

## Wood Finishing Class, Part One

by: Mike Cunningham

The SJFWA's continuing series of woodworking classes added another chapter on Saturday, September 26, 2009. Instructor Craig Miller gave an excellent and intense discussion of wood finishes. Craig has been involved in the painting and wood finishing profession for more than 35 years and it shows in his extensive knowledge of the subject.



In attendance at the class were SJFWA members and guests including Pete and Virgene Sieperda, Bill Lyman, Richard Pierce, Glen Gray, George Zerlang and your intrepid cub reporter. We certainly got our monies' worth with the information and knowledge we took away from the class.

Craig highly recommended purchasing the book by Bob Flexner entitled "Understanding Wood Finishing". He said that it was the virtual bible on the techniques and types of finishes used on wood. I was fortunate to find it in the library section of Ideal Saw Works and found Craig's description of the book to be accurate.

Craig covered types of solvents including Naphtha, Xylene, Toluene, Mineral Spirits and Kerosene, all of which are petroleum based. He recommended which solvent to use in various situations. Craig also showed us how to make a "tack" cloth out of Naptha solvent. He discussed Acetone and Lacquer Thinner as being the most universal of solvents when it comes to wood finishing. Craig recommended sanding your wood surfaces with a maximum of 150 grit sandpaper before finishing; he said that going more than that would not produce any finer surface after staining and finishing.

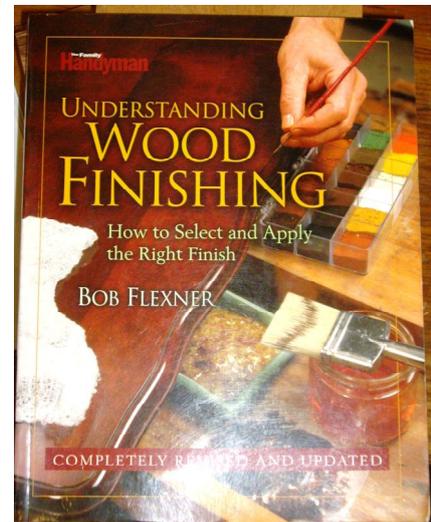


Craig recommends Harbor Freight sprayers for most occasional wood finishing. They are quite good for what they do. He even uses them in his work. He did recommend

that you practice with the hand sprayers on cardboard with colored water to get the spray patterns down. He found that you could spray most finishes with the hand sprayers with a little thinning of the product.

Craig then discussed different types of finishes including Pigmented versus Dye stains, Gel stains, Polyurethane, Lacquers, Glazing, Toning and Shading. He explained the makeup of Varnish (Oil + Resin) and described Spar Varnish as an outside varnish. He recommends dating all your finishes when you purchase them as well as your glues as all have a definite shelf life.

Stains were the next topic. Craig explained the difference between pigmented stain and dye stain. The former stain is opaque, oil based and fills in low points in the surface. Dye stain is water based, translucent and soaks into the wood fibers giving a much more intense coloring than pigmented stain. Most stains are combinations of four colors; Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber and Burnt umber. He recommends purchasing these as tints and creating your own stains. He likes using gel stains for the control they give him.



Craig finished up the class with a discussion of brushes. He said that nylon brushes were used for water based paints. China Bristle or ox hair brushes for varnishes and stains (He likes the Puroy brand). Craig said that you should purchase good quality brushes then take care of them. Load the brush at the lower half only and tap the side of the paint container with the brush, don't wipe it.

When it comes time to clean the brush, He begins with Lacquer Thinner and finishes with Mineral Spirits. Craig showed the proper technique to get the brush clean by bending the bristles to get the solvent up into the ferrule of the brush.

Craig covered a difficult subject with ease and imparted much information to his students. He will continue the class in two weeks with a discussion of Shellac. I look forward to the next class and recommend that you attend, it is time well spent.