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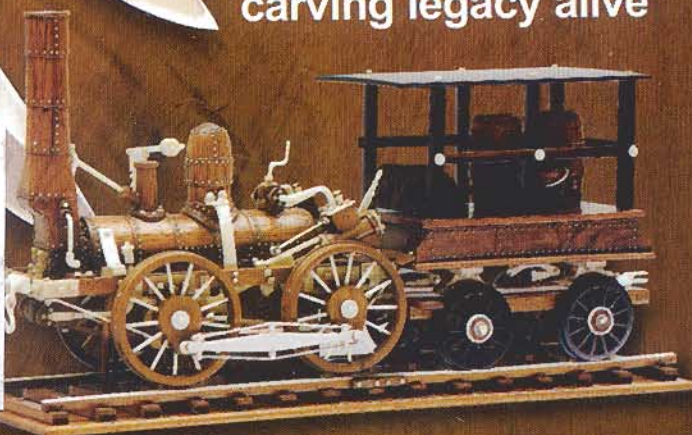
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## Bound for Glory

Warther family keeps  
carving legacy alive



# BENCHMARKS

Sam Maloof, the Greenville Woodworkers Guild, and an Adirondack carousel. By Sharon Hambrick



Wayne Comstock, Don Clarke and Michael McDunn, all members of the Greenville Woodworkers Guild, pose with Sam Maloof (second from left) at a recent guild event. The guild's education center (bottom) sees 1,000 hours of work each month.

## Woodworking Greenville-style

*With 450 members and a shop that operates six days a week, the Greenville Woodworkers Guild has outgrown its shop and meeting space and plans to build a 20,000-sq.-ft. building. What put them on the track to success? Aubrey S. Rogers, who was shop superintendent until he retired in April, answers our question.*

**THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF A GUILD SHOP** dates back to the board members who took office in 1997. Faced with a declining membership (40) and negative cash flow, they decided to act. At one of the board meetings, held then around members' kitchen tables, someone suggested: "Wouldn't it be nice if we had our own shop?" The seed was planted.

A shop was needed to meet the demands of our charitable project activity. Projects were then built in members' shops, which was not ideal. Over the next two years, membership grew to 70, a longtime member moved away and donated his shop tools to the guild, and an auction raised \$7,500 – twice our annual budget. This newfound wealth led to a planning session with an outside facilitator in 2001 that generated more than 50 ideas such as a Web site, a pre-meeting social hour and nonprofit status. A new board implemented these ideas and created a fiscal policy to raise funds for our own shop.

In April 2003, a new member made a storage building available for the guild's use. Two rooms – 3,000 sq. ft. – became our education center.

## Equipment and shop preparation

The guild selected a 5-hp table saw, 12" miter saw, 24" bandsaw, 14" bandsaw, 20" planer, 12" jointer, two floor length drill presses, three 14" x 42" lathes, and two types of sanders. A 7.5-hp dust collector was also purchased, and a 24" -wide belt sander was donated. Numerous small tools were donated, and some were sold to finance the purchase of a panel saw and compressor. A mortising machine, router table and line boring machine were added later, and our 24" bandsaw was replaced with a 36" bandsaw.

Teams also worked to prepare the center for use: pressure washing and painting the floors and walls, build-

## BENCHMARKS

ing a set of entrance steps, sink, counter and cabinets and benches, and installation of plumbing, electrical, dust collection and air systems.

### Managing the shop

Board members issued guidelines for the shop's operation and established job descriptions for a shop superintendent and shop supervisors. About 25 members volunteered as shop supervisors, and the board turned the operation of the facility over to this group. A supervisor is required anytime the shop is open.

Supervisors agreed to look after individual equipment in the shop, developed operating and safety rules, and then trained one another on the machines.

Three four-hour shifts were established for each weekday and two for Saturday. The shop is open anytime a supervisor is available to cover a shift. To our amazement, over 88% of the available shifts are covered by these volunteers. After the shop opened in September 2003, several hundred hours of usage occurred each month. It now averages approximately 1,000 hours. Hourly statistics are kept for member projects, charitable projects, training, and shop projects.

Supervisors meet monthly to set the schedule and to resolve shop operating and safety issues. Rules require members to be certified by a supervisor before using any tool. Liability release forms must be signed by all shop users. An accident report-

ing system is in place.

