



February 2010

EMGW Monthly Newsletter

February Meeting

February 13, 2010
9:00AM -12:00 noon

Location: Rikon Tools,
16 Progress Road, Billerica, MA 01821

Inside this issue:

Doing Better 2

EMGW Education Committee

By the time you are reading this Newsletter, I'm sure that you have all seen the recent emails from Brian Wadell announcing the EMGW mini-courses.

As the EMGW Newsletter Editor, I'm very happy to say that after many hours of work by both Brian and Fritz Smith, the EMGW Education Committee has



finally complete the work necessary to provide our membership with several classes offered by fellow members willing to share their knowledge.

I urge each and everyone of you to check out the

By Gary Iadarola

EMGW website (www.EMGW.org) and navigate to the Courses section to check out the offerings. Many of these courses are offered at no cost or minimal cost and run various length in duration. Classes are also from beginner to advanced from sharpening & honing to intermediate veneering.

Checkout the offerings, sign up for a class and by all means, if you have a skill to share, let Brian know and offer to teach a class to your fellow woodworkers.

EWGW February Meeting

Advanced Setup of Woodworking Machines
February 13, 2010 9:00AM -12:00 noon

Location: Rikon Tools, 16 Progress Road, Billerica, MA 01821; for directions [click here](#).

Did you ever find yourself endlessly repeating steps to adjust your jointer with

no improvement? This talk is a look at the power tool setup issues you won't find in the manual. Shimming, cleaning, surface grinding, upgrading, and rebuilds of the major stationary power tools will be covered. Find out when an upgraded part is worth it. And finally, when is it time to give up and buy a new tool? This won't be a sales pitch but

By Brian Wadell

there will be relevant products available for viewing and hands-on demonstrations.

Bring your stories, rebuild project, setup devices, or photos of upgrades to share.

Rod Burrows, Vice President Tech Support/ Customer Service, of Rikon Tools

Doing better: Taking your woodworking to the next level.

By Chris Kovacs

Are you becoming a better woodworker? If so, how do you know? Very few of us are actually being graded on our woodworking. I have yet to take a woodworking test, and there is no homework or tedious assignments handed out by over-bearing teachers. Woodworking is a hobby, a passion, and for some a profession. But how do we know if we are getting better, and what steps do we need to take to improve our skills and ultimately our woodworking projects?

For me, the first several years of woodworking were done in solitary, (not prison), just by myself. I worked in my parent's basement, and after watching episodes of The New Yankee Workshop, I did my best to emulate Norm Abrams. I was in college at the time and had not taken any woodworking classes, had no money and had a pretty simple collection of power tools. I thought I was doing some very nice work, but now when I look back, I sometimes cringe to see the first pieces I made. Unfortunately, my mother still has some of my early pieces which I cannot talk her into throwing out, or better yet burning!

After I graduated and had my first job, I was sitting in

the lunch room one day, and a new employee was talking about having to give up his work shop when he moved to the Boston area. I invited him to my shop in the basement. Three years and countless projects later, we had mastered the art of social woodworking. We critiqued each other's projects, would not let the other get away with sloppy work, and did our best to become better woodworkers. Still, neither of us had ever taken a woodworking class, we had not actually ever met a professional woodworker, yet we still felt that we were doing nice work. We weren't concerned that we used lots of extra glue to fill joints, needed plenty of clamping to pull together joints that were too tight, and did not see the problem with leaving a few sanding scratches from a 60 grit belt sander. If only we knew better.

After three years of social woodworking, I went off to graduate school and hung up my apron for the next three years. In 1999 I finished school and began woodworking full time. Being faced with making money at this profession, I realized that I needed some formal training in woodworking. I began tak-

ing courses at local woodworking stores, the North Bennet Street School and the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Maine. I also joined woodworking guilds and began interacting as much as possible with other woodworkers, both professional and amateur, trying to absorb as much knowledge from them as I could.

