

# SPLINTERS

## Tennessee Valley Woodworkers

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Editor: Tom Gillard

### **Meeting Notice:**

The next meeting of the TN Valley Woodworkers  
Will be held, October 19, 1999 at 7:00 p.m. in the  
Duck River Electric Building, Dechard, TN  
All interested woodworkers are invited!

### TVWW MINUTES September 21, 1999

The meeting was called to order by President Loyd Ackerman. Welcomed guests were Barbara and Phil Keen.

#### Announcements -

**Jim Van Cleaves** workshop is on schedule. The Carolina Woodturners seminar is going to be held November 6th and 7th.

**Phil Bishop** is going to hold a workshop on finishing on an undetermined date.

**Ted Baldwin** will conduct the fall seminar on October 30, 1999. The emphasis will be on construction and finishing small items.

#### NEW BUSINESS -

Jim Roy reported that the spring expo will be called "CREATIONS IN WOOD". The tentative plans call for the library in Winchester to host the show during the 3rd week of April, Manchester the 4th week of April and Tullahoma the 1st week of May. Forms are available to enter your project.

The slate of officers for 2000 are: Tom Cowan - president, Bob Reese - vice-president, John Mayberry - secretary, Henry Davis - treasurer, Tom Gillard - Splinters, and Doyle McConnell - publicity. Elections will be held in November.

#### OLD BUSINESS -

The Coffee County Fair is in progress this week. All members are encouraged to participate.

#### SHOW AND TELL -

Ben Whiteaker displayed a book with a section of old tools.

Gary Runyon brought a variety of pens.

Ross Roepke had a decorative box and a wall clock.

Bob Leonard shared his initial turning experience with an Osage orange walking stick.

Ron Dawbarn brought a combination stool and ladder made from spruce.

Henry Davis brought a plane handle and a plane handle in progress. as well as photos of a computer desk and hutch.

Steve Graham displayed a relief carving depicting the Sirens of myth.

Jim Roy brought picture frame clamps and gave a short explanation of how he makes his moldings. Jim also had an unidentified twig.

Crocia Roberson showed a floating magnet as well as a pin from New Zealand and a wooden button.

After a break Doyle McConnell presented an excellent program on the properties and problems of working with green wood.

A total of 43 members and guests attended. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted, John Green, secretary

>>>> *On Saturday afternoon I found a message on my answering machine from Jim Hadden of TAW in Nashville. His message was that Charles Alvis had passed away. He asked me to pass the word on. I'm sorry it's so late. <<<<*

*Loyd*

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The program for the October 19 meeting will be a presentation by Loyd Ackerman on Tagua nuts. The program will include a discussion of its physical structure, its background and uses, current sources and costs for supplies, and a demonstration of turning small objects from the nut including display of the tools required.

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Dear Members,

Jim Van Cleave held his second workshop of the year on September 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. This one was on making cabriole legs. Jim was well prepared and entertaining as well as being very informative. Everyone enjoyed the session and learned a lot.

I hope everyone will take advantage of these workshops and that the club's mentors and ombudsmen will continue to sponsor them. They provide for almost one on one instruction, unparalleled entertainment, and camaraderie. All of this leads to better woodworkers having a lot of fun, and that is what the club is all about.

Loyd

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Coffee County Fair Report  
by Doyle McConnell

The outing at the Coffee County Fair at the Morton Heritage Area was very successful for the club. There was an estimated 400 plus visitors that came through to view the displays and the demonstrations.

Those that attended and participated in the demonstrations were David Rarthel, Tom Cowan, Henry Davis, Loyd Ackerman, Doyle McConnell, Juel McConnell, Bob Reese, Harry May, John Mayberry, Forest Roan, and Alice Berry. There were three lathes used for demonstrating, Harry was carving and Juel was making baskets. We also had a guest that operated a spinning wheel for the club.

The fair board was very appreciative and one of them was very pleased when Henry presented him with the wooden goblet or chalice, that he completed during the demonstrations. Ps...Steve Graham was there, just no one from the club saw him. He arrived around 8:00am and left around 10:30am because there were no people there.

Wood Anecdote

Don't you dare touch that tree!! *Manchineel*

In South Florida and along the Keys, there grows a small tree that locals in the know disdain. A cousin to the Brazilian Pair rubber tree, the manchineel (*Hippomane mancinella*) has played a sometimes lethal part in history.

