



MICHIGAN WOODWORKER

michiganwoodworkersguild.com



Michigan Woodworkers' Guild (est. 1981) May 2021 Vol. 42 No. 5

When / Where:

SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2021

(Virtual Meeting starts: 2:00 PM)

Real Time Virtual Meeting

Ragnar Bergethon's "Craftsman Style Side Chair"

Remote Zoom w/Email Invite to Members

Coordinated by: Ragnar Bergethon

ZOOM MEETING START TIME: 2:00 PM



VIRTUAL MEETING
CONNECTION DETAILS TO
BE SENT BY JERRY ROMITO

MAY:

Ragnar Bergethon, aka "Berg", details the unique techniques to build a **Craftsman Style Side Chair** at our Sunday **May 9, 2021** Virtual meeting.

JUNE:

A MWG personalized tour of the **Ford Piquette Plant**, coordinated by **Larry Last**, is scheduled for our yearly Field Trip on **Saturday, June 12, 2021**

July:

NO MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY

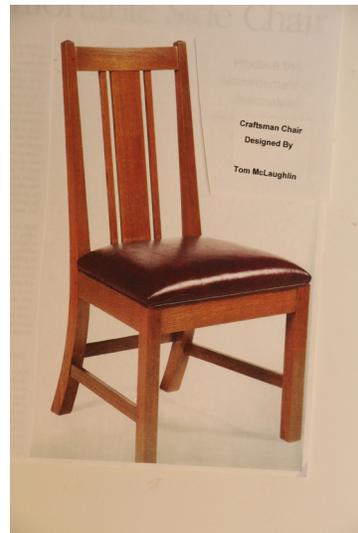
Due to the summer shutdown, there is no July member meeting. All are encouraged to enjoy the month with family and friends as well as making more sawdust.



Celebrate An Early

Memorial Day

Prepare to be bedazzled by our very own member **Ragnar Bergethon** as he takes us through the design and construction of his outstanding Craftsman Style Side Chair. Then check-out his specialized leg routing jig. Our **May** Virtual meeting is coordinated by "**Berg**"






President's Corner

By Jerry Romito



May, 2021

I must start on a sad note to remember our long-time MWG member **Ed Thomas**, 78 years old, who passed away on April 12, after spending almost a month in the hospital with Covid pneumonia. Ed was an active member, serving on our Board of Directors and as our past Membership Director for several years. You could always count on him to be a contributor at our meetings. You can see a link to his obituary later in this newsletter. His daughter, Melissa, will keep us informed about the details of his memorial which will take place probably in June. I will pass that information on.

Moving on, I have had a positive experience with Ridge Carbide which is reflected in this month's "MWG Resources" section of the newsletter.

Our April Zoom meeting with professional woodcarver Mary May was quite successful, with 43 members attending. You can read Dale Ausherman's review below.

For our May 9 Zoom meeting, MWG member Ragnar Bergethon will give a presentation on building a Craftsman style chair. He will cover all the steps from design, building templates and jigs, all the way through to the completed chair.

Our current plan is to still have Zoom meetings for the rest of this year and they are all filled with fascinating topics. So stay tuned to the newsletters and the website to see the schedule which includes two more professional speakers.

For those of you who remember Tom McLaughlin's special June 13, 2020 presentation to us on building his modern desk/table, here is a final reminder from me regarding his complete 6-part course for building

the table. The course starts on May 8, 2021. Click on this link to get all the details for signing up.

<https://www.epicwoodworking.com/epic-store/#!/Modern-Writing-Desk/p/314737320/category=16109086>

Jerry Romito
MWG President

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Jeff Wilmot



MEETING REVIEW



By Dale Aushman

MWG Meeting Review
Mary May Intro to Carving
11 April 2021

Due to the continuing Coronavirus restrictions on large in-person meetings, the Guild continues to hold its monthly meetings via online Zoom. For April member Don Hess suggested we have renowned carver Mary May host a two-hour Zoom class on Introduction to Woodcarving. For this two-hour plus session Mary gave an overview of her professional experience, reviewed the basics of woodcarving tools, workpiece holding methods, gouge sharpening techniques, project wood types, as well as key carving strokes and processes. She completed the session with a short example of a shallow carving project, and recommendations for surface finishing of the completed work. A link to the recorded Mary May Zoom session should be located on our website.

