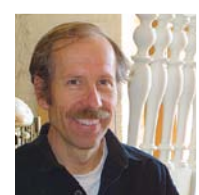
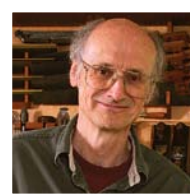


## 40 years, thousands of authors



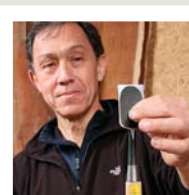
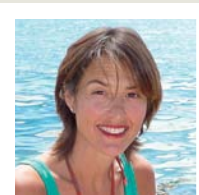
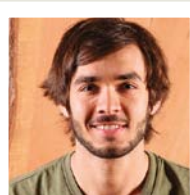
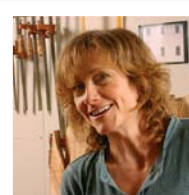
**R**ight from the start, when Paul Roman assembled the first issue of the magazine in his attic in 1975, *Fine Woodworking* has operated more like an academic journal than a typical magazine. Instead of having journalists write about woodworkers and what they build, we've had the woodworkers themselves explaining how they work. Our editors have helped with the writing—and we take the photos—but the ideas, techniques, and designs have come directly from the authors. Their hard-won and generously shared knowledge has been the strength of the magazine for 40 years.

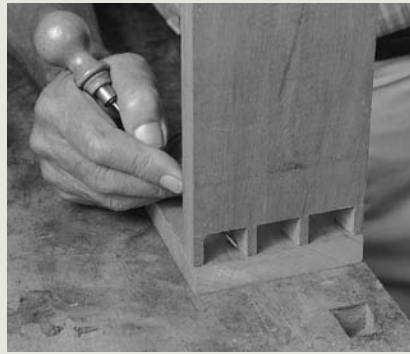


Our contributors have run the gamut from the deeply trained to the entirely self-taught, from machine mavens to hand-tool junkies, from period-reproduction absolutists to makers whose furniture verges on sculpture. Putting a premium on personal expertise, we've welcomed all those points of view, often presenting directly opposing approaches to the same problem.



In this final installment of Looking Back, we've gathered photos that represent the rich array of opinions and techniques embraced by our authors. We've also lined up a sampling of contributors on this page. How many do you recognize? To see if you can name them all, go to [FineWoodworking.com/extras](http://FineWoodworking.com/extras).





**Diverse takes on the dovetail.** In the hands of Christian Becksvoort (left) and Tage Frid (above), the high quality of the final joint was secure, but the two masters approached through-dovetails from opposite directions. Becksvoort cuts the tails first and marks the pins from them; Frid started with the pins.

# The best way to cut dovetails

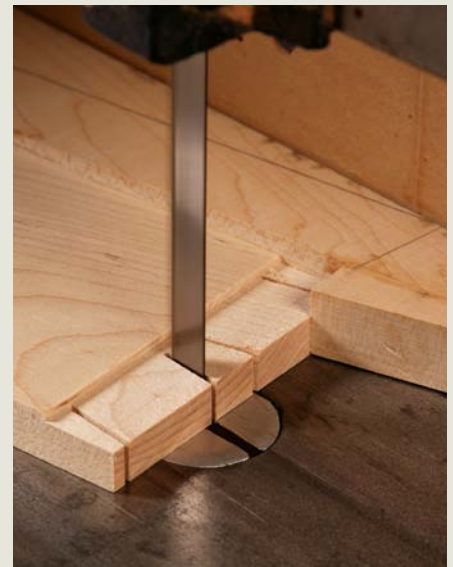
**TAILS FIRST, OR PINS? BY HAND OR MACHINE?**

You can find dovetails right in *Fine Woodworking's* logo, and there's doubtless been some mention of them in every issue we've published. For all the words we've devoted to dovetails, however, we certainly haven't hammered out a consensus on how best to cut them. Two of our most prominent contributors, Tage Frid and Christian Becksvoort, fundamentally disagreed on the subject. Frid, the product of an apprenticeship in Denmark, was an advocate for cutting the pins first and scribing the tails from them. Becksvoort, the son of a German cabinetmaker, is equally adamant about cutting the tails first and scribing the pins from them. In a single article in issue #116, the two titans went pins to tails on the topic.

The controversy doesn't end with the order of pins and tails, of course. We've featured proponents of cutting them by hand, on the tablesaw, on the bandsaw, with a router (with or without a jig), and even on the radial-arm saw. Many others blend hand tools and machines in the process.

Then there are the mind-bending variations on the dovetail our authors have advocated, from the Bermudan coggled dovetails described by James Bump in issue #35 to the hawk's-nail dovetails by Kintaro Yazawa in issue #191.

**Dovetails should be cut by hand...** Many of our authors, whether they use Western or Japanese tools, assert that cutting dovetails by hand is not just a mark of fine craftsmanship but also the most efficient and flexible approach.



**...unless they're made by machine.** Makers as dissimilar as Steve Latta (left), who concentrates on period-inspired work, and Stephen Hammer (right), who builds custom contemporary furniture, agree that machines have a primary role in creating the dovetail joint.

