

December 2025  
Newsletter



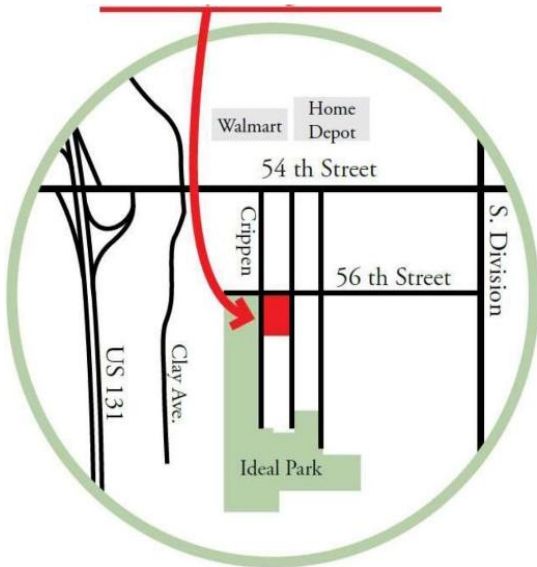
# West Michigan Woodworkers Guild

Next Meeting

**Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** (setup 6:30)



Ideal Park Christian  
Reformed Church  
Activity Center  
320 56<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Wyoming, MI



## December's Meeting Activities

*Bring in your*  
***Favorite Shop Jig***



## Holiday Pizza Party



## December 9<sup>th</sup> 'Auction / Sell'

Bring in an unwanted tool, wood, whatever to donate to our sale to support the guild.

## December 9<sup>th</sup> 'Show and Tell'

All are encouraged to share your latest project or creation with us! Big or small, any condition.

# President's Corner

by Les Derusha



## President's Corner

**Pizza Party!**, our December Staple.  
Pick your Pizza and soft drink and let  
me know via e-mail ([Les@derusha.org](mailto:Les@derusha.org)).



We still need to replace me, I did say I would continue until 1/1/2026, however last I checked that day is coming VERY SOON!

For our December meeting Subject, we will be Sharing our favorite home-made shop jigs. My first suggestion is to not overlook things you take for granted because you've used them so long. It may be old hat to you but unfamiliar to your peers. And there is probably a good reason you still use it.

It may also be something you use in a more imaginative way than initially intended.

If it's valuable to you in the shop it will most likely be helpful to your peers.

Bring your stuff help all of us!

## November 11th *SHOW & TELL*

### Jim Jakosh



Clock from Pistachio



Box for Tuning Fork (hand therapy)



Lock Box using magnet & Ball

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### Bryan Vaughn:

### Door made into a bookshelf



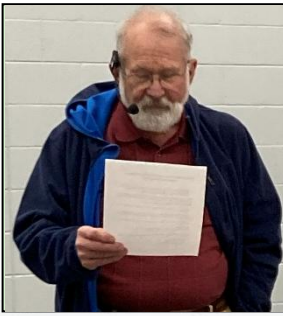
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### Ralph Lindholm:

### Plane with a etched (scrimshaw) markings on brass side







*In case you missed it:*

**November 11<sup>th</sup> Presentation**  
**Scrimshaw with Sam Lacina**  
shared his techniques, methods,  
and procedures of this art form.

Two pages of Sam's hand-outs follow:



## Scrimshaw

Examples of engravings on ivory, stone, wood or bone found as artifacts of prehistoric man are rare, but interestingly one of the more common stone artifacts/tools found are engravers. Many of us have seen examples of Eskimo/Inuit ivory and bone carvings with details carved/engraved and darkened on the surface. These are probably a close reflection of that early craft.

Scrimshaw is a term given to engraving on whale tooth and bone by sailors of the 17th and 18th century. (The term scrimshaw, originally had the meaning of wasting time.) Classically scrimshaw could be defined as an image created on whale bone or ivory (typically whale tooth) produced using a sail needle or sharp metal instrument usually colored with soot from whale oil lamps and whale oil. These were produced by the sailors and traded for goods at their ports of call. With the disappearance of whaling, they became collectibles during the 20th century. The term scrimshaw is now used to describe any image engraved onto the surface of ivory or bone and colored with various inks and pigments. Most early etchings/ scrimshaw were more symbolic art, much of modern scrimshaw is a highly realistic and detailed art form.

### Scrimshaw, getting started:

Develop an image: either freehand drawn or copied.

