

# Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 5

May 2009

## *AGAINST THE GRAIN*

*By Rollie Johnson*



President Rollie Johnson

Spring is here, let's all cheer. That may be a bit corny but that's the way I feel about the first warm winds wafting from southern climes to melt our winter doldrums and kickstart our summer passions. For some of us summer is the time of year for woodworking. We can finally get our shops warm enough for glue-ups and applying finishes and we don't have to wear Sorels all day long to keep our toes from frostbite. My shop shrinks in the winter, I have a nice sized area that I don't heat and I'm happy to be able to use it again. I'm also able to use the covered patio on the front of my shop for temporary lumber storage during big projects. Summer weather does have its drawbacks for woodworkers, however. We have to be especially vigilant about high moisture content in our project wood during those long, hot, humid days we often encounter between now and September. Moisture meters are pretty inexpensive compared to the rest of the tools we buy and they can save a project from disaster.

It's not critical that the wood be real dry, it's more important that all of the lumber used in a project is at the same moisture content. Wood moves a lot as it takes on or loses water and the hydraulic action created by those expanding or shrinking wood cells is strong enough to break granite. In fact, that's how granite can be quarried: drill a series of holes along a line, pound bone dry white oak wedges into the holes and soak them with water, the expanding wood can crack the rock. That same hydraulic pressure can wreak havoc on a piece of furniture if one board is dry and the other moist; they will move at different rates and can cause distortion of panels and table tops as well as furniture parts. If you cut a tenon on a piece of wood that has high moisture and fit it into a mortise on a piece of dry wood the tenon will shrink as it equalizes and the joint can become loose. And the opposite can also happen if the tenon is very dry and the mortise is damp, the tenon can expand to the point of splitting the mortise.

An ideal moisture content for furniture wood in our area is around 8% to 10% but I have often found wood to be 11% or higher during the high humidity season and as low as 4% in the middle of the winter in my wood-stove heated shop. If that very dry wood is stacked tight in a pile on the shop shelf it could still be that dry in the summer when it's dug out for a project and mixing that wood in with 11% wood could lead to real problems. It's essential to know how dry your wood is.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a Bosch press event at their North American headquarters in Chicago (that's why I missed the last CMWA meeting). I was able to see a number of prototype tools that will be hitting the market in the next few years and also got a chance to see how they test their tools and how they build their prototypes.

(Continued on page 2)



**Central Minnesota Woodworker's Association**

The CMWA is a group of men and women from around the St. Cloud Minnesota area who share a common interest in the art and business of woodworking. We meet monthly in Sauk Rapids and share information, techniques and topics of interest in the area of woodworking.

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**May 2009**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 mtg	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**Next Meeting:** May 20th at 7:00 PM at Sauk Rapids Middle School

**Board Meeting:** May 20th at 6:15 PM at Sauk Rapids Middle School.

**AGAINST THE GRAIN by Rollie Johnson (Continued from page 1)**

It's pretty amazing how much time and effort goes into each tool, and Bosch typically introduces more than 100 new power tools every year! Just to give you an idea of how big Bosch's worldwide presence is, here are some stats: they do 60 billion dollars worth of business a year, have 270,000 employees and produce over 32 million tools each year. These numbers include all of their automotive, appliance and other divisions, but still.....

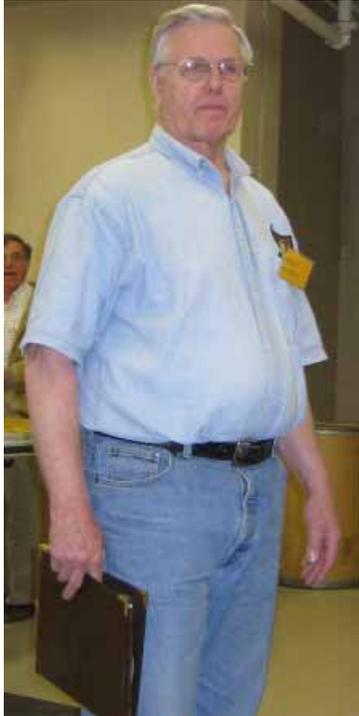
The big news from Bosch is their future use of e-Coupled technology: wireless power. Battery powered tools will be able to be charged without connecting the tool to a typical charger. It's the wave of the future for power tools, cell phones, appliances, computers, virtually anything that has a rechargeable battery. Check out [www.ecoupled.com](http://www.ecoupled.com), it's pretty incredible.