Mary is a carver of great renown in the woodworking community, having started carving in 1991. Mary reports that her education started in Minneapolis where she studied with master woodcarver Konstantinos Papadakis. After working and studying with him for three (3) years she had opportunities to study in Greece, England, and Malaysia, acquiring knowledge from a variety of master carvers from around the world. Her blog reports that her work has evolved over the years, from being mainly shop-focused and completing carvings that go on custom furniture, fireplaces, sculptures, and antique furniture reproductions, to a variety of opportunities to share her work through teaching. Having taken both a one-day and a five day class from Mary I can attest that she is an excellent instructor, superbly organized with great patience for beginning and experienced carvers alike. From these prior experiences I know that Mary

has also done numerous projects of carving in stone, which I find remarkable. Mary still treasures her first wood carving completed over thirty years ago with a single chisel.



Her home studio is near Charleston, SC. She has taught at virtually all the top-level woodworking schools, supported countless guild- and woodworking organization-hosted meetings, and operates a superb online *School of Traditional Woodcarving*. This school offers many levels of instruction via online videos of MANY different projects, and includes several FREE beginner lessons. Included are recommendations of tool and material suppliers.

(www.marymaycarving.com/carvingschool) This site also has galleries of Mary's wonderful work of many different varieties. Mary further has an entertaining and enjoyable Blog (www.marymaycarving.com/blog). The blog reports that Mary has recently completed her first book, *Carving the Acanthus Leaf Book*, with more info on the blog site.

Mary started by reviewing the tools and materials required for carving. Her first recommendation was a pair of bicycling or weightlifting gloves (those with



open fingers), particularly for carving complex projects in harder woods, and especially for novices who have not yet toughened up their hands with callouses. These can also prevent accidental cuts to the covered portions of one's hands. Even Mary uses these about 20% of the time. She holds both hands on a gouge and always both away from the sharp edge. One should never carve toward any body part.

Next Mary showed some of her collection of carving mallets. She prefers the smaller steel or brass ones with wooden handles. These are currently sold by Shenandoah Tool Works

(<https://shenandoahtoolworks.com>) for about \$100. Desired weight is 1 – 1 ½ lbs., so smaller wooden-only mallets may need to have a hole drilled and filled with some heavy metal for weight.



She then gave recommendations for wood selection. Basswood is the preferred species for the beginner carver, as it is soft and easily cut, yet still has some grain to enable learning to deal with grain direction and how that impacts direction of cutting. It is also a

good wood for quick practice of complex pieces, even for experienced carvers. Basswood from "solid winter" regions is best, as southern-sourced wood is often stringy. Another choice for beginners is Butternut, also called White Walnut, with more interesting grain and color than Basswood. Neither wood would be good for structural furniture pieces, as they are both soft and not very strong. With more experience one can move on to Black Walnut, which is somewhat hard, but carves well and takes a beautiful burnished look with appropriate finish. Mahogany also carves well with its even grain, and is used especially for period furniture. Mary points out that when buying Mahogany today, it is not clear what one may get, i.e. it may actually be Sapele (or maybe African Mahogany) which has wild grain and can be stringy and difficult to carve. Preferred choice is old growth Honduran Mahogany which can be difficult to find and is expensive. Cherry is also used, but it can be difficult due to its hardness. Clear white pine is OK, but stay clear of Poplar and avoid Southern Yellow Pine which quickly dulls tools.



As to workspace, one can work anywhere there is tabletop with space enough for carving and tools. One must be able to secure the workpiece to table to enable control and safety. She uses bench dog clamping 90% of the time. Mary also showed a cool Sjobergs portable workstation which can be placed on any table or bench, raising the work surface about five inches. This is available locally at Performance Line Tool Center, or Glenn Wing Power Tools, or Affinity Tools Works LLC. She said cost

is about \$250, and it requires some assembly. One could buy wood and hardware and make their own version.

