



From The Shop



The newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Woodworker's Guild

Issue 04.2007

Upcoming Meeting Information

Next Meeting: May 15th, 2007 (3rd Tuesday!)

Location: Lehigh Co. Senior Center
1633 Elm Street
Allentown, PA

Speakers and topics:

- Frank Rauscher - woodburning
- Take 10 – Members Q&A session

Note – THANKS to Lou Supina who submitted an excellent writeup of his trip to Mexico in search of exotic hardwoods. All submissions gratefully accepted! Dan M.



Phil Alcock gave us an informative, personal, and expressive presentation on carving at April's meeting. Phil is with the NJ Professional Woodworkers Guild.

Phil Alcock is sort of a Renaissance man. Trained as a tool maker, he worked in the trade for a number of years. He got an idea to make realistic flintlock rifles and decided to go into that business when his facility for making them disappeared along with the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Life had its ups and downs with a few job changes and some layoffs. He also unfortunately lost his wife, apparently at a young age, as he brought up their children as a single parent. I admire Phil for stating that this was very difficult for him to mentally recover from. Phil eventually found himself involved with carving. He apparently was inspired by a

friend and mentor he knew from childhood. Phil is a self taught carver and will carve anything but it is clear to see that his tastes gravitate to the art and figure of the American Indian. His favorite subjects are the human form and figure. He did go to England for a time and studied the Greco Roman school popular there. One of the first pieces he did was modeled after his friend and mentor. It is a Viking head. The detail is amazing, and the chain mail in the figure is exquisite.



The Viking bust modeled after his friend and mentor.

This is a copy of Phil's bio as represented on his web site and included with his permission:

I was born in Brooklyn NY; in 1965 I married and moved to New Jersey. That first Christmas my wife bought me a book about wood carving, a subject I had been interested in since I was 8 years old. This interest was generated by a man who taught us kids to fish, shoot bow and arrow – and dream. Ken was always whittling as he told us stories of his youth.

As is often the case, there was never enough time or money to pursue this hobby as we raised a family. Family, work, college at nights, layoff from my job, my wife's death, raising the children as a single parent, all served to bury the dream. Then one day in 1991 the kids were both having supper at friends houses and I was alone! I realized I needed something more in my life. Although I had given up art in the fourth grade (real men don't do art!) I remembered my dream and started to carve wood. I'm basically a self-taught artist, although I've taken several weekend seminars with some of Americas best woodcarvers.

Each of my first 7 years of sculpting I entered a piece in the American Carving competition and have took first prize in my category. In my last show I was also honored to receive Third Best of Show.

My works are in private collections in the US, England and Japan. I also have some pieces in Corporate collections in Japan.

In recent years my interested has focused on the **Masks that Mankind** has used and currently uses. Man evolves, and seeks to express this change in different ways. We used to employ physical masks to satisfy some of this need. Civilized man made less use of physical masks but the trend of painting children's faces at parties and the growing use of tattoos may mark its resurgence. Also, our belief in living creatures being able to change shape has never been greater, if we judge by the use of such images in movies, books, and plays.

I also create iconoclastic images to stimulate people to change even more, to break free of restrictive masks we created for each other; race, color, creed, sex, etc. In this way I hope to help mankind eliminate prejudices.

Phil does not just carve. He also studies up on the background of pieces he is requested to carve. Sort of puts his head and soul in gear about a subject before engaging steel to wood. This is a pretty admirable trait and one that tells you he is not a superficial guy. As example, he was commissioned to carve a piece in the shape of a dogwood flower. This is the symbol of Christ, with the flower center itself representing the crown of thorns and the petals flowing away representing the blood of Christ.



Dogwood flower. Phil felt that standing alone, people could not make the proper religious association.



