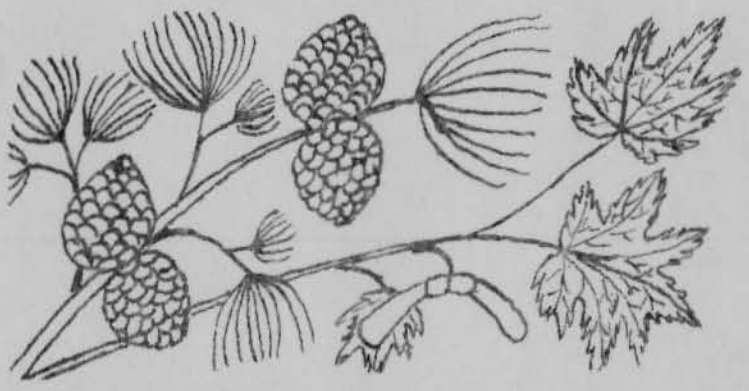
The Violin Makers' Journal

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE VIOLIN MAKERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Devoted to the development and encouragement of the art of violin making in Canada.

The Violin Makers Journal

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Vol.3..No.3.....January, 1960

EDITORIAL

1960 A.D.

It is extremely likely that the New Year will be very similar to 1959. There will be important events - there will be periods when nothing important happens - there will be deaths and there will be births - life will continue much as before. Yet in spite of this fact we have formed the habit of dividing two periods of time by the New Year. In perhaps a sentimental (sometimes morbid) frame of mind we indulge in a review of achievements and possibly tragedies over the last 12 months and wonder what lies in store for us in the next year!

Regarding our work with the Journal during 1959, we have no desire to hold any post-mortem over the departed. As William Tell said "I did my best no man can do better." We have learned much in the technique of operating our Journal. Like the Paint advertisement "It now covers the globe". Nevertheless we do believe that 1960 will see the extabliahment of a real first class Journal - for there is still much room for improvement.

Much of our material requires more careful Editing. There is much repetition and possibly too many "wild ideas and statements". Improvement, however, costs money and while our financial position is sound, yet it is suprising how fast the money goes.

We need more subscribers and definately more advertisers. You, our readers can help. Get your friends to subscribe to the Journal, and if you can obtain advertisements please do so.

Remember The Journal is yours so help to make it really worthwhile.

A Happy New Year to you all and good fiddle making.

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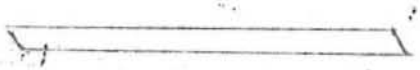
LOCAL NEWS

BY HAROLD BRIGGS



Hello Everybody:

Sorry I can't give you any report on our November meeting. There was a little snow on the ground and the weatherman was predicting an eight inch fall so I did not wish to risk a sixty mile drive.

Our December meeting took the form of our usual Christmas Party, with friends and wives and or sweethearts invited. The total number five and everyone seemed to be having a very enjoyable time. The major part of the program for the evening was supplied by members of the Kerrisdale Orchestra conducted by Mr. Desileux, consisting of strings, brass, wood winds and piano. Thirteen players in all and their repertoire included the following – Merry Widow, Voices of Spring, Pizzicato Polka, The Sandman, Desert Song, Golden Days, Stout Hearted Men, Your Land and My Land, and You Will Remember Vienna. We also enjoyed two violin solos – A Minuet by Blachford and part of a Concerto by Rieding. These were played by Master Daan Virkirk, a nine year old violin student who gives considerable promise of future ability and Professor Piltz and Mrs. Piltz treated us to two duets – Duo for Violin and Viola by Manuel Ponce and Dances for Two Violins by Bela Bartok. In the later piece, Professor Piltz played the second violin part on his viola.

All those who entertained us certainly had put a great deal of work into preparing the program and well merited the word of thanks as expressed by our president. After the musical part of the program was concluded, everyone present enjoyed a really yum yum lunch supplied by the wives and sweethearts. Many thanks to the ladies for their most successful efforts.

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Use your head

It's the little things that count.....