(<https://sjobergs.se/en/product/sjobergs-smart-workstation-pro-33309>) Steve Latta has plans for a super version in FWW magazine. Ideal surface height is 1-2 inches below standing height of elbow. Mary likes to stand when carving so that she can lean her body weight into vertical cuts.

Mary then discussed the main carving tools; gouges, including both currently available and antique ones, with info on where to find quality makes of current tools. The most common gouges are *Straight* gouges,



with about a 4-1/2 inch handle and a five inch straight blade curved around its axis. There are also *Fishtail* gouges, with normal width cutting edges which then taper back to a narrow shaft at the handle. Mary vastly prefers these as they are really good for getting into tight spaces.

Then there are *spoon bent* gouges with a curve in the blade and shaft to reach deeper areas, rarely needed but very important for some things like carving deep shells. There are also *back bent* gouges with the same general shaft curve, but with the sharpened bevel on the top



(incannel) unlike most others with the bevel down. There are also V chisels of various sizes and angles as well as gouges



shaped like a "U, called *veiners* because they are often used to carve veins on carved leaves.

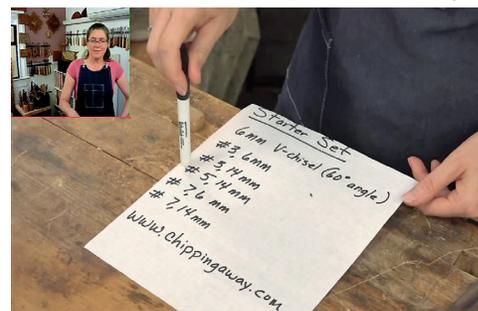
es shaped like a "U, called *veiners* because they are often used to carve veins on carved leaves.



There is a two-digit numbering system for gouges, which characterizes a gouge by its cutting curve (called the "sweep"), and its cutting width in millimeters (mm). For example a #1/10 is a flat blade 10 mm wide. A #2 is slightly curved, a #3 more curved, etc. all the way up to a #11, with the aforementioned U-shape. The V tools are sometimes numbered as a No. 12 or higher.

The most commonly available quality gouges in the U.S. are *Pfeil Swiss Made*, with Woodcraft as the exclusive dealer in U.S. These are the only ones you can walk into a store in U.S. and actually see and hold. Mary has designated a minimum Mary May Beginner Woodcarver Set of Swiss Made gouges which are sold via a Canadian source,

www.chippingway.com. This consists of a 6mm V-chisel (60 deg.), #3/6 mm, #3/14 mm, #5/14 mm, #7/6 mm, and a #7/14 mm. Other new-gouge sources are Auriou (French) from Lie Nielsen or Highland Woodworker, Ashley Iles (England), and maybe Flex Cut, but the latter are a little more flexible which can be a weird feel to some. Other European sources include



Two Cherries (German), and *Hirsch*, also sold by Lie Nielsen. Antique tools can be very good, the best of which are Ad-

dis and Dastra. Dastra recently closed after 180 years, but are now sold new by Hirsch. Again, Mary's school website has a page which lists all of these gouge sources.

Mary next covered *sharpening*, as razor sharp tools are key to successful and enjoyable carving. She says most tools one buys are razor sharp these days, but after a little carving will require sharpening. She uses a manual process with steel diamond stones placed on antiskid rubberized mats on the bench. For a tool with nicks or much wear she starts with a 1,200 (extra fine) grit, but for final edge will go to a second 8,000 (extra extra fine) stone. Diamond stones are very quick cutting and last a long time. But if you already own conventional water or oil stones of equivalent grit, they will work great. The final stone should be around 8,000 grit, giving close to a mirror finish. For a full sharpening she first works the 1,200 until she gets a tiny wire edge on the inside of the tool, at which point she moves to the 8,000. Beginners can use a black Sharpie to first coat the bevel as a means of seeing where one is removing the metal. She uses water with a little soap on diamond stones.