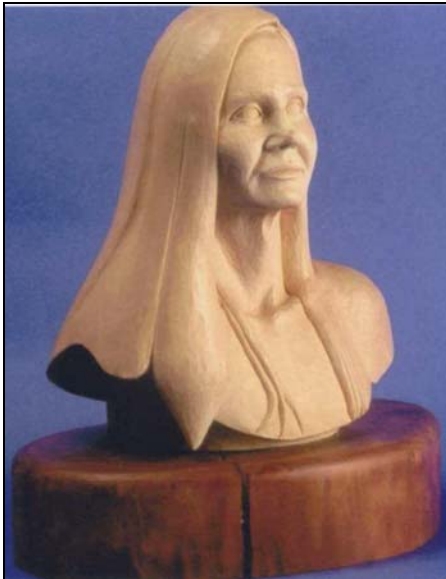
Mounted in the center of a cross, it takes on a whole new significance.



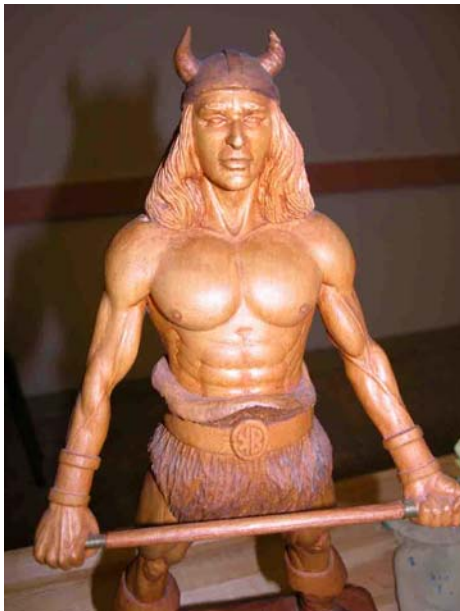
A frieze carving that Phil does for much of his business income. He will sometimes use a router to take out some of the field area. He does preferred to do it by hand, however.



Another frieze. This photo does not do the piece justice.



Phil calls this Dawn of Happiness. It is a special piece of work to him.



Another Viking, the face also modeled after his mentor. This figure is carved from one piece of English Lime, which is the same as Basswood or Linden. The axe is made of three pieces of cherry wood and some brass wire. It is finished in Danish oil with a little bit of oil paint mixed in to make the darker areas.

Phil writes of this piece:

His best friend, Ken Blakeney, died in 2001, at the age of 96. I've known him since he was 45 years old. He taught us kids how to fish and shoot and even how to make our own bows from a stave of Lemon wood. He said hundreds of times that he "should have been born a Viking, he was born out of his proper time."

When I started sculpting I decided to make his wish come true, I have his face on this piece (and he tells me his muscles looked just like that when he was 20 years old). He enjoyed seeing this version of himself.



Total view of the Viking.



The chain mail detail was quite impressive.

Of this Viking head, Phil writes:

Night Watch, Morning of his first Battle

This sculpture is made of one piece of Butternut wood, about 14 inches tall. The figure is finished with multiple coats of Danish oil. This is a true Norse image based on the most current data. I tried to show the fear and resolve of a young man who is facing his first battle. He's worried that he will fail his family and himself by running away; and busy convincing himself he must not. I was flattered by a visitor at one of my shows who came in and commented that he had seen this same look on many faces in Vietnam. The emotional reality is

not based on any particular war, it occurs in every generation.

Phil provided a slide show of pieces of work and brought several. Then he got into a discussion of tools, techniques, his process. Phil likes using hand tools. He has seen excellent carving with power tools like Dremels and others, but Phil does not use them well. He just did get a dental drill like, 45,000 rpm toll he uses on gunstocks. He uses a series of gouges with varying degrees of "sweep" or curve. A gouge with no sweep is essentially a chisel, and they are not used frequently. A #1 would be a chisel and a #11 would be a deep sweep. There are also V grooving tools in 60, 45, 90 degree grooves. Some gouges also have curves to them and are called spoon gouges. The tools average 10 – 11" long in total.



