henley Street/441 South; bear right immediately toward Route 62 (Western Avenue/Summit Hill). Go straight through the first light onto 11th Street; turn left at the first road on the left. This is World's Fair Park Drive. The museum is the first building on the left.

Westbound on I-40

Take Exit 387 (Western Avenue/17th Street) and bear right off the exit onto Ailor Avenue. Follow Ailor through the first light, and then turn right at the stop sign onto Route 62 (Western Avenue). Follow signs to the museum: at the second light turn right onto 11th Street; then turn left at the first road on the left. This is World's Fair Park Drive. The museum is the first building on the left.

The CFG Newsletter is published quarterly by The Cumberland Furniture Guild, P.O. Box 68343, Nashville, Tennessee 37206

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Layout & Design - Worth Squire. We are a 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit organization.

Thanks to all of the people who volunteer their time, without whom there would be no Guild and no newsletter.

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Letter From The President

By Alf Sharp

There's a lot going on, and so it falls to me as president to bring the membership up to speed on what the board is doing and planning. There's considerable irony here, as most readers must realize that I'm little more than a nominal figurehead in this wonderfully vibrant organization, and that credit for all the great things that get dreamed up and done goes solidly to other dedicated and hard-working individuals. I'd like to remind you who they are, and why they deserve a hearty thank-you: Scott Thompson, Jim Horne, DiAnne Patrick, David Knudson, Matthew Teague, Chris Somerville, Worth Squire, Roger Gramm, Peggy Joseph, Scott Moffett, and Zev Goring are steadfast and zealous workers. Alan Daigre has been elected the new treasurer, and has assumed his duties wholeheartedly. Your name could be here – just show up. Board meetings are open.

At this point, the board is anticipating the end of our exhibit in Knoxville, and the quarterly meeting that will take place at the same time. This meeting should be something special, and a lot of fun, because it's being held in Knoxville, at the Knoxville Museum of Art, and in conjunction with the East Tennessee Woodworkers' Guild. Here's your opportunity to meet a bunch of really great people and very accomplished makers, whose Guild has been strong for over 25 years. The meeting content will consist of a discussion and walk-thru of the exhibit pieces, conducted by a surprise guest. If that weren't enough, Ed and Arlene Decker, members of the ETWG, have opened their hostel-style lakeside bunkhouses to us, and so we have a party and bonfire planned for that evening. The next day, we'll be taking down and packing up the exhibit. Your help in this activity would be appreciated too.

Recent discussions for the Fall meeting are centering around a seminar sort of event, probably with demonstrations, at the high school in Columbia where CFG Member Mark Dillon teaches a resurrected industrial arts curriculum. The intent would be to develop a deeper appreciation in the students, their parents, and any other interested people, for the craft of furniture making. This is a great opportunity to reach out into the community, and to encourage the next generation of craftspeople. Plan to participate.

The board has also been discussing what efforts the Guild might make to increase membership. There has been some back and forth about whether substantially increasing our membership would necessitate casting our appeal more in the direction of the very large and devoted hobbyist population. We have never discouraged participation by this segment, but we have always actively encouraged excellence, and resisted the impulse to become more like a "club", with show-and-tell, endless demos on how to cut dovetails, etc. Greater membership does mean the ability to accomplish many more goals and affect the lives of many more people. Can we maintain the strong emphasis on professional development and standards, while still welcoming and nurturing novices and dilettantes?

Allied with this discussion is the question of whether to have a tiered membership. That is, could we establish fairly high standards for an advanced membership level in the Guild, and offer regular opportunities for general members to stand for a juried examination of their work in hopes of being elevated to the, say, "Master" level? Would that introduce an undesirable element of elitism, or just encourage advancement and excellence? Would "Masters" be expected to pay higher dues, and perhaps have certain extra privileges?

Another topic of conversation is whether we are ready for a part-time paid staff person – a Director? Some of the work necessary to keeping this organization vital and active becomes fairly burdensome to the handful of volunteers who always end up doing the work. Most of us are full-time makers in a field notorious for its low financial rewards. Does our present level of membership justify such a move, and can it be sustained? This is but one of the reasons striving for higher membership numbers is being discussed. Would this begin an inevitable spiral into a quite different looking organization?