## By far the best way to build furniture

AFTER 256 ISSUES, WE HAVEN'T QUITE REACHED UNANIMITY

Most woodworkers would agree that the mortise-and-tenon joint is the gold standard for frame joinery. But that doesn't mean they agree on the best way to create it. We've published techniques for mortising that range from the brace and bit to the horizontal mortiser and from plunge routers to hollow-chisel mortisers.

And even if most of our authors find the traditional mortise-and-tenon indispensable, they still avidly explore alternative joints and joint-making equipment. Since the early 1980s they've embraced the biscuit machine, finding it particularly fast and useful for working with sheet goods, but also fiendishly flexible for solid-wood applications. More recently, the Festool Domino, which combines a biscuit-machine format with a bit that can cut deep mortises, has begun to revolutionize solid-wood joinery by blending the speed and portability of the biscuit machine with the strength of a traditional mortise-and-tenon joint.

The best tool for a job can't often be objectively quantified—but that hasn't kept our authors from arguing for their favorites.



**Hand vs. hollow chisel.** There's broad agreement on the primacy of the mortise-and-tenon joint for solid-wood applications, but no such uniformity in the debate about how to cut it.



**Biscuits, dowels, and Dominoes.** Biscuits may be derided by some as corner-cutting, but noted craftsman Michael Fortune finds many uses for them. And dowels, though long spurned as underpowered, are found in cabinets made by Jim Budlong (above) and many others trained by James Krenov. These days, the Festool Domino (left) poses a new challenge to traditionalists.

**The beauty of a jig.** For some, woodworking is all about using hand tools and working by eye; but for others, nothing surpasses the delight of producing a great jig.







**Dream shops large and small.** Harry Van Ornum and Les Cizek built their 3,000-square-foot shop (left) in Fort Bragg, Calif., where they both studied with James Krenov. Matthew Teague made do nicely with 160 square feet in a one-car garage (right).

**Downstairs or outside.** A garage or basement is often the best option for a home shop. FWW executive art director Michael Pekovich set up shop in his two-car garage (top), and former associate editor Bill Duckworth has a basement shop (bottom) with easy outdoor access.



## Show me your shop

### WORKSPACES AS INDIVIDUAL AS THE MAKERS WHO USE THEM

Woodworkers may be divided by age, skill level, style preference, and whether they take a machine-based or hand-tool approach to the craft, but it seems they all share a fascination with the way other makers set up shop. We often hear from slightly sheepish readers who say that after quickly absorbing the main action in a photo in the magazine, they spend much more time poring over the background, scrutinizing it for unusual tools and machines, clever storage solutions, or simply expressions of personality.

And of course they're curious to know where a maker lives and into what outbuilding, old button factory, or corner of the cellar they've shoehorned their workshop. Most home shops wind up in a garage or a basement, and we've featured many of those. Then there are the lucky makers with freestanding shops designed to suit their woodworking habits. But some of the best work seems to come from surprising spaces, and our authors have also set up shop in a kitchen in Connecticut, an uncooled attic in Texas, a former firehouse in Massachusetts, and a chicken coop in California.



**In the woods or on the water.** Windsor chairmaker Curtis Buchanan, who works mostly with hand tools, built a snug timberframe shop (far left) in his back yard in Jonesborough, Tenn. Andy Peklo converted an old Connecticut thimble mill (left) to serve as his home and workshop.



## An array of styles

### DESIGN AS A SOURCE OF DIVISION AND DELIGHT

Nothing has the potential to divide *Fine Woodworking* readers as emphatically as a discussion of furniture styles and design. A striking contemporary piece on the back cover can elicit hosannas on one side and howls of indignation on another. And an exacting period reproduction might be met with both high praise and indifference. We have tried to present work all along the stylistic spectrum, pieces so well made that they'll silence the critics—or at least divert them with some fascinating techniques.

But for many woodworkers, design is more difficult than any technical challenge. So we've always aimed to feature pieces—even in highly technical articles—that are as notable for their grace of line and proportion as they are for their outstanding craftsmanship.

Fortunately, *Fine Woodworking* was launched into the middle of a renaissance in hand-built furniture, a movement driven by designer/makers like Wharton Esherick, Tage Frid, and James Krenov, and their work and its influence has been evident in the magazine from the start.



**Classic to contemporary.** To many readers, reproducing a period secretary like this one by Lonnie Bird (left) is the pinnacle of the craft. For others, designing and building a new classic—like Michael Fortune's No. 1 Chair (right) is the ultimate challenge.



**Stylistic sweet spot.** Shaker-influenced furniture like that made by Maine craftsman Christian Becksvoort (left) appeals to a broad band of the magazine's readership. So does Arts and Crafts flavored furniture (right), like that made by Kevin Rodell, another Mainer, who was once a shopmate of Becksvoort's.

**Fathers of craft furniture.** The middle decades of the 20th century saw a blossoming of handmade furniture. Makers like (from left) George Nakashima, Sam Maloof, and James Krenov set the compass for a resurgence in the field.



