



Woodworkers Guild



of

Southwestern Michigan – <http://www.woodguild.org> December 2016

Next Meeting

December 13, 2016 7:00pm

**Al Collison's Shop at
10292 Douglas Ave.**

Take Douglas North to Cooper, it is 2 ½ miles North of Cooper, on the right (East) side. Or you can take 131 to D ave East to Douglas and turn left, (North). Al will have an orange cone and flashing light out to get your attention.

Agenda: Spray finishing presentation
by Woodcraft of Grand Rapids

Don't forget to build and bring toy cars, trucks, tractors or any other imaginative vehicle for the annual guild donation to the Gospel Mission and Portage Community Center.

At the November meeting over 37 members and guests were in attendance. President Bill Crown called the meeting to order and gave a brief introduction of our guild and a welcome to our guests. Bill made a request and reminder for the annual Gospel Mission – Portage Community Center toy build. For those not familiar with the toy build, the guild provides batches of 40 wheels and axels for members to construct vehicles of any type. Ron Princing brought in some amazing airplanes he built with his set of wheels.



Elton Hiscock brought in wheeled animals. Thom Kelley crafted a toy car hauler trailer, a push car and had photos of a stop light bird house similar to the one below.



There was an opportunity for show and tell as follows:

Mike Cline had photos of a 12" wide custom mantel for his flat screen TV and did get the wooden wedding rings he made to the customer.



Ralph Babcock was able to trade a 2'x3' mirror for 20bf of ambrosia maple with the guys at Figures of Wood. He also reported on the shortage of Honduran mahogany. Ralph also provided the patterns he used to build his toy cars.

Larry Putman had pictures of a 7 year long project to construct a cabinet to conceal their washer and dryer. The top is a collection of scrap pieces attached to a plywood base. It is finished with seven coats of wipe on poly.



The members voted on a barrel firing demonstration for the May meeting at Chuck Andrews. Chuck also has some random width 4qtr red oak rough sawn boards for sale, up to 10' lengths.

Ron Prining had built a spalted wood box. He used the book Spalted Wood: the History, Science, and Art of a Unique Material by Sara C. Robinson, Hans Michaelsen and Julia C. Robinson. Hardcover 288 pages from Northern spalting.com

John Biermacher had photos of a 42"x100" barn wood table that he built. The wood needed to be adhered to a plywood substrate with construction adhesive. Voids were filled in with Bondo darkened with lamp black, a pigment for paint. John also had photos of salvaged barn timbers that are all hand hewn and about 10" by 12"- one 20ft and two 30ft lengths in excellent shape. There is also a thirty footer that has some rot, but still has a lot of usable lumber in it. They are about 35 miles north of Kalamazoo, very close to the village of Middleville.

The evening was turned over to a feature presenter, Joe Beam of Joseph Beam Custom Furniture out of Saint Joseph MI. Joe gave us a brief career history. He was heavily influenced by a high school teacher that formed the foundation of his career. He was a student of Gil Hutchens at WMU. Gil Hutchens is the person that founded of our wood guild. Joe taught woodworking in the Chicago suburbs for 12 years and started his business in 1999. He has a small, yet versatile shop in south Saint Joseph. This year he has had two interns working for him. Joe enjoys spending time in his shop, the process of design and leaving a legacy of works and time with family. Joe's work has been featured in and on the cover of such publications as Architectural Digest, Oprah at Home and Better Homes and Gardens among others.

He mostly builds projects after a buyer is identified. He figures out how to build the item after the sale has been made. Building on speculation that others will like the item has risk. One may think others will love an item, but most likely the craftsman loves it the most. Building on speculation is done for fun or one's self. Joe started by making a side project for a design firm in NYC. He kept getting work from that firm, and as the designers moved to other firms, Joe went with them. So Joe's exposure continued to grow along with flow work. It is a challenge building and maintaining relationships that far away. He visits the clients in NYC to develop the trusting relationship. The distance requires a lot of shipping. Joe often delivers the items himself

but has used movers, freight companies and blanket wrap companies, the most expensive but best service. Delivering items himself saves the client's money and fosters the relationships.

A tip Joe gave us is to keep a portfolio of one's work. His 17 years of work is all documented. With over 1500 pieces of furniture built, he can often produce a picture of a previous built item that fits the client's needs. More than once he mentioned the need to develop and meet clients in person and build the trusting relationship.

He will use Sketch up for large items such as a kitchen. Smaller items are drawn by hand at a drafting table. His clients find the hand drawings unique in this day and age, which helps set him apart.

He commented on how working with veneer really upped his game. Guild members should notice a trend in how different presenters have mentioned veneering as a game changer. He likes to use MFD for a substrate for its smooth flat surface. But if fasteners are needed he will use plywood. Often a maple ply of the highest quality. He mentioned building kitchen form bamboo plywood. The plywood was easy to work with and look amazing when done. The three ply bamboo required no edge banding it looked so good.

Most of his clients provide their own hardware. Trying to locate the hardware for them became too much of a hassle.

He provides lots of samples to help the clients with their decisions. One client wanted a hot pink finish. Not being able to find anyone willing to make a pink lacquer, he painted the cabinet with hot pink paint and finished with clear lacquer.

The key to a good finish is hand sanding between coats with 320grit. He acknowledged that there are many ways to seal an MDF cut edge. Joe's method involves sanding, painting with primer, more sanding, sealing bad spots with wood putty and more primer till paint ready.

White oak and grey finishes are very popular right now along with industrial galvanized look. He orders connectors for industrial pipe from an online company called Zoro. They can be found at www.zoro.com. Pipe is purchased at local home centers and spray painted flat black.

Most of his metal work is farmed out to a machines shop and folks with a CNC machine. They make metal feet and other ornamental effects. He works with aluminum, steel and brass. Tarnished brass is also popular now. The metal is typically coated with a clear sealer.

Joe does source lumber locally, but his graded lumber comes from Paxton lumber in Chicago and he orders veneer from Certainly Wood in New York. Locally sourced lumber is typically not graded and he has to buy extra to allow for that. None the less he will visit and shop local sources. He discussed a slab head board made from a piece of walnut ordered from California. It was a 12' x about 54" slab that weighed over 500lbs. The California walnut is not as purple as the Michigan walnut. The lumber yard recommended 3 day soak in a 150° kiln to kill off any bugs. He used a floor sander to smooth its surface.

On one occasion he was asked to bleach walnut by a client. He used a special two part bleach for that job.

Partly fun and partly legacy building, he and his son built their version of a Sunfish sail boat and a teardrop camper. He also ventured into building custom skateboards and guitars. He built a replica Chris Craft boat and then built a second. The client that bought the second boat wanted it split stem to stern and converted into a basement bar.

Joe's presentation was accompanied by slides of his incredible work. One can visit his webpage www.beamcustom.com and find a gallery of over 150 pieces of his furniture and contact information. The guild owes a thanks to Bruce DeDee for arranging this meeting and a special thanks to Joe Beam for his time, travel and amazing presentation of his work.



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