Some of the tools in Phil's arsenal.

Phil advised that as long as you have both hands behind the blade, it is tough to get cut but also tough to work like that. He advised that you can use cheap tools if you enjoy sharpening. A good quality tool will cost maybe \$25 - \$35, and he favors the Swiss Pfeil brand. He has also used Ramelson tools from Newark, NJ. For very small pieces you use smaller tools. Micro tools or palm tools, with very much the same properties as their larger counterparts. Micro tools are like smaller versions of the larger gouges, whereas palm tools have smaller rounder handles that essentially fit in your palm much like a short screwdriver handle. There are also hooked knives for doing bowls. When you carve, you more or less use your thumb as a pivot point, literally slicing the wood away. Phil uses weightlifter gloves leaving fingertips exposed for some work, other gloves have Kevlar to minimize getting cut, and still others have fine steel mesh. There are also gloves with a gel type pad to help to cushion the butt end of the tool from hurting your hand and causing things like carpal tunnel syndrome.

Phil favors a waterstone for the majority of his sharpening, essentially working down to a mirror finish. Phil talked about the burr left when you sharpen a tool. You may remember this from cabinet scraper discussions. The idea with gouges is to minimize or eliminate the burr. Phil also advised that the only wheel you should use is a slow wheel, or a water wheel, not a high speed wheel, which will heat the metal and cause it to lose its tempering. Phil finishes his sharpening with use of a strop with a dressing such as a fine diamond powder or even Brasso.



A water stone, some micro gouges on the left, and protective gloves to the right.



Medicine man with an amulet that represents the vertebrae of a killed animal. A connection to the animal.

Phil sharpens in a typical chronology, coarse, medium, fine, compound, and leather strop – but to a mirror edge. He advised that his tools are sharper than some of these disposable scalpels you may have been cut with. The angle you will sharpen to will vary from 20 – 30 degrees. Curved tools require a rocking motion

when sharpening. He recently discovered a rather expensive but effective wheel made by Koch that uses a fiber wheel and compound. It apparently does not raise a burr.

Phil advised that there are those who make use of mallets in carving but he does not use one much. He spoke of his love of the feel of a sharpened edge slicing through the wood and the smell of carving a wood like cherry. This man loves his work. He carves a lot of butternut and basswood, but will match the wood to the work.

Phil advised a good way to get started is to take a class, join a carving club, read some carving magazines. Some of the magazines he suggests are:
Carving Magazine
Chip Chats
Carving Magazine (another one published in England)

The question was asked if Phil carves in any chronology, like most difficult piece first (so if you mess up, you have new firewood and start over). Phil advised he just sort of does the whole piece at once. Another question was if there are any specialized holding tools and he advised that there are (since carving is a 3 dimensional art. Flat stuff is more or less clamped to a table. Phil advised that he also carves with both hands because some angles need to be approached from opposite perspectives and altering your method with one hand will not always accomplish the effect. When he does relief carving for a client, he positions a light to duplicate where the light will come from when installed. He stands while carving, using a table much like our adjustable height table used at guild meetings. He keeps the surface about elbow high. He does not wear magnifiers while carving.



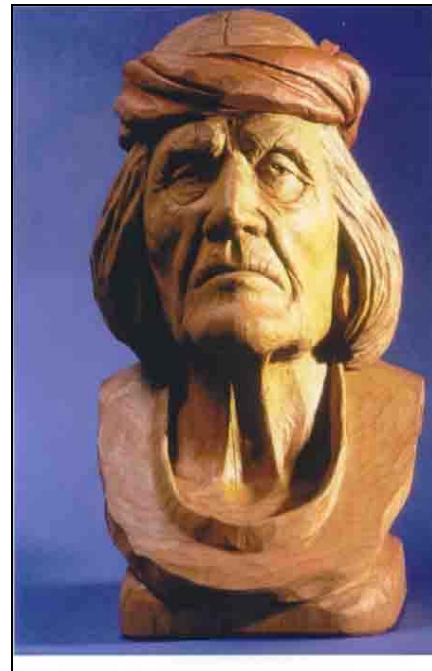
City of Millburn, NJ emblem that hangs in their town hall. The mill is now known as the Paper Mill Playhouse. It is 36" in diameter.