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THE HELMHOLTZ NOTATION

by Norman Miller
Queensland, Australia

I have now received several copies of the Journal all of which have pleased me. By the interest shown in it and the obvious need for it expressed in the letters by members from all parts of the globe, one day perhaps you will have on the front cover "Devoted to the development and encouragement of the art of violin-making in Canada.....and the world".

I would like to send one or two of my instruments over to Canada for engagement in competition either for prizes, or exhibition, and would like to see a competition each year open to makers from all over the world. Even if such a thing is not quite possible, could you advise if a violin or viola, perhaps both, of my manufacture would be eligible for either competition or exhibition.

In reference and appreciation of the articles and research by Dr. F. Saunders and his co-workers, I hasten to assure you that I have incorporated Dr. Saunders method of grooving, and even a modification of it with great success. I have corresponded with Dr. Saunders for some years and have reaped great benefit from his findings and can recommend his methods. Contrary to the expectations of some who scoff at the idea of a rather thin edge, I have not had one split or in any way prove to be weak.

One thing that seems to be rather vague with most correspondents is their method of notation. In saying whether a top is a C or D or whatever they arrive at I feel that just calling it D (like that) is confusing. Would not we have the cycle per second of the note? To this end then could we not all familiarize ourselves with the Helmholtz notation, and list our plate notes under that notation, or at least only give the cps, and not put D unless we mean D ! D in the Helmholtz notation is 73.4 cps. which makes it two d's below middle c.

Helmholtz Notation

A – 27.5 cps.	A – 55.0	A – 110 cps	a – 220 cps
B – 30.8 cps	B – 61.7	B – 123.4 cps	b – 246.9 cps
C – 32.7 cps	C – 65.4	c – 130.8 cps	c – 261.6 cps
D – 36.7 cps	D – 73.4	d – 146.8 cps	d – 293.6 cps
E – 41.2 cps	E – 82.4	e – 164.8 cps	e – 329.6 cps
F – 43.6 cps	F – 87.3	f – 174.6 cps	f – 349.2 cps
G – 49.0 cps	G – 98.0	g – 196.0 cps	g – 391.9 cps

a – 440 cps	a – 880. cps	a – 1760	a – 3520
b – 493.8 cps	b – 897.7 cps	b – 1975	b – 3950
c – 523.2 cps	c – 1046.4 cps	c – 2093	c – 4186
d – 587.2 cps	d – 1174 cps	d – 2348	
e – 659.2 cps	e – 1318 cps	e – 2636	
f – 698.4 cps	f – 1397 cps	f – 2794	
g – 783.8 cps	g – 1586 cps	g – 3136	

A friend of mine wrote with just that sort of a problem; he had been tuning his plate note to his piano and then found out some time later that his piano could not be brought up to the pitch with a' (440). The book said to tune his plates to C and D without giving the cps; as his piano was a full tone or note lower than it should have been to be correct Standard pitch, you can imagine the confusion. I feel sure that this state of affairs exists with many other makers. Could we not have the plate notes given

then in Helmholtz notation and or cycles per second according to Helmholtz, who I am told is the general authority for pitch notation?

The fourth string of a violin is g - 196.0 cps
The third string of a violin is d - 293.6 cps
The second string of a violin is a - 440 cps
The first string of a violin is e - 659.2 cps

anyone who gives a plate note called G or D or something similar is using notes outside the range of the instrument. How do your readers feel about this?

If we adopt a universal use of the cps we can then readily understand which note is referred to. If we say 440 cps that can mean only 440 cps. if we say 'a' or A it could be either one of perhaps three or more cps. even if we mean the second string of the violin. I really feel that this knowledge of the cycles per second should be a necessary part of a violin makers understanding, and perhaps the lack of the use of it has caused many misunderstandings in construction. I am told that the cps of the second string of the violin in the days when Stradivarius was making was about 412.

Let us consider the boginner then and also to no less extent the advance maker and when giving instructions in selecting a plate note be specific and say " c 251.6 cycles per second". It will be a step in the right direction I think.