One starts by putting the gouge on the stone and rocking it until one feels the flat of the bevel lay on the stone. Then she locks her wrists and arms and



moves her body side to side, sliding the stone side to side while synchronously rotating the tool around its axis to roll the entire bevel onto the stone. If one does not roll evenly you will get flat spots. And the wedge side of the bevel should be perfectly flat axi-

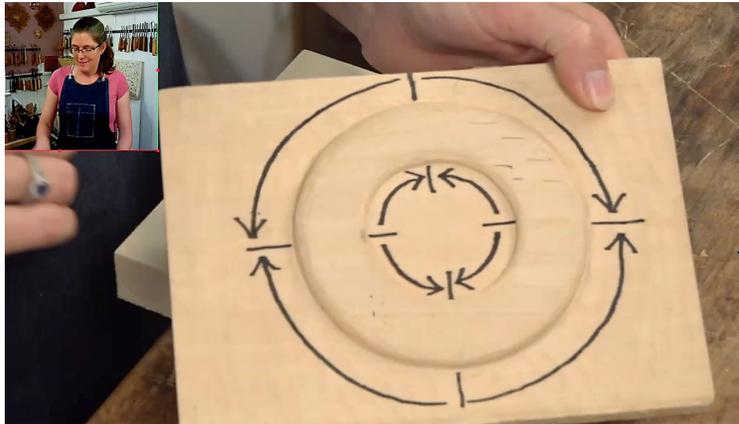


ally. Check the Sharpie marking to see where you are removing metal and adjust your movements accordingly. This is a matter of practice, practice, practice. Next take a little slip stone (Arkansas) moving flat on the inside gouge surface to remove the tiny little wire edge. Go back and forth in this process 3-4 times, inside outside, inside outside, to remove any hint of wire edge. Your finger can feel if the edge is gone, or look for light reflection. After any wire is removed, strop the bevel with leather impregnated with honing compound, dragging backward only. Sometimes stropping alone is good enough to renew an edge. There are also leather honing jigs to help with the inside curved bevel. Mary has tried using Work Sharp and Tormek machines, but prefers hand sharpening in most cases.

The V-chisel is the most challenging to sharpen. This tool has two flat sides meeting at a corner. The flat sides are sharpened like a flat chisel, using the Sharpie bevel marking if needed. This will result in a very sharp point where the planes meet, a point which needs to be "rounded" to be like a tiny gouge, until the outside radius matches the original slight inside radius of the V-chisel. A tiny V-shaped slip stone is then required to finish the tiny inside radii of the point. Mary's free beginner lessons on the school site include instructions on sharpening both a curved gouge and sharpening a V-chisel.

Mary completed the instruction by showing key principles of the carving process itself, using a shallow relief carving project in Basswood as an example. If

one has a fragile carving with fine detail, one often attaches the piece on a backer board with double-sided tape, Mary recommending golf club grip tape. Later it can be removed using alcohol. Mary also covers the means of putting the pattern on the work-piece. To begin carving she then first outlines the pattern detail using a V-chisel.



how to deal with grain direction, which requires always carving "downhill" with respect to the grain to avoid chip out or rough cuts. This is not unlike choosing router direction to avoid tear out. Mary showed how to remove and flatten the background, and also how to round over edges to make the shallow carving look deeper than it actually is. Also covered is how to carve to show parts of plants going over or under other parts. She emphasizes the need to learn to carve with both hands for efficiency. The free beginning carving videos at Mary's site are wonderful places to start learning to carve.



She completed the class by discussing finishing. One can smooth the broader surfaces by a little sanding, but only if necessary. Be careful not to remove carv-



ing detail or softening edges, losing the "character" of the hand carving. Do not carve more after sanding because sandpaper generally leaves grit behind in the wood, which then will dull the tools. Or one can use Abranet sanding mesh available from a variety of sources. This material does not leave any grit residue.