Phil teaches carving and, if there is interest, he would be willing to suitcase a course out here. Usually groups up to 10 people.

To summarize, there is a lot more to Phil Alcock than carving and his well delivered, personally touched, informative presentation was very interesting and informative. To hear from a person who truly loves their craft is a pleasure. We were remarking about the feeling Phil put into the presentation even at the steering committee meeting.

Contact info for carving, classes:

- **phone/fax number is: 973-538-6045**
- **email address is: Philip.Alcock@Verizon.net**
- **Web site: <http://mysite.verizon.net/vze2rw83/>**



A representation of an old American Indian who remembers the days of the Apache Geronimo. He Remembers...



Interesting humpback whale carving in cherry.



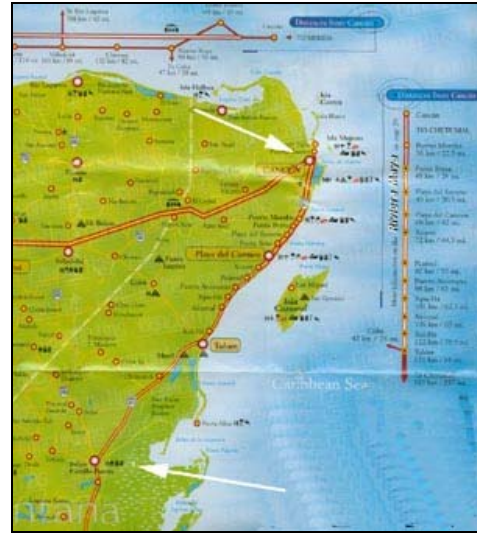
The Indian Sacajawea, who guided Lewis and Clark to the west coast. The red color was supposedly color she wore on her cheeks and on her hairline. I believe this is the piece Phil said was carved from pear wood, which he said was very hard to carve.



Whistling demon Made of Basswood, about 14 inches tall. Colored with water paint and finished with multiple coats of Danish oil. Wall hanging with pierced eyes, nose and mouth. Inspired by an original in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Natural History, NYC.

Lou Supina - Mexico Wood Safari.

A few years ago while vacationing in Cancun I took a trip to a nature preserve on the island of Contoy. On the island, I met a biologist and asked him where I might find exotic hardwoods in the Cancun area. He told me that beautiful hardwood could be obtained in the area of Felipe Carrillo Puerto about 120 miles south of Cancun. In 2005 that city was my destination.



I rented a car, a standard shift Nissan with air conditioning the evening before my scheduled trip because the rental agency did not open till 9 AM and I wanted to leave early for my 3-hour trip. The clerk at the counter told me I had to wait about 1/2 hour because the car was coming from the airport. A short while later he came into the office and told me I was getting an upgrade to a car with automatic transmission and air conditioning, a Chevrolet Monza. Now the Monza is about 3/4 the size of the Nissan and looks like an upside-down bathtub. I didn't want to make a fuss, after all I was just interested in transportation. We made the usual check of the exterior and then I drove to our "home". That night I set the alarm for 6:30 AM so I could get an early start.

6:30 AM arrived too early! When the alarm sounded I shut it off and went back to sleep. At 7:15 I awoke and figured I better get out of bed. I quickly ate breakfast and packed the lunch I made the night before. Packing meant getting the sandwiches, along with some bottled water and a couple cans of ice tea, my camera and my camcorder.



A Mayan Totem..