It is my wish to be in receipt constantly of your excellent publication with the sincere hope that it will grow into a world wide authority and aid in the development of the violin makers of the world, as it is with a publication such as this that we, the handmakers of violins, will be able to educate the general public to the excellence of modern handmade instruments and to hold our own in the struggle for recognition against the traditions supposed to be existant only in the "old" makers work; these traditions are fostered and kept alive mainly by dealers, so with a gathering of strength we may be able to turn the tide in our favour.

Thanks for your interest and the remarks on my way of cutting the scroll. As you may imagine I have other methods and ways of arriving at the work on other parts of the fiddle, and with your permission I would like to tell you of them. Not that I hold them to be the only way to work, but I have found them time saving and generally easier that many other recommended ways, and also would like to hear the opinions of other readers on their agreeing or otherwise with my methods. In that way we will get structive criticism and so help each other. At the moment I would like to bring out a point that rather amuses me in the fact that it was written in 1756, two hundred and three year ago, only twenty years after the death of Strad by a man who was twenty years old when Strad died, and one who
I speak of the book written by Leopold Mozart (the father of Wolfgang Mozart, born in 1756.) Leopold was born in 1719. In his book he says amongst many other things the following:-

"It is most regrettable that our present-day instrument makers take so little trouble with the finish of their work. Yea, and what is more, each works away according to his own notion and his fancy, without justification for either one or the other. For instance - the violin-maker has perchance after some experience, made a rule for himself that when the ribs are low the belly must be more highly arched; whilst, on the contrary when the ribs are high the belly can be less arched and high; and this for the sake of propagating the tone, in order that the tone may not be too much suppressed by the lowness
stronger than that of the belly; that both the back and the belly must have more wood in the middle than at the sides; that besides this, a certain evenness must be maintained in the increasing or diminishing of the thickness of the wood, and this he knows how

to test by means of callipers etc. How comes it then that the violins are so unlike each other? How comes it that one sounds powerful and another weak? Why has this one, so to speak, a shrill tone; that one a wooden tone; this one a rou gh, screaming tone; that one a sad muffled tone? It were vain to inquire deeply. It is wholly due to the difference between the work of one man and that of another. They all decide the height, thickness, and so on by the eye, never attaining any fixed principals; so that while one succeeds the other fails. This is an evil which indeed robs music of much of its beauty."

He could perhaps be saying about those violins of two hundred years ago exactly that which some experts are saying about the violins of today. Or rather, that which the experts think of the violins of today. So it would appear we are in good company. So take heart modern makers, two hundred years ago, a violin expert was slamming Tony Strad and Joe Guarnerius in the same voice as we get it today. Another item of interest in this book by Leopold Mozart, viz; — "Should we not consider why it is we meet with so few good instruments" and those of so varied tone-quality and unequal workmanship, than that we should rekon out whole rows or paper intervals and write them down, especially since they may prove of little or no subsequent use? These learned gentlemen could further the cause of music greatly by means of useful research -- for example; what is the best wood for stringed instruments? How can it best be seasoned? Whether in shaping the belly and back the years of the wood should not be in relation to each other? How the pores of the wood can best be closed and whether with this object in view the inside should not be lightly varnished; and what sort of varnish would be the most serviceable? But above all, how high, how thick, and so on the belly, back, and ribs should be. In a word, how, according to a definite system, the parts of a violin should be proportioned with each other." -- All this two-hundred years ago. How much progress have we made? These questions are still being asked periodically and all sorts of arguments arise. One can well imagine that
selves, doing the same thin s with exactly the same doubt and trepidation, or the same assurance, as the makers of to-day. Look at his remark on varnish, and whether to varnish the inside or not. They were
Some do it and swear by it, others do it and swear against it, and all sorts of arguments ensue. In painting, one artist can take a jar of paint and a brush, go through some generalised movements in swabbing the paint over some canvas and produce a masterpiece; another could go through the same generalised movements with the same materials and produce a flop. Is the answer there?

It is perhaps significant that Mozart does not mention any maker in his book. He does not hold up Strad or any other as a maker of distinction and I feel that if they would have had any great advantage over the general supply he most certainly would have done so, seeing that he speaks so strongly about the scarcity of good instruments, and the quality of tone etc. We can take forlorn hope from a footnote on one of his pages which reads;- "Most instrument-makers, it is true, work nowadays merely for their bread and in one respect cannot be blamed. (for poor quality) People demand good work and pay but little for it." It would seem that it will be ever thus!