Mary showed examples of finishing for a Basswood carving. She starts with 2-3 coats of highly thinned shellac, such as from Zinsser. The shellac dries quickly so these coats can be all done within an hour or two. She next brushes on a glaze or stain, and quickly



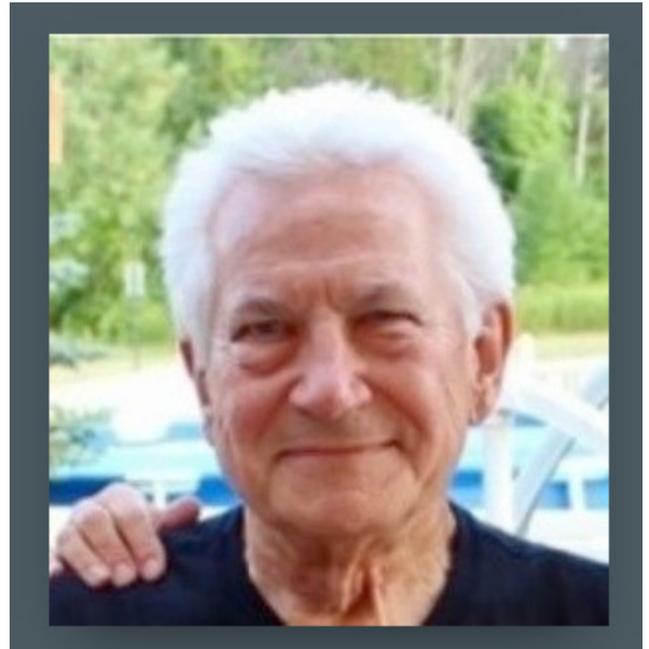
wipes off all that is possible with a soft cloth. After the glaze or stain dries overnight, she then applies, via sprayer or spray can, more shellac coats to seal in the glaze. She then often completes the finish by applying a very light coat of clear paste wax.

We thank Don Hess and Jerry for arranging this interesting and educational program with one of country's most accomplished carvers and instructors. I encourage members to peruse Mary's School website, to watch a few of her videos, and to view her incredible work in the Gallery.

- Dale Ausherman



In Memoriam:



Editor's Note:

We lost another friend, who was a consistent MWG contributor and previous Guild Membership Chairman, to the Global Pandemic. Please say a long prayer for **Ed Thomas** and keep his family including daughter Mellissa in your thoughts as they go through this terrible time. Below is a link to Ed's obituary. We can be rest assured knowing that Ed is now above us making mountains of sawdust.

From Jerry Romito:

Ed Thomas's daughter, Melissa Combs, has left the following message with me:

"I would greatly appreciate if any of you could take a moment to leave a thought or a memory - I plan to print it out later. It brings me comfort seeing the wonderful things people are saying about my dad. He was the best!"

If you care to leave a condolence note, please use this link to get to Ed's obituary, and then scroll down to the Condolence section.

<https://mimemorial.com/obituaries/persons/T/Edward-Joseph2>



MEMBER NOTES / ASKS



Free Canoe Jig

Long time MWG member **Charles Andrews**, an expert in making canoes, has an unbeatable offer. He writes:

"I have a jig I built to produce a 14-foot lap strake canoe I no longer need. I am willing to give it to someone who is interested. The jig is located in Orchard Lake, Michigan."

Charles has the following contact information:

Cell phone: **(248) 420-1937**

Email: cjandrews1@msn.com



MWG RESOURCES



MWG President **Jerry Romito** had a great experience with Ridge Carbide. He writes:

"If you have watched YouTube videos of Tom McLaughlin or Stumpy Nubs, you have seen them speak highly of Ridge Carbide's table saw blades.

I just purchased a dedicated ripping blade from them, and had a great customer service experience. I wanted the blade to rip a large quantity of 8/4 oak for a table I was anxious to complete for a friend. (I did not want to use my good combo blade for that, even though it might have done the job).

I ordered the blade on-line, and after a week without a delivery confirmation, I called them to check on the delivery status. That's when I found out that the blade was backordered, that the production on it was just restarting after the typical Covid setbacks, and that my delivery would be in a couple of weeks.

It turns out that the man that answered the phone was Ridge's President & owner, Paul Hardenburger.

When I told him I was hoping for the blade much sooner, he said that he would put my order to the front of the line, and it shipped the next day.

Now that is customer service! And by the way, the blade handled that oak like it was butter."