**Rollie**

**May CMWA Meeting Subject  
is  
Wood Drying with Paul Herbst**

Paul has a facility just off Hwy 23 near Foreston, MN. He brings in wood from sawmills, dries it, dimensions it, and either returns the dried lumber to the sawyer or sells it himself. Greg Pont has Paul dry wood for him. Paul should be able to answer any of your drying questions.

## April CMWA Meeting Recap



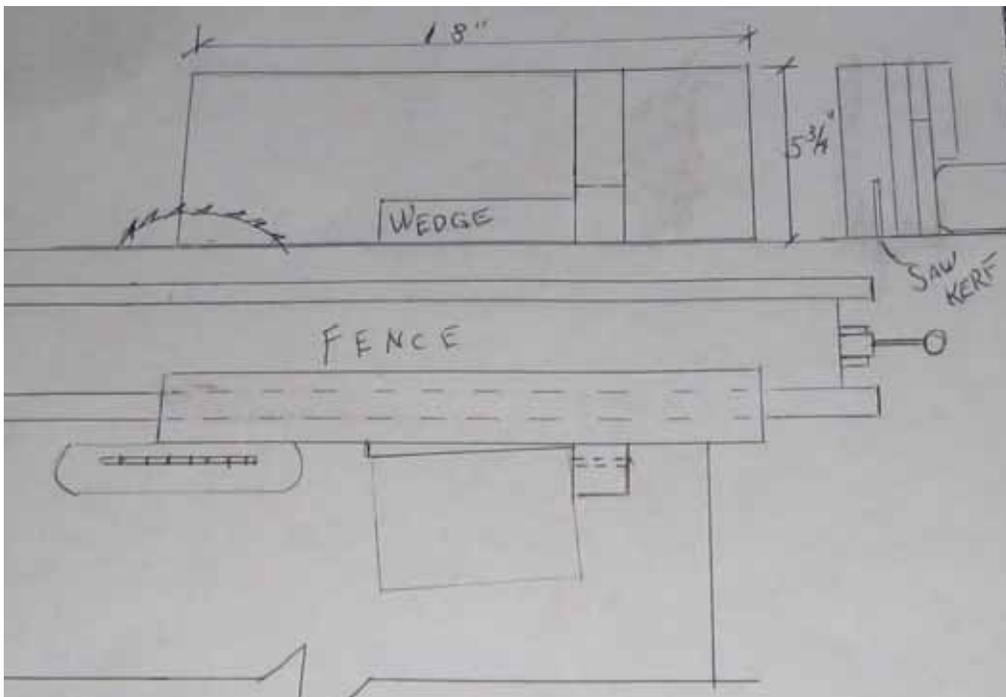
Brad Knowles

Our president, Rollie Johnson was out of town and therefore unable to preside. Our vice president, Brad Knowles did a great job with the meeting and taking care of business.

Al Ernst brought in some really neat scrolled crosses. He made them from patterns by Sue Mey from Mounument Park Pretoria, South Africa. She is a contributing pattern maker in a scroll saw magazine he subscribes to. Each cross tells a biblical story about a particular event from bottom to top. She has done patterns for firefighters, police departments, medical workers and now she is doing an awesome one for veterans. Al is working with her on a wedding cross. There are also crosses for babtisms, first communions, and confirmations that would make great gifts. The designs and scrollwork are great. Thanks for bringing them in!



Al Ernst



Marlin Eich showed off a jig that he made to cut shims. A drawing for the jig is shown to the left. No need to make a trip to the store when you can cut your own shims from scrap.

## April CMWA Meeting Recap (cont.)

### A Chair Building Experience

Our April meeting was great! Four of our members, Scott Randall, John Skalla, Tom Zak and Jim Preusser, did a four man tag-team presentation covering their joint-effort woodworking project currently underway. They are each building their own Stickley reproduction chair. Scott announced several months ago that he was looking for members interested in just such a project. Although each of the four members is building their own chair, and selecting their own materials, they are working together in concert putting their minds and efforts together to achieve the best results. They brought two of their partially finished chairs to exhibit.