We know that our work is good, and that our violins should be in the hands of the top flight players. So let us convince the world. To this end I believe it is the production of Journals such as the Violin Makers Journal of the Violin Makers Association of British Columbia that will do much in bringing this to be a fact.

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"It's useless sowing seeds two feet deep," Fothers advised his neighbor over the garden fence.

"I know," was the reply, "But it annoys the birds".

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ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF "FILLERS"

by Carmen White

Our Editor's idea that a violin should be judged for tone and playability is excellent and I hope he will go ahead and "blow his top" about the judging of new violins as he suggested. The fine boosts given to good new violins by Mr. Hoing and Roelof Weertman are certainly in order, and I am substantially in agreement with what they have said. In most cases, the trouble with the new instrument is it is a poor instrument and that the maker was not aware of its limitations and ran to some artist with the violin before it was ready for a critical test. Mr. Hoing is entirely right; if we cannot sell our new instruments, we should first look to our methods and to our results.

However, it should be pointed out that the mere fact that certain new violins sell does not prove that they have merit. It may prove only that the maker is himself an excellent salesman, or that he has one working for him! I know personally of two examples within the past few years where violinists bought new violins made by a famous modern maker and were delighted with them for the first few months, only to find after a year or two of hard playing had been given these beautifully made new violins there was still not the quality and tone that was thought to be there at first. In both cases, the violinists
with which they both now seem happy. Yet, this modern maker can truthfully say that his new violins sell -- there is no doubt about that fact. But the fact remains that their proud owners did not keep them. In reply to Mr. Weertman's statement that it is wrong to look for a "treatment of wood", and that it is just sufficient to make the violin properly out of fine woods, let me point out that these new violins I am discussing were beautifully made of untreated wood, and that their workmanship does not yield to Stradivarius or to any Italian master I have ever compared them with--I do not see how any artist could make a finer looking violin than these new violins--and they do sell! But they do not seem to satisfy their owners as to tonal beauty after some time has passed. On the other hand, repeated tests have showed that violins with treated wood do compare favorably with violins of known value in tone within a few days after being finished, and that so far as can be determined, this tone is permanent--I have examples dating from 1944 which are still sounding as fine as ever and which show no sign of deterioration of tone, such as is characteristic of new violins made from raw-wood and oil-gum varnishes.

The collective experiences of Mr. McNeese, Mr. Lynch, Mr. Gilbert, and Mr. Michelman would indicate that successful treatment of wood and use of filler is subject to a wide variation--it is not so important which filler is used as it is that a filler be used. One authority wrote that the varnish of Stradivarius appeared to have penetrated half way through the wood; if this is correct, the result would be the same as if a filler had been used. Any maker who has ever actually used a filler or treatment of wood can soon decide for himself whether the tonal quality of the old Italian masterpieces comes from raw untreated wood--Mr. Gilbert
although many of his ideas changed as he grew older, this one did not change--he clung to the idea that Stradivarius tone comes from treated wood. Let it be pointed out that he himself was a great player of the instrument and he must have known good tone when he heard it, although some of us take the liberty of disagreeing with some of his methods. Again, let it be pointed out that thousands of violins have been made from Beautiful Woods by crafstmen who could do finer work than Stradivarius himself--and always with poor results in so far as tonal quality is concerned. If Mr. Hoing and Mr. Weertman have sctually tried a filler or pre-treatment of wood and found it unsuccessful, their conclusions in this matter deserve our close attention and consideration. If, on the other hand, they have not done so, it would appear that their statements about the matter are in the same class with the man who yealls "get a horse" when he sees a car

pass! Craftsmen of the standing and reputation of Mr. Hoing and Mr. Meertman are not to be taken lightly; their opinions justly carry weight with us all, but we think they should speak from actual experiences in the matter of wood treatment and use of fillers.

