

The following article is taken from the November issue of a Newsletter from Chris Pyre. He gives his permission to use any parts of his newsletters. It is a much longer article and you can log onto the his website to see the rest of it.

I've written about it extensively and shown hundreds of people how to do it. I've even made a DVD about it. Yet I still get emails from carvers who find sharpening their tools an unsatisfying experience; anything from a chore to a misery. Here's the deal:

**I've often said that to carve well, you *must* be able to sharpen your carving tools correctly, *properly*.**

Why 'must'?  
And what does 'properly' mean



The relationship between your carving tools and yourself is like a musician playing their instrument: you cannot separate the instrument from the music. It's not just that you need your carving tools to carve, but your carving tools *cannot to be separated from the act of carving itself*.

In the same way that the state of the instrument and it's tuning significantly influences the quality of sound coming out, the state of your carving tools - how they have been sharpened - will significantly affect your carving.

If a musician wants to progress and play to their heart's content, they will get a decent instrument, learn how to tune it and always look after it.

If *you* want to progress in carving you must get 'decent' tools, and learn to sharpen and look after them. That's it; bottom line. Tuning is what musicians do; sharpening is what woodcarvers do.

If you can't do it, then you've got problems which you could well do without as a woodcarver. That's why I'm saying 'must'.

**I think most beginners understand what I'm getting at here and probably hate me banging on. It's the next bit that they struggle with: What exactly do I need to do .**

**1: I don't care.**

You can sharpen by hand on benchstones. You can use honing wheels. You can use a house brick tied to a pineapple. I don't really care how you get there (and I've told you where you want to get to), *as long as you do*.

There is no moral highground in any one approach. The essential thing is getting the tool working as efficiently as possible. What matters at the end of the day is the result: your finished work. The tools are merely a means to the end. If the method you use doesn't get you what you need, change it.

**2: Skill**

Sharpening is a skill. You need to learn it and practice it. Carve (and therefore sharpen) every day and you'll soon get on top of it. Carve once a month and give little attention to sharpening and you'll struggle.

### **3: Bevels**

Sharpening means controlled removal of metal, in specific amounts and in specific places, until you get what you want.

The only place you remove it from is the bevel (outside or inside). The cutting edge arises from this.

*You don't sharpen the edge; you sharpen the bevel.*

Sharpening, as a skill, is not a big one compared to carving itself.

If you know you have it in you to carve, then you certainly can get that sharpening under your belt.

### **One for the Bench:**

"Some people say that the prevailing mood in the world today is one of powerlessness. Decisions about political, economic and environmental issues all seem to be made somewhere beyond our reach. What can the individual accomplish in the face of the huge institutions that run our world? This feeling of powerlessness fuels a vicious cycle that only worsens the situation and people's sense of futility.

At the opposite extreme of this sense of powerlessness lies the Lotus Sutra's philosophy that the inner determination of one individual can transform everything.

It is a teaching that gives ultimate expression to the infinite potential and dignity inherent in the life of each human being".

~ **Daisaku Ikeda**

A Couple more Top of Maine Christmas Tree



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**Notice of publication***The Maine Carver* is published monthly by the Maine Wood Carvers Association, a non-profit 501 (C)(3) organization dedicated to the education, promotion, and advancement of artists who express themselves in wood.

Please submit all material for *The Maine Carver* before the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's publication.

Membership Fees: Individual Member: \$15, Family \$22.50, annually. All membership fees are due and payable by September 1.

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Membership in the Maine Wood Carvers Assoc. runs from September 1, and ending September 1 the following year.

All members receive a newsletter, *The Maine Carver*, on a monthly basis. However, occasionally a double month issue is printed, e.g., during the summer when there is little news or the post-show issue. If you do not receive the newsletter, contact our Newsletter Editor, Barbara McCutcheon at 13 Liberty Street, Fairfield, ME 04937 or call (207) 453-6048 or email [barb72@hotmail.com](mailto:barb72@hotmail.com)

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George Gunning Workshop  
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**CARVER STREET CARVERS**

\*Every Tuesday, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
Seton Village Senior Center  
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**COASTAL CARVERS**

\*4<sup>th</sup> Saturday, 1:00 p.m.  
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**McGAFFEY MOUNTAIN WOODCARVERS**

\*1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays  
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3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 1:00 p.m.  
Richer Memorial Library  
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*\*Check for possible changes in schedule.*

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## **HIGHLIGHTS !**

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