About 8:15 I climbed into the Monza and headed for Felipe Carrillo Puerto - 150 miles away. Driving down Mexico route 307 was uneventful - most of the time. The first 80 miles were on a 4-lane divided highway. The only problem is the *&#@ speed bumps. The Mexican version of a speed bump is to place in the road about 4 parallel rows of steel balls the size of a grapefruit. There are signs warning of the approach

to speed bumps but if you happen to miss a sign the bone jarring awakening will guarantee you won't miss the next one - after you put your eyeballs back in their sockets.

I guess it was around 9:30 it started to get warm so I turned the temp selector dial to air conditioning - and it didn't work. I pushed all the buttons I could find - still no luck. I wasn't going to let this spoil my day so I opened the windows and proceeded on my way enjoying the humid hot air of the Riviera Maya.

After passing through Tulum, still on route 307, the road narrows to two lanes. Also very noticeable is the lack of road stands or any other kind of business or homes. The only sign of life is the occasional "totem" on side of the road. The totem with a sign "rancho" identifies the location of a path that leads into the brush. At the end of the path is the "ranch" of the Mayan owner. The ranch usually consists of a thatched-roof hut with wall made from bamboo closely placed side-by-side. An opening in the wall defines the doorway.. The low brush that stretches over the countryside gradually gave way to large trees.

When I was in the area of the Sian Ka'an Biosphere I watched for the spot where my wife Mary and I met Antonio the previous year. I thought that maybe I could employ his services as a translator when I got to Felipe Carrillo Puerto. I located the hut where we found him the previous year. A young man told me Antonio was not around - "maybe he come back one hour". I didn't want to wait so I proceeded on my way to the city. It was a boring ride - miles after mile of nothing. Even a village with speed bumps would have made it a little interesting.



I have a caption in mind, but I will not use it..

As I approached Felipe Carrillo Puerto my heart beat picked up its pace - after a year of anticipation I was finally here. Gee, they must have known I was coming - a welcoming committee was waiting for my arrival. As you can see from the pictures below, the town is a mix of the old and the new. It is a center of Mayan culture. The economic status ranges from lower middle-class to very, very poor - but it is extremely clean. The people are quite friendly and I am not afraid to walk the streets alone....but I didn't come to socialize - I'm looking for WOOD!.

After wandering around town and not finding any place that had wood or wood carvings or wood products I began to feel disappointed. I also recalled that in my research of Felipe Carrillo Puerto I had read that one could walk the streets all day and not see another "gringo"! So true is that statement.

My luck turned positive when I came to a Police Station - or so I thought. The station was a masonry enclosure just large enough to have a desk with one chair in front and one chair

behind. I asked the policeman behind the desk if he spoke Ingles (English) - no answer just shook his head "no".

The previous week, when my daughter and her husband were with us, Andy had written on a piece of paper the Spanish translation of "I want to buy some wood, Chechen". The man came to the doorway, pointed to the next street in the direction I was headed and motioned for me to turn at that street. Then he held up 3 fingers and said something that indicated blocks and again motioned another right turn. I was feeling better - I'm on the right track so off I went.



Newer Felipe Carrillo Puerto Marketplace

Saints be Praised!! After making the third right turn and driving a few block I came back to Mexico 307 and right there on the corner was a building with "Tourist" Information painted on the outside. I thought that surely someone inside would be able to speak English and have a good knowledge of the town and surrounding area.

I walked inside, a young Mayan lady sat by a makeshift desk. "Do you speak English?" "Yes" she replied. Then I told her of my quest to buy some wood. She told me that there was none to be had in town. She said I needed to go out of town on 307 for about 20 minutes. There I would find the village of Uh-May. After the village is a road to Hazil Sur. "In Hazil Sur you can have some wood - what you call in English"? I said "lumber yard" and she said "yes".

She gave me a map showing all the dirt paths and villages in the Mayan part of Yucatan. The map showed the two villages she mentioned. I could sense my good fortune , the clouds that had shrouded the town gave way to sunshine. I was getting close - really close to the end of a wooden rainbow.



The tourist information center. This caption is not a joke.