John Skalla, while delivering his part of the presentation, was sure to point out that each of the joints in the chairs is designed two degrees out of square, making the chairs quite a challenge. They've opted to make their chairs out of either Red Oak, White Oak or Cherry with Walnut accents. They mentioned that White Oak was often the wood of choice used to build Stickley Chairs, and was commonly fumed with a strong 28 percent ammonia solution (not your average household ammonia) to darken the wood without staining it. Fuming with ammonia darkens quarter-sawn ray flecks, as opposed to staining, which leaves the wood's quarter-sawn ray flecks lighter than the surrounding wood. "Did I mention that all of the joint angles are designed and cut two degrees out of square to add to the attractiveness and challenge of making the chairs?", John frequently asked.

The backs of their four chairs were steam bent and they were sure to point out that it's best to use green wood for the steam bent components rather than kiln dried lumber. During the steam bending process, Scott's Cherry components broke when they attempted to clamp the steamed components to the jig. John Skalla is providing his tenoning jig, capable of cutting the compound angles, to cut all of the chairs many tenon's, while Scott Randall is providing his mortising machine to speed construction of the mating mortises. Did I mention that all of the chairs joints were designed and cut two degrees out to square?



John Skalla

Each of the four would like to use a different type of glue to assemble the chairs. Scott has chosen hide glue, while the others favor titebond glue. John Caye, one of our club members, recommended using a slower setting, two part epoxy, which would provide them ample time to glue, assemble and clamp all of the many individual components, and adjust things properly, before the glue begins to set up.

It sounds like the group has been having a great time working together and traveling to see each others shops. The social aspect of working together as well as the BS sessions with coffee and cookies are as rewarding as building the chair itself.

Stay tuned for an update when their project is completed. We still need to see what each one chooses for the final finish and upholstery.

## April Woodturner's Meeting

The Woodturners Group met on Saturday, April 18th at Gary Mrozek's shop.



Members brought in different pieces at different stages of completion seeking advice. Jay Eggebrecht had questions on some of the bowls he had been working on. As Jay shared his items, he said, "This one started out a lot bigger than it is now". It was a statement that all woodturners could relate to at one time or another. The photo to the left depicts Jay sharing some of his experiences.

Ironically, Dick Beumer had brought along a list of 5 simple truths of woodturning, taken from a recent publication:

- 1) You can always make it smaller
- 2) Its only wood, you can burn it as any shape
- 3) Catches are not a problem, but rather an artistic opportunity
- 4) Practice may not make you perfect, but it certainly produces a lot of shavings
- 5) When things happen on the lathe they happen FAST

Brad Knowles discussed his bowl drying experiment using dish washing detergent. This method was talked about at our March meeting. Although many of our members had heard about this process, none had actually tried it. Brad did some research on the Internet and determined that a ratio of one part soap to six parts water was commonly used. Brad rough turned a bowl from a piece of green aromatic cedar purchased from our blind auction. The bowl was submersed for 36 hours then allowed to air dry for 3 days. He remounted the bowl, turned it to about half of its final dimension and monitored the drying by weighing it on a postal scale. Over the next two weeks there was some additional weight loss and some noticeable warping, but it turned, sanded and finished without cracking. More information can be found at [www.woodcraft.com/articles.aspx?articleid=313](http://www.woodcraft.com/articles.aspx?articleid=313)

The Group's challenge project was an egg – plain or decorated. Many members participated. Dick Beumer shared some maple eggs colored with various aniline dyes. Les Sova showed an egg he turned and hand painted in a Ukrainian-type design. Jake Schneider once again incorporated his baseball passion with three eggs he turned and decorated with the treads of a baseball. Jake said it wasn't as easy as he thought and decided "three strikes (tries) and he was out". There were many other eggs of various sizes and shapes in a variety of wood species. There was good dialog of the different methods used to turn them.