It is reported that when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the Florida Keys intent on conquest, the local Indians fought back with everything at their disposal. That included the poisonous sap of the manchineel, which they used to contaminate the Spaniards' water supplies. In fact, because even the tree's leaves can trigger painful reactions, the soldiers learned to fear and avoid it. In caution to others, one Spaniard wrote, "He who sleeps under a manchineel sleeps forever." During the turn-of-the-century construction of railroad magnate Henry Flagler's extension to Key West of his Florida East Coast Railway, manchineel again reminded man of its dangers. According to Pat Parks writing in her book *The Railroad That Died At Sea*, in 1910 a hurricane suddenly overtook a section of the railroad's building site. Endangered by the raging storm, a construction superintendent secured himself to a nearby tree with his belt. Not until it was too late did he realize that his savior was actually a manchineel! Sap from the wind-splintered branches oozed into his open wounds, adding to his peril. The man lived, but spent many months in a hospital recuperating from the tree's poison.

Needless to say, the little manchineel tree has never earned renown as a supplier of woodworking wood. Even firewood gatherers have left it alone, for poison also lingers in the smoke of burning manchineel.

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**The toothless termite**

One day a toothless termite walked into a tavern for lunch. He saw one customer standing next to the gleaming mahogany with his foot up on the brass rail, and sipping on a drink. Not seeing any employees, he approached the other customer and asked, "Excuse me sir, but is the bartender here?"

Get it: bar-tender

## Old Hand Ways

### **Boatbuilders of the Chesapeake**

For thousands of years, Indians harvested the bounty of Chesapeake Bay, using boats made from trees felled along its shores. Their tools were seashells and fire—"sometymes burninge and sometymes scraping," in the words of colonists who described the process. Newly arrived English immigrants ridiculed the natives' bevel-ended, hollowed-out canoes. Yet, even as the newcomers mocked, they couldn't fail to notice that three Indians paddling a "hog trough" could easily outdistance eight of their own hard-rowing men. And it wasn't long before the colonists, armed with iron-bitted axes and adzes, began copying the Indians' canoe.

Occasionally, the settlers widened their canoes into vessels called "punts," which a man pushing with a long pole could maneuver more easily than by paddling. They widened the canoe by filling the hollowed pine hull with water, then adding red-hot rocks until the water came to boiling. This wet bending of the sides produced some stability, but only an experienced waterman cared to fire his musket broadside from such a vessel.

### **Making do with smaller trees**

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the huge trees used for canoes and punts in the early days became scarce. Those that remained were often far from the Bay and troublesome to move long distances.

In Virginia, local legend has it that a slave named Aaron was the man who solved the problem of how to continue making log boats in the absence of large trees. At his home on Lamb's Creek in York County, he took two logs, maybe 20" in diameter, hewed them square with an ax, and placed them side by side. With a piece of charcoal, Aaron traced the lines of the boat on the top and sides. Then, he separated the logs and shaped them to the lines with an adze.

From time to time, the ingenious Aaron reassembled his log halves to study with his eyes the evolving grace and symmetry of the craft. No model or plan guided his work. As boatbuilders used to say, it was purely "winchum-squinchum"

### **Joinery for a watertight hull**

After Aaron sculpted the timbers to 3"-thick half-shells, he faced fitting them together in a perfectly

watertight seam. With time and a sharp blade, he could have worked the fit. But Aaron probably learned somewhere the shipwright's trick of "kerfing in." Starting at one end of the seam between the temporarily rope-bound timbers, he ran his handsaw down the joint again and again. Each pass of the saw took an equal portion from each side of each tight place in the joint. When the sawteeth cut both sides for the whole length of the seam, the timbers were a perfect fit.

To join the halves, Aaron resorted to another ancient technique, the free tenon. Into both faces of the seam he cut a series of 3" long, 4" deep mortises. Next, he set 8" long oak tenons into each mortise in one of the halves. Finally, he forced the two halves together with twisted ropes and locked the tenons into place by driving locust pegs into the holes bored through tenon and hull. Once in the water, the swelling timbers, restrained by the long grain of the oak tenons, forced the seam as tight as a Chesapeake oyster, and no waterproofing was used.

### **Improvements in speed and size**

Aaron later built a larger canoe from three logs, then an even larger one from five. Soon scores of the swift, graceful craft, copied from Aaron, were coursing the Bay—some as long as 50' and made from as many as seven logs!

Eventually, Aaron's successors added sails to speed the day's catch of fish or oysters to market far ahead of conventional sailboats. The wider boats, however, presents a new problem.

Their keel logs could come from straight trees, but their outer "wing logs", forming the outward then inward, curving gunwales, required trees with the appropriate curves. Specimens such as these could only be found after days of searching. Yet, the rewards were many. In addition to speed, the boats were well suited to fishing and oystering because they had no internal fibbing, making net and trap-handling an obstacle-free chore.

These boats came to be called "cunners," and were still being made the original way into the 1930s. You can probably still find one or two skimming along today on the Chesapeake's waters.

By Roy Underhill; Wood /Oct. 1986 #13