The board has also decided to engage the membership with more regular e-mail blasts about activities and obligations, and also to sponsor more spontaneous events when opportunities arise. The recent lecture by Brian Gladwell at the Frist (co-sponsored by the CFG) is an example of the kind of thing we can notify members about via email on relatively short notice, which might otherwise not be possible at all.

We are also working to streamline the dues renewal process. Now, each member has their own annual renewal date – quite cumbersome. We're going to send out a notice to all in arrears right after this newsletter. Then the next renewal period will be in March of next year, and then at the first of the year thereafter, to bring our renewal appeals in line with the calendar year. This little Guild has accomplished remarkable things in its short life. We all want to sustain such great activity.



Alan Daigre expounds on the virtues of Hickory (above) and shows us how to bark like we mean it (below)



Photos by John Lucas

The board is working hard to make this so, and to confront the questions the future holds. Your comments, and especially your participation, are vital to the continuation of this success. Thanks for a very good time so far. -Alf ♦

Barking Dogs Demo

By Worth Squire

At our last Guild meeting we had a demonstration by CFG member/chairmakers Alan Daigre and Tim Hintz in the art of harvesting Hickory bark for chair seats, and in weaving chair seats. It was a great demonstration, and it seemed to me that it was especially worth writing it up since we had a lower-than-usual turnout at the meeting due to a snafu in getting the last newsletter out on time.

Tim and Alan showed up with a length of Hickory log in tow, and set up out under the Hackberry trees in my yard to start the demonstration. They explained that this was a young Shagbark Hickory log, but that one could also use the Mockernut Hickory with equal success.

Just a few minutes into their presentation the wind kicked up and the sky began to darken, causing all of us to look around nervously. Luckily, we had cleared out our garage against the possibility of bad weather, so we all made a dash for cover, dragging all of our demonstrators' paraphernalia along with us. We got under cover just as the sky opened up.



The log stripped a

Continuing under cover, they then explained that the trees must be cut in the late spring when the sap is really up and running, so that the bark is loose enough to pull away from the trunk. This can vary from year to year depending on conditions. Tim said that you could test a Hickory trunk to see if the bark would cooperate by cutting a 6 or 7 inch long chunk, maybe an inch and a half at the middle, shaped like two parentheses touching at top and bottom. If the sap was running sufficiently to allow the bark to come loose it would peel off easily from this test spot. If it was not, this technique would not harm the tree.

Alan then demonstrated how to strip the outer bark from the hickory trunk with a drawknife just down to the 'corky' looking layer beneath, being careful not to take too much. He then took a mat knife and scored



deeply along the entire length of the log twice, about 1 1/2 inches apart. Then, after encouraging the layers to start separating on the exposed endgrain, he simply peeled off the strip in one long, even piece. This looked so easy and natural that the garage resonated



Tim Hintz weaves a seat (above) and shows us how to split White Oak chair parts with the fro (left)



down to its sapwood

with oohs and ahs as he went. One of the great things about the process was being able to feel the log right after he peeled off the bark.

It had a slick and mucilaginous feel where the bark had been adhered to the trunk. The bigger the log in diameter, the wider the strip you could take at once, they said.

Tim then showed how that strip should be cut into narrower strips according to the width desired, and then split into thinner layers by hand. He explained that the choice, innermost

layer was reserved for more high-style seats, while the outer-most layer could be used with its 'corky' side out for a more rustic effect. He also said that he would try to harvest as long a log as he could in the woods so as to not have to splice the bark as often when he is weaving a seat. A 35 or 40 foot long strip of bark might do most of one small chair seat, for instance. Once harvested, coiled, and properly dried, the bark could be hung up in the shop and stored for many years. When needed it could then be soaked overnight to restore its supple workability and woven as easily as if it were new.

Tim then showed us how to weave the actual seat in a small antique chair that needed a new seat. He had prepared the chair before everyone showed up for the demonstration with the warp (front to back) bark already applied, so he made quick work of weaving the weft to make a complete seat. I will not go into a detailed description of the process



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here, but rather will recommend that there is a good PDF tutorial at the following link: <http://www.basketmakerscatalog.com/mfiles/hickorybark.mv>. *The Basket Maker's Catalog* is also a good source for chair-seat weaving supplies if you are not inspired to harvest your own.