Suppliers warned us that the use of the machines by so many people with so many different backgrounds would cause major problems. They were right! Training helps, but it does not solve the problem. Fortunately, we have supervisors who can fix anything that goes wrong; without this talent our shop would be down a lot of the time.

Strict rules evolved to maintain shop cleanliness and maintenance, both crucial with so many people using a shop.

### Growing pains

All major machinery was set up in the only room with heat and air conditioning so the supervisor could see all the operations. However, the noise of the machinery conflicted with instruction so training schedules are now posted and members have to work around the classes. We later expanded our space and converted two offices into a training room.

Early on, 25 cabinets were donated for storage of members' projects. Later the guild decided to purchase plywood and lumber for members to use, which required an extra room. These actions led to storage problems: cabinets were seldom cleaned out and purchased wood was everywhere. Rules were established, and a supervisor now manages project and wood storage. One person is assigned to maintain the inventory.

In 2006, a new member started

classes on hand tool use and bench building, and soon our assembly area was full of benches, charitable projects, and member storage. An additional 30' x 40' room was obtained to store lumber and conduct all hand tool activity.

### A new vision

The total occupied space is now 5,800 sq. ft., including the machine room, an assembly room, training room, wood storage, dust collector and compressor room, library, bathroom, two storage rooms and the hand tool room. The guild has space to conduct seminars for 50 people and to hold an occasional auction. However, we have no space to hold general meetings and parking is limited, which led to our new vision – a 20,000-sq.-ft. building to house all of our activities.



Dick Dobbins, Steve Kern, Kathy Byer and Dave Favreau (left to right) spent about 500 hours crafting this walnut slant-front desk. Kern served as mentor for the three others, all new guild members. The desk will be sold to help finance the guild's community service projects.

## Sam Maloof visits Greenville

A chance meeting paved the way for the Greenville Woodworkers Guild to bring Sam Maloof to Greenville, S.C., in late March for a weekend seminar that offered a personal as well as professional look at this American wood-working icon.

(See "Offcuts," page 78, for the story behind Sam's trip to Greenville as well as the highpoints of his demonstration.)

Sam and his wife Beverly were guests for the weekend at the home of guild member Bobby Hartness and his wife Becky. Bobby and Becky also hosted a fund-raising reception at their home on Friday night that

brought Sam and Beverly together with guild members, woodworkers from other states in town for the seminar, and some special guests.

The 75 reception guests met Sam and Beverly in a woodworking setting – Bobby's woodshop. The shop is a 2,000-sq.-ft. addition to a former horse barn that now houses all manner of state-of-the-art equipment

and Bobby's antique tool collection, according to fellow guild member Wayne Comstock. "His collection is vast and is beautifully displayed in both the downstairs barn and upstairs areas," Wayne said. "He also collects works from other woodworkers he finds interesting or entertaining."

The highlight of the reception for Wayne was the interaction between Sam and Beverly and the other guests. "They were extremely pleased with the event, and everyone was impressed with their down-to-earth personalities and genuine appreciation of what was being discussed."

Sam also signed copies of his newest book, *The Furniture of Sam Maloof*, published by W.W. Norton, and a DVD from The Taunton Press, *Sam Maloof - A Fine Woodworking DVD Profile*, for an hour and a half after the seminar.

### Major guild event

"This is by far the largest event the guild has ever attempted," Wayne said. "We do a lot of seminars using

regional experts, but they're usually restricted to 50 or so participants because they are held at the education center's limited space." For Sam's seminar, the guild was able to rent the local Little Theatre that offered professional sound and lighting equipment and plenty of seating for the 270 attendees.

Wayne said 80 invitations were sent to woodworking-related guilds throughout the Southeast. Fifteen members of the Alabama Woodworkers Guild attended, along with woodworkers from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Tennessee.

In addition to Wayne, who edits the guild's newsletter, the planning committee included programs chairman Bobby Hartness, Web site manager Bill Brett, communications chairman Charlie Stephan, audio/visual chairman Dave Guthrie, treasurer Linda Rakey, charitable projects coordinator Ron Critser and Don Clarke, who arranged for Sam's appearance.

Librarian Chris Willey handled the sales of Sam's book and DVD. Guild instructor Bo Hurley and the guild's mentoring class built and signed the workbench Sam used for the seminar. Don, Wayne and Michael McDunn served as Sam's assistants in the workshop set up on the theatre stage. Altogether, Wayne said about 25 guild members worked before, during and after the seminar to facilitate the successful event.