Older marketplace



Lou found out his timeshare was a little different than he thought. Seriously, interesting contrasts of old and new in this part of Mexico

I went through the village of Uh-May and turned on the road to Hazil Sur which was about 2 kilometers away. The tree-lined road soon gave way to a small village. Once again a welcome committee was there to greet me. Driving slowly through the village, I was looking for a some clue that wood is available here. Then I saw it - a Mayan hut with wooden planks used for the enclosure. The picture below shows this hut. What is important is that the planks are of tropical hardwood and the hut even has a wooden door!! I am soooo close.



The hut..

As I was leaving the town in a field on the right side of the road - There it was HARDWOOD HEAVEN!!!. What I came upon was not a lumber yard - it was a saw mill at the edge of the jungle. The yard filled with a variety of hardwoods. Planks 8 to 12 feet long in widths from 4 to 12 inches. In 2004 when I visited a factory that made furniture from Chechen, I was told it was a rare wood. Now I know the "rare" story is only so they can charge more for their product.

On the opposite side of the "driveway" is the sawmill. Sitting around an old saw were three Mayan workers eating lunch. Needless to say, no one spoke English so I took out my electronic translator. I showed them the note my son-in-law

had written. To converse more I used my electronic translator. It was a slow endeavor but we all enjoyed the process.

They were quite surprised when they saw that they could enter a Spanish word, press the button and have the English translation. Our electronic translation told me that they had many kinds of tropical hardwood, mostly Chechen. Since I brought back some Chechen last year I wanted something different. I decided on Tzalam, a type of Mayan Walnut. After loading my purchase in the car, I headed back to Cancun where I arrived about 4PM. It was an exciting day.

In 2007 I returned to the village hoping to get some more wood. For a while I thought I had forgotten the route because the village was farther off the main road than what I remembered. When I arrived at the village I noticed changes had been made. In the photo below on the left you can see a satellite dish mounted on a pole outside the home. Another point of significance is the fence. The fence is made from hardwood boards.

After passing through the village I drove up the driveway to the sawmill and was horrified to see all the drying racks empty!! I could see no sign of life in the sawmill. The remains of the past were scattered around the open air sawmill. As I walked around wondering what to do next I was surprised by a Mayan man, I'll call him Philippe - I never did get his name. Philippe spoke no Ingles and I spoke no Spanish. This



A little bit of tropical wood? I'd say..

year I was better prepared. I brought my laptop with software for translation - English to Spanish and Spanish to English. This worked like a charm - I typed English and displayed it in Spanish. Philippe typed Spanish and displayed in English. He said the business saw mill moved to another place. We soon gave up on the translating, it was taking too much time. He now knew that I was there to purchase some wood so he proceeded to show me many different kinds of wood - the names being unfamiliar to me.

I settled on a wood called Chicozapote. It is a very dense wood, weighing in at about 92 lbs/ft³. Coloring is a brown/purple. I was pleased with my selection and asked Philippe to cut my purchase into 24-inch lengths. The photo shows Philippe cutting the wood..

I was pleased with my selection of three 24-inch lengths, 10 inches wide and 2 inches thick. I loaded the trunk and headed back to Cancun.

Getting my purchase into the United States is a story for another time. When I did get home I did a lot of searching on web wood sites for Chicozapote - no luck. I then made a Google search for Chicozapote and learned that the Mexican

government forbids the commercial harvesting of this wood because of its value as a source of chicle - the gum used in the production of chewing gum.



Cutting the wood. I do not think it is a Delta...



The sawmill....

I guess I was lucky to get some wood from a tree that must have fallen down!!

And in other news...

Don't forget! Bailey Lumber is changing its business model and is having a huge open house on **May 12th**. Bailey's flyer will be sent out with the newsletter AND they are having a drawing for 100 BF of PA red oak or a store credit for \$250!!