It might be nice to believe that "if it's good, it will sell"--that is, of course, referring to your new violins! Much depends on who is doing the selling. I once knew a man who became a violin expert overnight and established a going violin business, although he did not play the violin and know nothing about music. He sold more violins than any person in his state, in fact, some say he sold more violins that all the other people in his state together! Most of the instruments he sold were poor in quality and badly adjusted, yet they were successfully sold t
who should have knownbetter. Why? The answer is simple--the man was a super-salesman, one of the finest it was my privilege to meet anywhere! I know a violin maker who turns out the crudest sort of instruments, mostly by machinery, but he sells
at substantial prices. The reason is that he is a fine salesman. He does not play the violin and
patronize him and his shop and have confidence in his ability!

In selling new violins, it must be remembered that every player's idea of tone is based on what instrument he grew up with. He may not really want a good instrument at all-- he may condemn it because it does not agree with his idea of good tone. Last summer, a fine young player criticised a Stradivarius violin unme
thoughtall Strads were highly overrated. At the time, he was playing on a $75.00 German factory fiddle which he"inherited" from an aunt--thus his idea of good tone! He might buy a bad fiddle; in fact, I predict that eventually, he will be in the market for a bad fiddle.

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WE SHOULD EXPAND

by Rev. George Wright

I am wondering, if the time has come in our Association, to air something that has been on my mind for a long time, Even years before the inception of our Association.

It is the forming of a North American Association of Violin Makers.

I feel that if we are to progress in the Art of Violin Making, we must sooner or later standardise our theory and practice, by drawing on all the experience of our fellow luthiers that it is possible to obtain.

I feel the minds of the average violin maker, (too long) has accepted the idea that Stradivarius produced the Zenith, in the violin world. I beleive like Pedor Svindsay that the best violin has not been made yet.

The reason I believe that is because science proves it to be true. There is no reason why we shouldn't make better violins
that we have progressed in every phase of the art. We have more scientific means of listing wood, for resonance, moisture content and accoustics etc. There is no reason scientifically

I feel we are not using the scientific information available at our universities, nor are we using their equipment to test our wood, neither are we using the technical science available in their Professors willing to help us. In fact, the law of scientific improvement, has marched steadily forward in almost every field, why should it bog down in the field of making the king of musical instruments?

THE BASS BAR - IT'S MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

by Clarence Cooper

In my article on "The Outline of the Violin" published in the September, 1958 issue of the Journal, I used as the basis of measurement a line divided into 72 parts and the divisions of that line as a unit of measurement, which I will refer to as a division. In describing the mathematics of the bass bar, I propose to refer to and use the same units of measurements, that is, the bass bar described will be applicable to the outline in the article. Again, I propose to use the major third relationship as the basis for the proportions.

The axis of the bass bar is on the line drawn perpendicularly to the centreline through the point 40. This point 40 on the centreline divides the length of the interior of the violin into a major third relationship of 5/4 i.e. 40/32 equals 72. The bass bar will likewise be divided in a major third interval of 5/4, that is, the length upper bout will be 30 divisions and in the lower bout 24, both measured from the axis line at point 40. See the diagram.

Position of the Bass Bar:

Along the centreline, at a point 10 divisions from the top, locate, on a line perpendicular to the centreline, a point 4 divisions from the centreline and, at the point 64 from the top, locate, on a line perpendicular thereto, a point 5 divisions from the centreline on the same side of the centreline. Join these two points by a line. This line forms the outside edge of the bass bar before it is modified as mentioned later. The length of the bar should then be cut off so that you have the part in the upper bouts from the axis equal to 30 divisions in length and the part in the lower bout 24 divisions in length.

Curvatures on the Underside of the Bar:

There are three main curves on the underside of the bar. First, the curvature of the bar at the axis. This curvature has a radius of 14 2/5 divisions from a centre on a line drawn perpendicular to the line of the axis. The depth of the bar is usually three divisions. Secondly, the curvature of the bar in the upper bouts has a radius of 108 divisions (72 plus 36 divisions equals 2-octave relationship). The line on which the centre is located is 15 divisions from the line perpendicular to the axis and parallel to it. The curve when drawn blends in with the curve drawn at the axis. Third, the curvature of the bar in the lower bouts--this curvature has a radius of 86 2/5 divisions (72 plus 14 2/5 divisions, the octave and the fifth relationship). The centre for the curve is on the line which is to the axis and parallel to it.