Woodcraft of Greenville owners Paul and Brenda Patterson were major sponsors of the event, providing most of the equipment and a financial donation. Financial support also came from a Metropolitan Arts Council grant.

In addition to the extensive publicity and the profit from the weekend event, Wayne said the guild will also have a valuable Maloof chair to use for the guild's benefit. Although Sam was unable to finish the chair's construction during the seminar, he promised to finish it in his home shop and return it to the guild.



Sam Maloof greets Bobby Hartness, who opened his impressive home shop for a reception when Maloof visited the Greenville Woodworkers Guild in March. At right is a sample of Hartness's work, a tool chest with cabriole legs.

# OFFCUTS

## Measure of a Man

by Don Clarke

I first met Sam Maloof when I showed up very late for a tour of the Maloof Museum in October 2006. I got caught in the infamous California traffic and considered skipping that last tour of the day. When I finally arrived, I could not find the tour group on the grounds and ended up running into Sam and Beverly walking arm in arm to their residence. Beverly offered to take me to the tour, and Sam asked me if I was a woodworker. When he discovered I was, Sam asked that I come by their home for a talk after the tour. During the discussion in their home, I was impressed by Sam's approachable demeanor and his sincere interest in my efforts at woodworking. I felt that if we could set up a seminar, the Greenville Guild membership would experience the same affection.

Five months later, as the beginning of that seminar approached, I was anxious. At 91, how would Sam's energy hold up during a full-day seminar? And more importantly, would that personal relationship that I had felt with Sam play to a large audience?

After I introduced him, Sam took the stage. With Sam's enthusiasm and warm personality, I began to sense the development of the same bond between him and the audience that I had experienced in his home.

When Sam asked for helpers onstage, three of us volunteered. One helper and I were weekend warriors; the third was a full-time professional woodworker. Plenty of help for what I thought was going to be a relaxed role with a great view.

As Sam began the actual construction of the chair, my thoughts of an idyllic and laid-back view from the stage evaporated. The pace of this seminar was going to be brisk. In 6½

hours we were to cover all the required steps to complete Sam's signature side chair. Sam would do the shaping while the helpers would complete the other machining back work of sawing and drilling and assist with setup and support tasks. Sam's instructions were brief



*Offcuts reunite to reveal the graceful shapes of two arms of a Sam Maloof chair.*

but complete. When a given task was done, Sam always thanked us and indicated his approval.

Occasionally, fear gripped the stagehands as Sam made eye contact through his trademark glasses then smiled, and simply explained what operation was required. At times he would casually add, "very accurately" to the directions.

Sam's mastery of the bandsaw and his admonishment to us to not try his methods at home seemed in complete harmony. Always the teacher, he showed how he accomplished the task and encouraged us to find improved and safer methods. His optimism in our ability to improve his methods was infectious and encouraging.

When Sam had to wait for us to finish an operation, he entertained the audience with a blend of anecdote and masterful skill, delivered with humor to make sure the lessons were retained. Questions from the audience allowed the stagehands to catch up on assignments, and reinforced the personal interaction with everyone attending. Sam also maintained a playful banter with his wife Beverly, which revealed his openness, wit, and warmth.

Sam's connection with the crowd became evident during the breaks when people came up to get the waste scraps from his bandsaw cuts in hopes of getting them autographed after the seminar. At the conclusion there was not a cutting scrap left to clean up.

At one point we were so busy onstage that we missed Sam's offer to finish and return the chair he was building for us to auction as a fundraiser. A hearty applause

of gratitude rose from an audience that knew it was not uncommon for a "simple" Sam Maloof side chair to command



## OFFCUTS (continued)

a price of \$25,000. Only later did we discover the reason for the audience reaction.

At the conclusion of the presentation Sam received a standing ovation followed by a 2½-hour line for book



signing. Sam took the time to talk with each individual, reinforcing his connection to everyone who attended the seminar. The audience patiently waited for their time with Sam, and I received many kind comments on the quality of this seminar experience.

The Greenville Woodworkers Guild had fulfilled its charter of promoting woodworking as an art, providing education, and creating fellowship through giving. We were honored with one of the giants of contemporary woodworking, and we had been part of a seminal event in guild history.

*—Don Clarke is an engineer who travels extensively for a large building materials company. When not traveling or stuck in traffic, he pursues his passion for woodworking in his shop in Anderson, S.C.*