Directions: From I-78 exit #35 - Lenhartsville

- Take 143 north toward Kempton
- Go about 4 - 5 miles and turn left onto Old Philly Pike(First left after the Sunoco Gas station)
- When you come to "Y", keep right onto Kunkle's Dahl Rd.
- Continue 2 miles to a stop sign, turn left onto Mountain Rd.
- Go 1.25 miles to Bailey Wood Products, Inc.

BOOKS!

Books will be available for pickup at the next meeting. By the way, we got the order placed in time to get free shipping, so you get back a buck a book. Mr Chiles will be happy –he bought 15!!

Drag and Brag



From the mind of Will Schmidt. It is sort of an infinity symbol – if you follow the edge with your finger, it goes around and around... VERY NEAT. Nicely done. I'd like this myself. Nice work.



SOUP's on! A very interesting ladle courtesy of Mike Moody.



A fantastic looking pen that looks even better in focus, but I include it anyway. Jim Frankenfield does it again.

And the Woodcraft winner is...

I have an excuse this time – I was Emcee and missed the photo op.

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Andy gave the treasurers report and it was accepted. Judy Muth stepped up to doing refreshments – THANKS! Dan asked at the last meeting if members think it is appropriate and in fact fitting that we do something for the community and we got about 70% approval, so we will be looking for some blocks making frenzy this year.. If anyone has a better idea than blocks, speak up fast – but it does not get any easier than this...

We were told that fire rules will prevent us from storing a file cabinet on the premises. Russ Reinhard had one for us, but no go.

The 2007 calendar is holding up pretty well. We have a couple of vacancies but some plans to fill them.

Allen Powell will be pulling together the list of contestants for the October woodworking contest.

We also discussed the potential of getting a camera to do close ups of presentations and project them for better viewing. Russ also suggested we get a mirror that can be affixed to the bench we have overheard at a 45 degree angle as in the turning bench at Woodcraft, enabling a birds eye view of the work being done.

VIRTUAL SHOP TOURS! Presentations!

Joe Deevy will be doing a presentation on a trip to Williamsburg where the old strictly hand tool methods are demoed. Coming up soon!

Jump in and do a presentation– OR –submit an article!

Wood Specials

SHADY LANE TREE FARM

Louise & Mike Peters

5220 Shimerville Road
Emmaus, PA
610 965-5612 Please call

FLEETWOOD LUMBER & FLOORING

BILL BURKERT
27 Rapp Rd.
Fleetwood, PA
610 944-8364 Please call

Member discount 5%

Bailey Wood Products, Inc.

441 Mountain Rd.
RD#2 Box 38
Kempton, PA
610 756-6827

Woodcraft

Pkwy Shopping Ctr.
1534 Lehigh St.
Allentown, Pa.,18103

L.V.W.G. Contacts

Founded in 1995 by:	Dave Dreher
Steering Committee Chairman:	
Newsletter:	
Dan Manturi	484-894-7116
Steering Committee Support:	
Ray Winkler	
Distribution / Mail list:	
Quentin Patterson	610-253-1402
Special Projects Manager	
Allen Powell	610-258-5546
Web Site Administrator :	
Lou Supina	215-679-4234
Treasurer:	
Harold Andy Anderson	610-965-4828
Book / Purchase Coordinator	
Russ Reinhard	
Guild Contact Person – E-mail	
Russ Reinhard	

2007 Meeting Calendar:

Month	Topic	Speaker
May 15th	Woodburning	Frank Rauscher
June 19th	FESTOOL – new tool! Shop tour – Craig Bentzley's shop.	Vendor presentation
July 17th	Planes! Hand planes!.	Jim Leamy
August 21st	Vacancy!	
September 18th	Carving	Frank Rauscher
October 16th	Annual Woodworking contest	Anyone and everyone
November 20 th	Vacancy!	
December 18th	Annual Holiday Party	Members and families

NEXT MEETING – Tuesday, May 15th, Starting at 7:30, sharp. Allow time to arrive and be seated before start time.