Prepare the material: I typically use old piano keys which are the most readily available form of legal ivory. Other materials may be used including a variety of plastics, cow and camel bone, cow/buffalo horn, antler, vegetable ivory (Tagua nuts), as well as a few sources of legal ivory, these include warthog tusks, hippo tusks/teeth and fossil ivory (mammoth, mastodon, walrus). Modern elephant ivory is no longer legal. Elephant ivory was used as piano key veneer in the 1800s and early 1900s, this is still legal to own and use. (I typically find them for sale on eBay). Any of these materials will need to be prepared, some materials such as hippo teeth require specific surface preparation because of the hard dentin on the surface. There are multiple resources available which cover that process in detail.

Any of these materials require sanding/polishing to a high/fine Grit at least 600 to 1,000. After the material has been polished to this grit, it is typically inked and re-sanded. This is to assure the artist that there are no hidden scratches, cracks, unusual grain or other defects in the material. Pores, grain and softening are more of a concern with materials such as bone, antler and horn. Cracks and staining are very common in fossil ivory. If you are using bone, some makers will cover the surface with *Renaissance Wax* to fill its pores.

Most artists like to have the image of what they are engraving on the surface of their project before they start. After ivory has been sanded to a fine grit, it becomes very slick



and it is very difficult to draw an image directly on the surface using a pencil. I have arbitrarily called the two methods/ways of working around this the dark-field and light-field methods.

#### Dark-field Method

After the surface is prepared, the artist will re-ink the surface. The surface can be free hand engraved without a surface image. As it is engraved, the white background will show through the dark surface allowing the artist to monitor their progress. This is probably the method that was used by the scrimhandlers of the whaling period. (My speculation) The artist can also draw on the dark surface with a graphite pencil the image they wish to engrave. The disadvantage is, that it will be a dark on dark image.

#### Light-field Method

The light field method is a more common choice for the modern scrimshaw artist. As mentioned before after the surface of a piece of bone or ivory has been sanded/polished it is very difficult to draw on that polished surface. To solve this problem, a coating/ground is applied to the surface of the material. The coating/ground is usually diluted acrylic paint (typically white), engravers ground (paint-ish kind of material) or the residue of a soft eraser that has been rubbed on the surface. After the ground has been applied, the image can be transferred, either being freehand drawn or transferred using carbon paper, tracing paper or projection (less common because of the small size of the image).

Using any of the above methods the artist may now start engraving and proceed until they are satisfied with the amount of detail they have transferred onto the surface. The surface is re-inked and the excess ink is removed, the engraved lines will define the selected image. The artist may now add progressive layers of detail, repeatedly engraving and re-inking.

**Tools:** For drawing and engraving I use a small straight edge as well as a metal French curve. (The French curve was made for use as a cabinet scrapper.) I use washers of various sizes for use as a guide, both for drawing and engraving. I find engraving a sweeping line is much easier against a metal guide. I have cut curves into thin sheet steel to use as an aid, for both drawing and engraving curves such as a hook bend or hook eye.

I use a variety of shop made engraving tools. Most were made from high speed steel or O-1 drill rod using a grinding wheel. I also use the point of an X-acto knife and a pin vise with a stiff needle mounted in it. Many modern scrimshaw artists will cut in the image using fine scratched lines, then refine the image using a fine needle point engraver, and a stipple technique (multiple fine dots). They also use a power engraver to speed up the process.

In the past I used an engraving ball but now mainly use a wood platform mounted on a lazy-suzan base, that is held in my vise. I will use double stick tape to attach the ivory to the engraving base. (you can use a strip of painter's tape, attach it to each surface, then super glue the back of the tape layers together.)



The Guild's Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/groups/wmiwwguild](http://www.facebook.com/groups/wmiwwguild)

(Capture this QR code with your cell phone camera) →



***Notice: The Guild's original Website is being updated and should be available soon***

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## ***December Events at Woodcraft***

### **Grand Rapids Wood Turners**

*free monthly meeting*

Sat. Dec. 20<sup>nd</sup> 9:30 am



### **Cabinet Workshop Class**

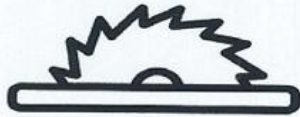
W Dale Smith    \$250 materials included

Saturday, Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 9:30am – 6 pm.





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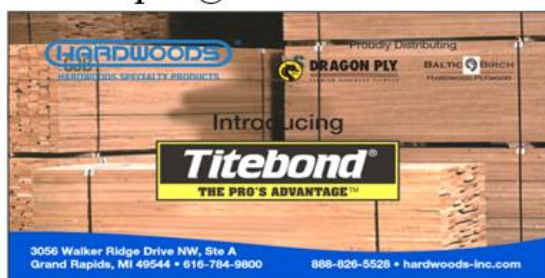
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