

Tidewater Woodworkers Guild Meeting Minutes April 2005

The Guild met at the Woodcraft Store in Norfolk, Va. on Monday, 25 April.

Pat Taylor opened the meeting at 7 PM, announcing that the reorder for the club's embroidered logo caps had arrived, but the price had risen to \$11.00- available at the meeting close from treasurer Gene George. One new member joined our ranks this evening: James Colby, from Virginia Beach.

Mike Geller has offered his nearly complete collection of *Fine Woodworking* Magazines to the club's Lending Library. Stowage of possibly more than 100 magazines will require a set of shelves or cabinet. If a few members are willing to construct something along this line, the club will reimburse said members for the materials involved...3/4 inch cabinet grade birch plywood would be most suitable. Please contact Pat Taylor or Gene George to offer your services and get some guidance on the size of the project needed.

In the call for any Show and Tell items to share with club members, Jerry Hobbs presented a handsome bench made of western red cedar that he had coached out of his seven year old grandson. It was a piece any woodworker would have been proud of...with sturdy mortise and tenon joinery - and finished with an exterior UV resistant MinWax varnish. A query as to anyone with some carving skills that might volunteer to do some work for a Bible School was answered with a recommendation to inquire of the Woodcraft Store, which hosts several wood carvers as instructors- and to further look into the Portsmouth Wood Carvers and Whittler's Club, by contacting John McCormick, PH 397-9450.

Pat Lester made his annual offer to hold the June meeting at his large shop in Chesapeake (just outside the Virginia Beach line down Kempsville Rd.). We help with Pat's offer by providing soft drinks, pretzels, and the likes. "Sailing directions" to Pat's shop will be included in the June newsletter. A brief demo of the new Titebond luminescent glue was shown - using black light to reveal any unwanted dry glue on mated surfaces. The product seemed to work as advertised, such that finish sanding and/or scraping of the mated surfaces revealed when all traces of glue were gone by using the UV light.

Pat Taylor introduced the evening's guest, Ray Journigan, known locally (and in the American Society of Period Woodworkers) as the "Colonial Craftsman." With a pretty wide assortment of his pieces up front on display, Ray took the floor and "floored us" with his craftsmanship for the next hour and a half. His reproduction furniture pieces are crafted pretty much entirely by hand tools. In one of his opening remarks, he allowed that he was of the school that allowed placing a hand plane down flat on a workbench surface. His rationale allowed that a plane blade was designed to work on wood...and he now avoids cutting his hands and digits on an exposed blade lying on its side! Only when one of his customers is not "fussy" about a piece- or wants it "right away" does he resort to turning a table top on a lathe, building a jig, or shaping an edge with a router. In learning his trade over the past 23 years, Ray pointed out his early ventures into museums with fine original antiques on display, where he was rebuffed by curators who took offense at his crawling under tables, beds, chests and chairs, and pulling out drawers to learn the construction techniques used over 100

years ago. In pointing out the sometimes crude and often custom made hand tools to build furniture in the Early American day, Ray has resorted to much of that tooling in his own business. While he displayed a set of carvers chisels - well over 100 assorted blades, he also spoke of grinding his own knife edges from steel stock just to match the original ogee or cove that can't be made with a router bit or shaper knife found in today's market. As one might expect from any craftsman at this level, over and over again Ray emphasized the importance of very sharp tools. He himself prefers the oil stone, since it is readily at hand for the frequent touch-ups that he finds necessary during the course of an hour's work. While his table tops are for the most part all hand carved- even the flat portions that are recessed inside an intricate edge, after his aggressive carving he manages to attain an even, flat looking surface with expert use of a hand scraper. Discussing the different approaches to building furniture the old fashioned way...the shape of table or bed legs, the various approaches to the then popular ball and claw footed pieces, and even the number of rungs found on ladder-back chairs, Ray pointed out that there were no hard and fast rules in those days...and the differences were usually due to the different locations in the country where furniture pieces were produced. We learned how to spot a table leg foot from Boston versus one carved in Pennsylvania. Common to almost all period furniture is the relationship found in the ancient classic Greek architecture; the columns of the Doric, Corinthian and Ionic styles played a large part in the proportions used to build furniture in both Europe and the American colonies. Looking at those styles, one can see the degree of relative plain in the ionic column, versus the more elaborate carvings in the Corinthian column...it is then plain to see how various early craftsmen took their inspiration in their furniture carvings.

Ray spent a good deal of time under the watchful eye of the small TV camera over his shoulder walking us through the steps he uses in carving the outer edge of a round pie table. Working with stock thicknesses at an inch-and-a-half, he showed how the outer table edge was first relieved with a 45 degree chamfer before shaping the edge with a coping or fret saw. To reduce the stock thickness and prevent the top from warping, as much as 1/4 inch might be removed from the bottom face of a table top, and then, inside the rim reserved for carving, he would "scoop" or dish out as much as another 3/8 of an inch with chisels, planes, and scraper. Not only did he employ at least a half dozen carving tools for different beads and coves, he displayed the necessity to be able to work with these tools in ambidextrous fashion, in order to work the grain properly.

Needless to say- our group were in awestruck of the Colonial Craftsman's gift with wood. Thanks to Ray Journigan for a thoroughly entertaining evening! It is obvious as to why he has an almost two year backlog of business - pieces to build- as there are so many patrons that have seen his work...and are willing to afford it!

A brief moment of appreciation from club members was extended to Bob Fred, Gene George and Pat Taylor who put in the time and effort to build our new workbench. It includes both a twin screw tail vise, an end vise, and brass dogs on its six foot long top, a pair of lockable cabinets and assorted drawer spaces built into the base, and now a set of hinged caster wheels that will permit moving the bench to and fro - ~ Member Jim Holly mentioned an acquaintance that is "in the business" of

personalizing outerwear- shirts, caps, and the likes. He has put me in touch with the gent - in hopes that we might secure some "summer stock" for club members: we hope to be able to get a good price on either silk screen or embroidered short sleeve shirts - (will inquire into both T-shirts and collared polo shirts) and we'll look into future caps at a reduced price....and let you know

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Minutes by Fred Olds

Pat Taylor, Pres.