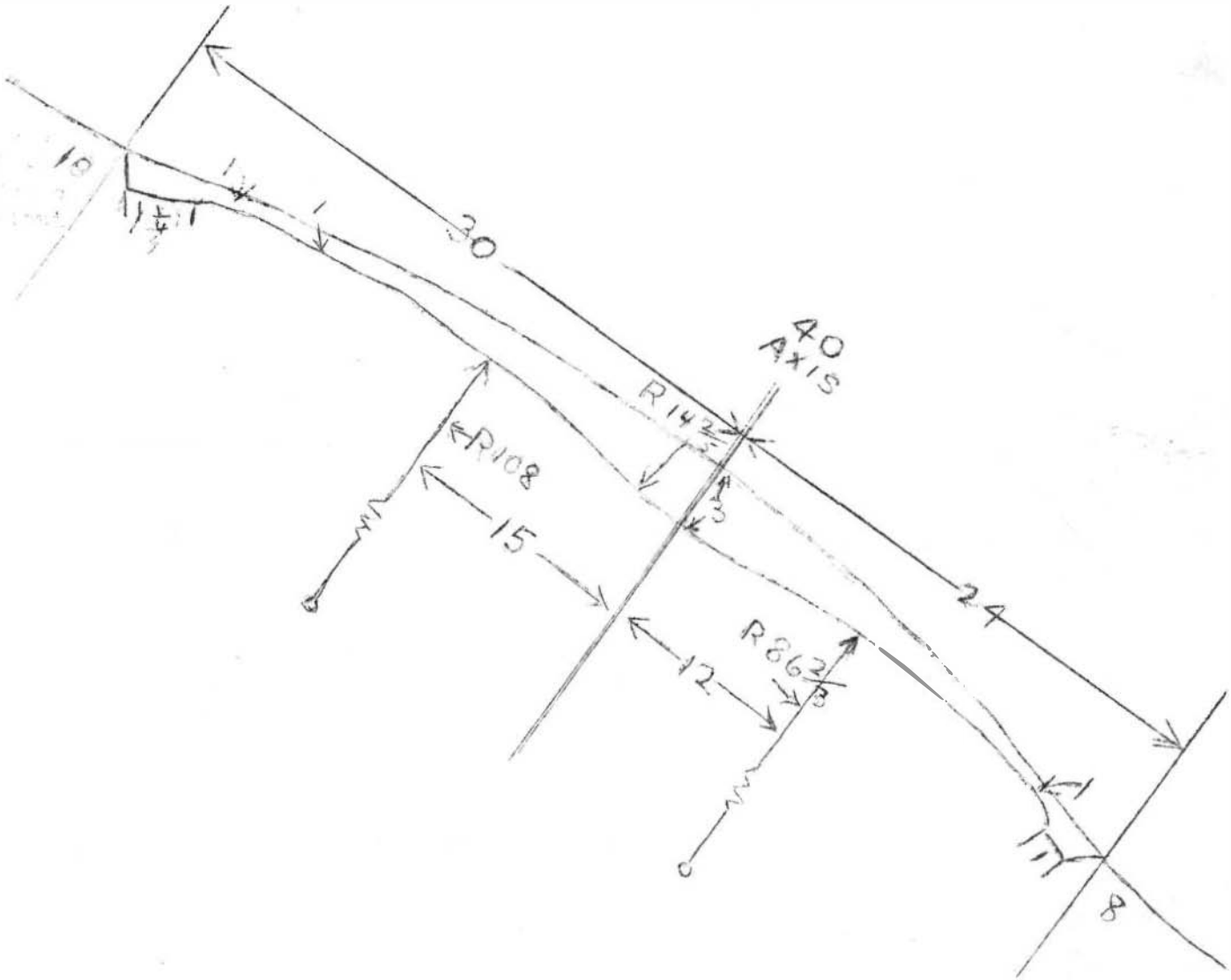
You will note that the curvatures in the upper and lower bouts are in the relationship of 108 to 86 2/5, which is equal to 5 to 4, the mathematical interval of the major third. Where the curves are drawn near to the ends of the bar the thickness will be reduced to one division. In finishing the bar, however, leave extra wood at the tips to be finished in the form of wedges which will be described further on.

