

twenty years of education, community and growth

What a Success Story!

Two years ago, I wrote a short history of the Guild for the website, and I remember that when I wrote it, I came to the end and thought it needed a conclusion of some kind. I couldn't decide what to write. I realized that because the Guild history was ongoing, it had no conclusion. Searching for some final sentence, I simply wrote from the heart, "What a success story!"

I don't pretend to know all of the things that happened within the Guild to attain this success. So many people put their oars in the water to move the ship forward, and no one knows the whole history. *The Old Saw*, *The Journal*, and the video library have provided documentation and a tremendous showcase of public Guild activities over the years. But here I will attempt to pull back the curtain to see what has made the Guild work so well.

At the founding meeting we crafted a mission statement that even today has changed very little. It is about bringing together the woodworking community and sharing our experiences to expand everyone's woodworking knowledge and skills.

We found our groove early, and stuck to it. Saturday meetings consisted of a demonstration followed by a business meeting. It has never been a problem finding experts to demonstrate for the Guild, because we have sustained a level of activity and excitement that is attractive to demonstrators.

John Skews showed us how he made Windsor chairs at the first regular meeting. The second meeting was on the Japanese style with Paul Tuller. A few months later I did a demonstration of woodturning at my shop, which was in Franklin at the time, and Peter Bloch made the first video. Nearly every major meeting from that time forward has been made into a video. It is amazing to see where this has led—seven videos in one day at the Furniture Design Symposium last month.

Because we are not trying to sell the products made by our members,

we are free to pursue our one simple mission—EDUCATION. Experts willing to demonstrate, professionals willing to govern, rank-and-file willing to volunteer, the video library, scholarships and grants, *The Old Saw* and *The Journal* have proven to be a powerful force in woodworking education emanating from our little state where the Artist Laureate is a cabinetmaker. There is an immense hunger for woodworking education, and insofar as we are filling that need, the Guild thrives.

These events occurred because people made them happen—sometimes behind the scenes. I will mention a few people who come to mind who helped make the Guild what it is.

First are the founders, who include John Skews, the first President, and Paul Tuller, who with John McAlevey

**"THE MAIN THING IS TO KEEP THE
MAIN THING THE MAIN THING."
—told to me by Scott Larson**

conceived the idea of the Guild and called the founding meeting—especially John McAlevey who held that meeting at his shop in Warner in 1990. All three helped kick-start the Guild, then moved on to other things.

In the early years, Peter Bloch started the first and still the largest sub-group, the Granite State Woodturners. He also conceived of the New England Woodturning Symposia, which every three years draws about 400 attendees. Peter started the video library, that began at the third meeting, and to this day he is still involved in many aspects of the video productions.

Although he was never president, no one was more influential in the first decade than Roy Noyes. Roy was not only a founder, but edited *The Old Saw* for ten years and carried it through its

adolescence. He seemed to know what we needed

to do to make the Guild take root and establish itself. Through his connection to Pinkerton Academy, Roy brought in Jack Grube, whose incredible organizational skills took the Guild to the next level. With a set of bylaws, job descriptions for officers, and 501(c)3 tax status (executed by Ed Epremian), the Guild suddenly had the look and feel of an official organization.

DJ Delorie, with his tremendous computer skills, put the Guild on the web and kept all the membership data in a comprehensive way for the first time.

The final big leap was made when Jim Seroskie became editor of *The Old Saw*. Jim knew how to take advantage of new printing technology that allowed us to get high quality color even though we were only printing 500 copies. Jim has applied his technical knowledge and his incredible energy to totally transform the Guild's communication media—both in print and on the web—that allows us to present a new and impressive face to the outside world.

I want to thank everyone in the New Hampshire Furniture Masters Association who helped the Guild. Many of them had to shift their energy into the new organization when it formed in 1995, yet managed to continue to give their time to further our mission as well. I am thinking of David Lamb (the new Artist Laureate of NH), Garrett Hack, Terry Moore, Jere Osgood, Wayne Marcoux, Ted Blachly and Tom McLaughlin.

Almost from the beginning we have had a mutually beneficial relationship with the oldest craft organization in the State, the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. Our activities at the annual Craftsmen's Fair, in Sunapee, help us share our woodworking skills with the general public.

David Emerson keeps us in touch with the old ways—and we need that.



Alan Mitchel's Homestead Woodworking School has been a home on so many occasions. John Whiteside thinks outside the box, and challenges us to see the next level. The constant injection of new blood, such as Allan Saffron, Al Hansen, or the dynamic duo of Bob Couch and Claude Dupuis, exemplify the new people who have joined the Steering Committee and taken on important jobs. It is after all, the Steering Committee that governs the Guild, but most of the meetings are planned and carried out by the sub-groups—nearly 35 per year! Every sub-

group leader contributes tremendously to the Guild, even if they are not on the Steering Committee.