When I started spending time with some of the best woodworkers in my area, I began to notice the small, but extremely important, things that they do that I had not dreamed of incorporating into my work yet. I saw that methods of work are very important, the setting of consistent processes and standards for each step of a project. These experts insisted on meeting extremely tight tolerances, they had a desire to produce the best possible work, and they accepted nothing less than the best materials, finishes and quality. The first time I saw a microscope used to inspect a newly sharpened plane iron, I thought to myself, "This guy is nuts." However, when I used one of his smoothing planes, I was enthralled by the effect that the precise sharpening had on the wood. The plane effortlessly produced wispy, full-width shavings

**Social
Woodworking:
Drinking Beer
with your buddy
in Mom's
basement while
making sawdust!**

Doing better: Taking your woodworking to the next level. Cont.

By Chris Kovacs

less than a thousandth of an inch thick, and left a flawless surface in its wake. I saw the light. I got my hands on a microscope, and now I use it every time I sharpen.

I also have calipers and engineer's squares accurate to a few ten-thousandths of an inch. Who needs to precisely measure wood to the thousandth of an inch, we are not machinists? Or are we, just in a different medium. I soon found myself milling tenons to fit mortises with a few thousandths of an inch of slop. These tenons would slide in perfectly, and very little clamping pressure was needed to produce perfect joints. Instead of milling a 3/4" dado for so-called 3/4" plywood, I bought a set of shims to make the dado a few thousandths of an inch wider than the width of the plywood. This extra step does take more time, but the end results are always worth the effort. There are countless other tricks-of-the-trade that I have learned over the years and I am sure I have only begun to scratch the surface.

I took this new, super precise approach to my finishing as well. When I started spaying finishes, I accepted a certain amount of

dust particles, drips, and sags in the finish. I then visited a custom guitar maker who had truly mastered the art of a flawless finish, and I was inspired to do better. After plenty of reading, research and discussions with technicians at finish manufacturers, I have vastly improved my finish quality. I try to make further refinements every time I spray. As every woodworker knows, the finish is how most pieces are judged. My perfectly-fit mortise and tenon joint goes completely unnoticed when there is the slightest imperfection in the finish. That smallest defect in the finish is found immediately by the customer's sensitive finger tips gliding across the surface.

Doing better is a lifetime skill and is not accomplished with a single woodworking course, a subscription to a magazine or a bookshelf full of lengthy tomes on fine woodworking. I have found that no amount of reading or classes has been as beneficial to me as interacting one-on-one with other woodworkers. Collectively, we (that's you, me and all of our woodworking friends) have a tremendous amount of knowledge to share. Only by getting out there and meeting other

woodworkers, calling up professionals to ask questions and visiting other shops can we really make real progress towards becoming better woodworkers. I am constantly trying to deliver the best product possible to my customer, and balance that desire with the need to make money. For amateur woodworkers, the financial limitations should not be a priority, so every woodworker should strive to incorporate best practices into each piece. A completed piece whether for yourself or a client should be critically evaluated, the design and construction processes reviewed and ways to improve always should be explored.

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woodworker
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Visit the guild on the web at: WWW.EMGW.ORG

Eastern Mass. Guild of
Woodworkers
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*Promoting Woodworking
Excellence Through
Education and
Networking*

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Membership

If you would like further information about the Eastern Massachusetts Guild of Woodworkers, please email Don Stella at dstellajr@charter.net. Yearly dues are \$45 and payable each September.

Meeting Schedule for 2009—2010

Monthly meetings are always held on the 2nd Saturday of the month from September through June.

Date	Event	Manager
9/12/2009	Wood Turning at The Eliot School	Mgr: Tom
10/10/2009	Finishing at Chris Kovacs' shop	Mgr: John
11/14/2009	Design Principles by John Fox at Chris Kovacs' shop	Mgr: Chris
12/12/2009	Furniture Photography location TBD	Mgr: Gary
1/9/2010	Canceled	Mgr: Brian
2/13/2010	Advanced Tool Setup Rikon Corp HQ	Mgr: Brian
3/13/2010	Luthier at Chris Kovacs's shop	Mgr: Chris
4/10/2010	Veneering with Fritz Smith Location TBD	Mgr: Fritz
5/8/2010	Hand Tools at Peter Wilcox's Shop	Mgr: Peter
6/12/2010	BBQ location TBD	Mgr: Tom