The bar can now be shaped along the sides so that, in substance, it tapers from the axis towards At the axis the bar should be 1 1/4 divisions wide and taper to each end so that it becomes one division wide. It is advisable to draw a line down the centre of the bar so that the tapering is equal on each side. Actually, the bar tapers away at each end from the line which was first drawn to locate the bar position.

In the previous paragraphs we mentioned that the tips of the bar could be shaped in the form of wedges. This gives the bar an artistic finish and, in additions, provides a little extra weight in the tips. This extra weight in the operation of the base bar is similar to the principle of the hammer or pendulum effect. The ramifications are too complex to cover in this article but what actually happens is, in addition to giving a ring to the note, it provides a reserve of power in the volume of the tone.

The reason for making the tips wedge-shaped is because it makes it easier to measure and compute the quantity of wood, hence the weight according to the size of the wedge. The top edge of the wedge in the upper bouts is 1 1/4 divisions long and, in the lower bouts one division long. The height of the wedge depends upon the density of the wood used. However, do not overdo these wedges in size, otherwise a person playing on the violin will find he has to use much more strength to develop the tone.

It may be that one experiences difficulties in drawing the curves mentioned to shape the under side of the bar. An approach in a practical way can be made by first preparing templates of each of the three curves or, in some cases, one template combining the three curves. This, of course, is something the maker can decide himself. The edges of the bar can be rounded off so that it forms a half round near the tips and elliptic at the axis, all in the 5/4 relationship.



ON JUDGING THE QUALITY OF A VIOLIN

by Don White

In "Wolf Notes" last month I suggested I might "blow my top" over the judging of violins and other string instruments. I had hoped to shelve this till I had more time but the phrase "blow my top" suggests immediate action so here I go BANG!

Let me state at the outset that this is not an attack on the judging at any particular show, although two recent exhibitions come to mind, one of Violas at Ascoli Picano, Italy and the other in Arizona. While I do feel that too much emphasis was placed on workmanship we must remember that the Arizona Exhibition is only in its second year, and it would be unfair to criticize too severely, they need encouragement. Regarding the Italian Viola show: Their literature and entry forms provide very little information as to the method of judging definately a serious omission!

The question I ask anyone attempting to appraise the value of a violin is "Why was that violin made?" and the answer always comes back "To be played upon.". There you have it! Not to look at, not to be put in a glass case but to produce (so the maker hopes) the utmost in musical language and to provide pleasure to the listener, not the viewer.

Let us examine another musical instrument, the human voice for instance! While anyone will admit a certain amount of "stage presence" is essential yet we judge a singer by his, or her, voice not by the color of the eyes or yet upon the ownership of a devine figure (am I showing my age). Some of our best sopranos would never pass this latter test.

The violinist is not judged by the instrument he carries but by the tone he gets from that instrument combined with his interpretation. When we listen to a Symphony we do not first examine their instruments for beauty neither do we examine their necks to see if they washed this morning! What concerns us is the music they produce and they are praised or condemned accordingly.

What amuses me is the fact that many who insist on equal points for tone and workmanship fail to carry out this system when they come to test your instruments. What they do is to play them and they take a fancy to one particular violin because of its beauty of tone and nothing you can say about workmanship can change their decision! Tone combined with handling qualities, which brings up another point.

There are several physical requirements necessary to a good violin. These while produced by a good craftsmanship do not to any real extent affect its beauty. First it must be standard size. It's string length must be correct and above all it must be easy to handle, I once had a violinist take a fancy to one of my fiddles because the neck just suited his particular hand. The bridge must be the correct height and angle so that the strings are the right distance from the fingerboard. Strange to say these are details that are often ignored by makers who produce "perfect" workmanship.