## April Woodturner's Meeting (cont.)

The main presentation included a slide show of extreme turnings done by Edina, MN native Virgil Leih. Virgil is becoming world renowned for his art form. Virgil takes the entire tree trunk (often measuring 36" by 8 feet long, weighing up to 2000 pounds) and turns them into hollow form sculptures. Search Virgil Leih on [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) or [www.virgiltreeart.com](http://www.virgiltreeart.com) for videos and more information.

There were also several slides showing "steady rests" that can be built or purchased. A steady rest is often necessary to stabilize a very large item or long spindles on the lathe. Gary shared several steady rests that he had made over the years. His current model is made from an angle iron flange used in HVAC ductwork. Ball bearings, skate board and roller blade wheels are often used. Gary showed how his current project (an 18" x 32" segment vase) was a perfect application for a steady rest.

Our next meeting will be Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:00AM at the home of Dick Beumer, 3750 15<sup>th</sup> Street NE, Sauk Rapids. Dick will demonstrate how to build and use jam chucks. If time permits we will also have a hands-on activity to rough out round blanks to be used at our June meeting. Bring your face shields, roughing gouge and apparel. The topic of the June meeting is Spindle Turning Basics - Beads and Coves. Our blind auctions are going strong. Bring an item to donate and/or cash to purchase. Our challenge project for May is a weed pot.

All future meetings of the Woodturners Group will be held on the third Saturday of each month. This will coincide with the Wednesday night CMWA meeting to utilize the Club newsletter as the meeting reminder.



Challenge project- egg shaped turnings.



Gary demonstrates the use of a steady rest.

# April Woodturner's Meeting (cont.)



Virgil Leih with one of his creations.

## For Sale

Porter Cable 7539 3 1/4 hp plunge router in very good condition \$250 or will swap even-up for a PC 7518 fixed base router in similar condition.

Brad Knowles

Remember to bring items for the auction at the end of each meeting. One man's junk is another man's treasure.

The next few meeting topics will be as follows:

June	Vacuum bagging for wood by Dave Blenkush
July	Pig roast at Pont's Logging
August	To be announced
September	Intarsia basics by Bill Sampson
October	Make the perfect inlay by Rollie Johnson
November	Shaping wood with hand tools Spokeshaves, inshaves, travishers,

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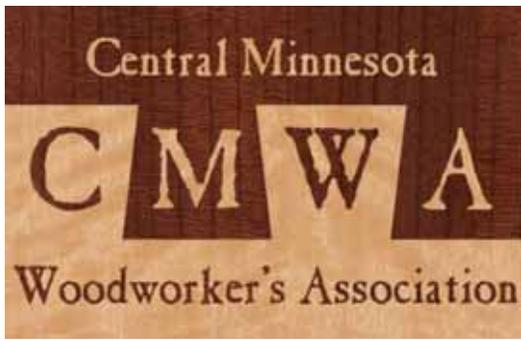
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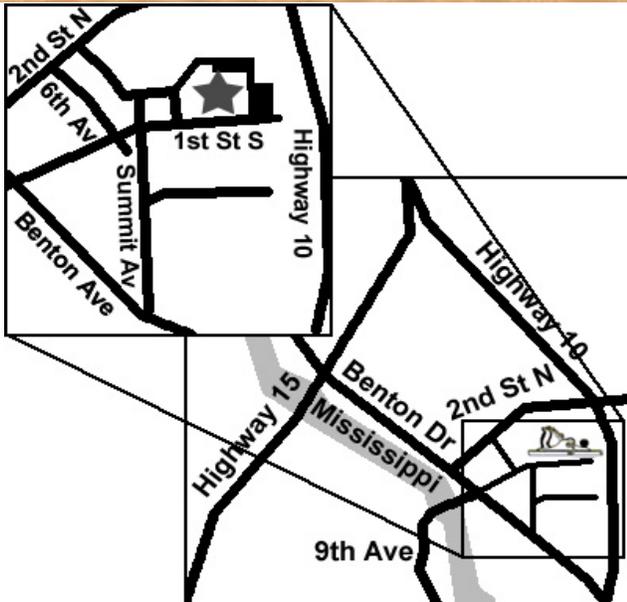
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**Next Meeting**  
**Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM**  
**Sauk Rapids-Rice Middle School**  
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