As if that were not enough, Tim then did a greenwood chair parts demonstration, which was fascinating as well. He did not demonstrate his ability to pick up the end of a VW, but I don't think there was anyone in the room who doubted that he could, as we watched him wield the mallet and fro. Of particular interest was his mallet, made in the style of noted early toolmaker Fred Flintstone –*Worth*♦

Our Best to Mike Bell

Guild member, Tennessee State Museum Curator, and newsletter columnist extraordinaire Mike Bell is having some health issues that prevented him from doing one of his great columns in this issue. We all send our prayers and best wishes to Mike for a speedy recovery!

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Cool Tool Review

John Henry and the CNC Machine

By Scott Thompson

This summer we have been working on a painted kitchen for a wonderful old farm house. My shop is set up for milling rough cut solid wood - the cabinet face frames in this case - but I quickly bog down when there is a sea of sheet goods and cabinets-in-process everywhere. So I asked a friend if I could do the cabinet construction and finishing in his much larger shop. Along with a lot of space, he also owns a CNC (Computer Numeric Control) machine which is bigger than my entire shop. In order to speed up the machining of the sheet goods, I asked him to mill the plywood panels with the CNC machine. It was an interesting experience to observe a huge, whirling router that moved over each plywood panel, changing its own bits and collets, adjusting the cutter speeds and feed rates while cutting, drilling, dadoing and notching the cabinet parts.

Of course, the idea behind connecting a computer to a woodworking machine is to attempt to produce accurate, repetitive cuts, allowing the maker to concentrate on other parts of the job while the machine prepares parts for assembly. Another benefit is that the computer is able to organize its cutting patterns to maximize the yield of materials - particularly with sheet goods.

I have another friend who owns a small "Mill - Drill" machinist's tool that is hooked up to a computer. This much smaller machine actually has three small motors (or "servos") that the computer controls to move a small panel of material under a stationary bit. (see photo) His hobby and passion is wind turbines and he has the CNC machine set up in his garage to mill small curved parts that he then turns into "air foils". He then tests what wind speed it takes to turn his small turbines. I have been most impressed with the ability of CNC technology to create "curved" parts effortlessly.

There are many CNC machines between the two described here—and the prices range from a couple of thousand dollars to six figures. In an effort to be more efficient and profitable, you may want to consider having a relationship with a shop with a CNC machine. Understanding the appropriate times to seek this type of help can really make a difference in your bottom line. Making accurate "blanks" for furniture makers who do multiples which can then be hand-refined in assembly seems like a great application to me. Typically there is a "programming fee" (to input your specific design information into the computer) and a "machining fee" (per hour to run the machine).

I have five children and have read a lot of children's stories over the last eighteen years. The story of John Henry and the steam drill is one that has stuck with me—it speaks to the struggle between human beings and machines. It raises the question of what makes us human. How do we work well? What does "handmade" mean? When watching the CNC cut out cabinet parts for this farm house kitchen, I knew there was no way I could cut out the parts faster or more accurately. However, the machine's biggest weakness seems to be its inability to deal with the real world - variations in material thickness, for example, or swirling grain in hardwoods. I found it both frustrating and satisfying that I had to take several of the parts milled by the CNC



The "Mill Drill" is a small scale CNC

Photo by Scott Thompson

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back to my good old Powermatic 66 table saw and shave a little from the edge so that they would fit. I thought about John Henry, the steel-driving-man as woodworker, who could still read the grain better than a \$ 120,000 machine. -Scott ♦

Barn Raising at Greg Pennington's

Guild Member Greg Pennington will be having an old fashion barn raising on Saturday, August 29th starting around 12:00 noon for a new shop dedicated to building and teaching about Windsor chairs. There will be a celebration following the raising. They have a baseball field and swimming pool for the kids, so bring the family. There will be plenty of barbecue and sides; just bring your own drinks. For more info call Greg at (615) 264-3578 or email Greg.pennington@comcast.net Put this in your calendars now! And look for a Guild email with specifics nearer to that date.

Swap & Shop

8 inch Steel City Jointer—granite fence; 6 months old— \$850 or best offer. Call Alan at (615) 713-7868 or email alan@alandaigre.com.

Powermatic Model 50 6" Jointer—classic, made in McMinnville, with extra set of knives. \$550 OBO. 120/240v. single phase. Will consider a trade. Call Craig (615) 952-4308 cn@craignutt.com.

15 inch Powermatic Planer—3 HP, 220v, 2 Speed; \$950 or best offer or trade for?? Call Worth at (615) 368-7798. or worths@united.net.

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