Check them out at: www.ridgecarbide.com



PROJECT REVIEW

By MWG Members



Dan Holowicki's *Curly Cherry and Walnut Natural Edge Coffee Table*. Dan states:



This project started last fall when I pulled these curly cherry planks down from the wood rack and decided to clean them up to see if anything good was there. The planks were about 4 to 6 foot long and varied in width from about 7 inches to 15 inches. There were originally rough sawn to 5/4 thickness. There was some punky areas and evidence of worm tracks.



I had been thinking of a building a small natural edge coffee

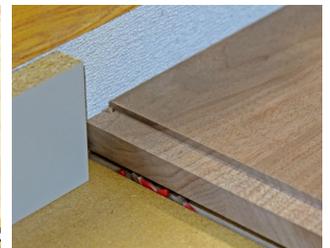
table to fit in front of my colonial style settee that my grandmother had purchased about 60 years ago. Of the three boards shown I ended up using the shorter left one and the longer right one, the third board was put back up in the wood rack for future use. I cross cut the best regions out of both and ended up with two planks there were about 32" long. Because of the variation in width, I figured I could invert one plank and end up with a slightly diagonal joint run-

ning through the length of the top. I planned to keep the natural edge and worked to get a finished top dimension of approximately 18" by 30". I decided to go with a trestle style base, made of a contrasting wood. I also planned to use a thin strip of the contrasting wood to sandwich between the diagonal joint for the top. One of the planks was about 4" wider overall than the other, so I figured I could rip a stretcher out of it.

The planks were fairly flat without much twist, so I cleaned up one surface of each with a hand plane then ran them through my planer to get a consistent thickness of about 1". Unfortunately, this resulted in a fair amount of tearout. Some serious hand planning with a pair of Lie-Neilson low angle jack and smooth planes came next. I ended up with boards that were just under an inch thick.



I purchased some 8/4 and 5/4 clear walnut from Homestead Hardwoods in Allen Park, MI to build the trestle ends. To make a mortise for the through tenon of the stretcher, I actually started by cutting the stretcher end verticals half width, used a dado blade to cut the mortise in each half, then glued the vertical halves together.



I decided on a 5/8" wide by 6" long by 1" deep mortise for the upper and lower trestle blocks which I

started cutting on the drill press as I don't have a 5/8" mortise chisel. The mortises were then cleaned up with a hand chisel. The tenons in the verticals were cut on a table saw slowly cutting material away until a good fit was machined.

The trestle end verticals have a somewhat hourglass shape. The upper and lower blocks would have curved ends with rounded over edges. The edges of the verticals would also have round over ends. The curved profiles were done with a band saw, then cleaned up with a spokeshave, while the round over edges were done using a 5/8" roundover bit in the router table. The stretcher was jointed, then the tenons cut on the tablesaw to fit the through mortises. A gentle curve was cut along the bottom surface to lighten the look. Small roundovers were added along the top and bottom edges. The trestle end pieces were then glued together ensuring all was kept square.



After cutting a strip of walnut about 3/8" thick, and both inner edges of the top boards were jointed all three pieces were glued together. I used biscuits to help align all three pieces. As the top has a natural edge, I constructed a carriage arrangement so that cauls could be clamped to



the top and bottom of each board to provide square surfaces to draw everything tight during glue up.

The carriage arrangement worked out well; there was minimal cupping or misalignment during the glue up. After the glue had dried up overnight I spent

more time using the smoothing plane to get the top boards dead even on both the top and underside surfaces.



The end treatment for the top was accomplished by cutting a gentle curve which was faired with a hand plane. I then used a block plane to plane a chamfer on top and bottom of each end. This removed a considerable amount of material that would make it easier to shape a roundover.



Sanding of all parts was done starting with 100 grit paper and progressing down to 320 grit. Some filling of a few remaining worm holes was needed for the top for which I used a grain filler of the appropriate color. All pieces have two coats of finish consisting of a 50/50 mix of tung oil and wiping varnish was applied, with a light sanding using 320 grit paper in between coats. After the second coat of finish dried I went over all pieces with #0000 steel wool, and then applied a coat of paste wax. The top was then attached to the trestle assembly using wood screws. The holes for the screws in the stretcher upper blocks were elongated to allow for wood movement. I completed this about the end of March and I couldn't be happier with how it turned out.

- Dan Holowicki



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