In twenty years we have had a string of outstanding presidents and officers. Besides Jack whom I mentioned earlier, C. Peter James has been one of the officers (treasurer) working behind the scenes with impeccable precision, and making a hard job look easy. After his term as president, Peter Breu took on difficult jobs organizing many of the symposia and heading up the Scholarship & Grants Committee. Dave Anderson and Roger Myers both served

as president, then maintained a strong influence as sub-group heads and Steering Committee members throughout the entire second decade. Bob LaCivita, the once reluctant leader, has proven to be the perfect president for the current time.

If I have forgotten to mention others, which I'm sure I have, I am sorry. Thanks to everyone for doing what you did to get the Guild where it is today.

As for myself, I just want to be remembered as the only person to use the words "THE OLD SAW" in *The Old Saw*, without referring to *The Old Saw*. ■

More...

I remember going to Warner, driving with Dave Emerson, to check out the first meeting at John McAleve's shop. I remember the instant comradery developed between all of us and the energy as we all talked about, what we did, about our shops and learned of what others did.

It was at John's that I met Jon Siegel. We struck up an instant friendship over craftsmanship and old machinery. This led to many auctions and field trips—the search for restorable old iron.

It was also where the seeds of the Furniture Masters may have started to sprout. At least to the point of getting to know those who had like interests in marketing sophisticated and expensive work—the FM's started meeting in '92.

David Lamb

Sharing...to me, the Guild has always been about sharing. People with a common interest, woodworking, sharing freely what they know with others who share that interest. The best and most accomplished professionals and masters sharing their knowledge with people just beginning. Sharing

through our meetings and our publications. Sharing through our symposiums and archived media. Sharing by supporting education via scholarships, awards and grants. Sharing by outreach at events like the Craftsmen's Fair. And through sharing, I have made friendships which will last a lifetime. **Roger Myers**

I joined the Guild back in late 1998 as a result of a booth set up at a woodworking tool show in Manchester. If my memory serves me correctly, the booth was manned by Roy Noyes and Bill Hart. They had a beautiful chest of drawers on display and when I stopped to see what they were all about, they signed me up.

I like many people got the Guild confused with the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen and thought I was not qualified. After they got that issue corrected, I was eager to join and to meet other woodworkers and share knowledge. It has been a wonderful experience to learn from some of the best that there are in the woodworking field. As I have grown in my skill levels,

I have tried to pass on what I have learned to others. That is what the guild is all about, sharing knowledge.

C. Peter James

Being editor of *The Old Saw* was one of the most rewarding times of my life. It gave me the chance to work with and learn from some of the most talented furniture makers in the country—people like Jere Osgood, Jon Siegel, Terry Moore, David Lamb, Peter Bloch, Garrett Hack and numerous others less well known.

Five times a year, we put together an eight page issue of how-to articles and Guild news that I printed on a Xerox color printer that the Guild purchased for me. And then Dave Anderson, Jack Grube, and my wife and I would sit down at the dining room table and fold, sticker, stamp and sort the copies by ZIP code for mailing.

This was certainly a far cry from the slick publication that has evolved since Jim Seroskie became editor. He has achieved what I dreamed of doing and more! **Roy Noyes**

continued

WHAT A SUCCESS STORY CONTINUED

The Guild has given me education, friendship, and a place to focus on what I love to do, woodworking. I am fascinated by all sorts of woodworking from high end furniture to basic utilitarian implements. The Guild provides the theater for me to explore this vast and diverse world of woodworking. I am always learning something new.

As for friendship, put out a call to move your shop and see how many members will help, it will be touching. **Bob LaCivita**

My first guild meeting was in the basement shop of Mike Fonner in Manchester in 1991 soon after I moved to NH from the west coast. I saw an ad for the meeting in the Union Leader. Wow, that was different! It was a nice group of people, but it didn't seem too well organized. We were all ducking under low hanging plumbing trying to get a view of his lathe.

I believe the next meeting I attended was at Jere Osgood's shop and then I was hooked. Seeing Jere's work and watching him share all his techniques was a real eye opener. I also opened my mouth and inquired about buying books at a discount. Peter Bloch came over after the meeting and encouraged me to take on the job of making a group purchase.

His friendly advice and the general warmth of the group really made me feel like a member. I took on the book order not knowing that it would eventually lead to being President. Funny how small things grow! But in retrospect it makes perfect sense as the nature of the guild has always been open and encouraging.

Over and again I have been encouraged both in my woodworking and in my responsibilities in the guild by folks like Peter Bloch, Jack Grube, Roy Noyes and countless others. Some meetings over these 19 years stand out, others have faded, but I go to meetings now knowing I will greet friends and still be encouraged.

Clearly other members feel the same way. They come to be encouraged in a group of friends. I hope the guild will continue to thrive for another 20 years and at our 40th anniversary I can look around the room and see good friends who share my love of woodworking. When I joined I imagine there were less than 50 members and now there are 10 times that, so the guild has prospered. I hope new members will jump in and help as their talents allow so that the guild will continue as a great organization! **Peter Breu ■**