

Introduction to Woodworking Series: Drawer Case and Drawer Construction by Richard Pierce

The woodworking classes hosted by the San Joaquin Fine Woodworking Association continued at Ideal Saw Works on Saturday August 22nd with member



Al Sindlinger instructing on Drawer Case and Drawer Construction. Al has been a woodworker for over 60 years and is one of the senior members of the club having joined in 1989. Al began his working career as a mechanic, joined the Marine Corps and instructed in maintenance and repair of M46, M47 & M48 tanks. From there he went to Reedley College, and then graduated from Fresno State, attended Berkeley, and Cal. After receiving a teaching Credential Al taught Automotive Mechanics at J.H. Polytechnic High School in Southern California. He then transferred to College of the Sequoias where he continued as a Department Head and enjoyed much success retiring after 20 years in 1998. Bill Bridger, John Harkless, John Wetzell, Jim Gulley,



Glen Grey, David Dunlap, Stan Stephens, Bill Lynam, Craig Miller, Mike McClelland and yours truly Richard Pierce were members in attendance.



In addition to learning a great deal about the subject matter at hand we all had a great time. One had to, because we had a great instructor. Al was well versed in the subject, brought along many teaching aides and got us involved in some hands on learning. We started right out creating a “layout stick” or “story pole”.



We each were provided a board 2” x 22” x ½”. Then step by step Al walked us through the process including requiring students to place all the dimensions taken from a cabinet used as a teaching aid onto the “story stick”. Al took the

dimensions as we watched which was very helpful for students understanding how to use this process for their own future projects. We heard about face frames and drawer guides; make sure the drawer is smaller than the opening; do you want to construct the face frame first or the carcass? Both way works and each has advantages for the woodworker. If you use manufactured drawer guides read the instructions first. And purchase the guides before making the cabinet. Al talked about the advantages of pocket hole screws (glue or not glue), flush trim face frames, and ways to fix the cabinet to accommodate the drawer chosen. We were also reminded that the ultimate use for the drawer determines the drawer support required. A drawer for silverware may require less support than one destined for your kitchen “junk” drawer. We were reminded to attach cabinet tops in a fashion allowing for movement of wood in order to avoid the top expanding and damaging the carcass. We heard about the various methods of fastening drawer faces to the drawer body. Al emphasized safety and encouraged us to think through the sequence of milling drawers and drawer faces in order to ensure making cuts in the right order. Also make an extra sample to recreate the cut when required. The various drawer construction options were discussed with several different drawer examples displayed to the class. A jig used to flatten twisted boards in the planer was also displayed. Locking router bits for locking together drawer parts was discussed and displayed as well as numerous options for the joinery used to fasten drawer sides to fronts.

Each student then constructed drawer using a butt joints, the drawer bottom fastened with small nails with the edges protruding to serve as drawer guides. All entirely appropriate for this small but efficient “pencil drawer”. Being a retired machinist probably accounts for the perfectly symmetrical nail pattern executed by fellow student Bill Bridger unlike yours truly which was more random but close enough!

Once again members are encouraged to take advantage of these classes. The San Joaquin Fine Woodworkers Association currently has ninety one dues paying members from throughout the Central Valley. Just over 11% of those members attended this class. Why don't you add your name to the list attending these classes? Take advantage of the opportunity to meet fellow members, get to

know each other better and learn from some of the most experienced and knowledgeable instructors available anywhere.

The schedule of classes is listed in the current Newsletter and on the club website at www.sjfwa.com. Signup sheets for future classes are available at the regular monthly meetings or by contacting a club board member.