That most interesting and informative work "The Universal Dictionary of Violin Makers" by Wm. Henley, Amati Publishing Co., while being a most valuable book does have the one fault of dwelling too much on the beauty and workmanship of the instruments made by different makers. This criticism might also be extended to those delightful booklets "Violins and Violinists Series of Violin Makers", William Lewis and Co. In saying this one must remember the Lewis Series is really a history of the lives of the Old Masters. Please do not think that speaking disparagingly of these two works which definately should be on the bookshelf of all makers but as a suggestion to future additions to literature of this nature. We would like to know more about the tone of a makers instruments

(continued on Page)

MASTERTONE

By kind permission of Mr. Herman Weaver. President of The House of Weaver

A Story of the Violin

by P.F. Wright

Mastertone is the superior quality a master violin maker imparts to the tone of his instrument. This is the crowning feature of a masterpiece, which distinguishes it from the ordinary and commonplace.

Since the days of the classical makers thousands of men have devoted themselves to the violin maker's art. Some fine instruments, with wonderful playing qualities have been produced and, as one generation after another has passed, illustrious names have been added to the list of great violin makers. But these are exceptions. The majority have been persons of ordinary attainments whose labor produced only haphazard results.

Among the latter class there have been, and always are, some who harp about the lost Cremona secrets and who endeavor to duplicate accidents, laboring under the delusion that this can be done. Varnish, pickling processes, graduating by the light of a candle, proportioning wood to air space, tuning the top and back to certain musical notes, swabbing the inside with white of egg, freak bass bars and rattlesnake rattles are but s few of the long list of discoveries.

Whenever a haphazard genius hits on an accident, somewhat better than his previous efforts he announces the discovery of a lost Cremona secret. Failing to duplicate it, he remains more or less out of the picture until another accident is stumbled upon, when a lost Cremona secret is again broadcast. Such fellows are as perennial as the color of autumn leaves. Their theme is romantic enough to appeal to the press as good copy, and the persistence with which such fictions are published leads a credulous public to believe that there actually were Cremona secrets.

The merits of these different discoveries is about the same in each instance. That is, none of them are of any value. Rattlesnake rattles are no more silly than in computing of cubage in vibrating wood and air content impractical. Violins are not designed in that way. Yet the latter stirs the imagination of the intelligensea, while the former appeals to country fiddlers as a potent charm.

In no case is the bugaboo over Cremona secrets more misleading than that of relative tone values typical of the classical makers. Instead of being the result of profound research, the instruments, these artists made sre a record of evolution in musical taste. Whatever acoustical studies may have been conducted were incidental to meeting the demands of the period in which each worked.

In order to visualize this, let us turn back to the sixteenth century when the string instruments in vogue were of inferior resonance. Among bands of humming viols and tinkling lutes a roaring Gasparo da Salo or Maggini violin was as unwelcome as the proverbial bull in a china shop. It is easy to imagine how violin devotees of that day were berated. They no doubt were accused of having leather ears, of being fools, of being freaks, of being insane, etc. Slurs that have been cast upon saxophonists during the past thirty years supply a parallel illustration.

Andrea Amsti, aware of the objection to Brescian instruments, devoted his talents to producing violins more compatible with the musical taste of his time. He modeled the top and back with lovely reverse curves which were not only beautiful to behold, but also reduced the vibrating area to such an extent that the tone was small and pinched. His instruments were favorably received and his fame spread to distant parts of Europe. A notable order that he filled was one for King Charles IX, of France, which was for twenty-four violins, six violas and eight basses.

A hundred years or so of familiarity with the violin awakened a better understanding of its place in music with a corresponding demand for fuller tone values. Niccla Amati complied with his "Grand Amati". This evolution toward bigger tone continued until both Joseph Guarnerius and Stradivarius met its demands, each in his own way. The "Long Strad" was one effort, to be followed later (1700 to 1725) by the "Grand Strad".

Although their models were different, each of these great artists combined power with refinements lacking in the early Brescian instruments. Their work, including that of their pupils, indicates that the effect of the arch of violin tone was recognized. The arches of these makers, although differing somewhat, were designed along lines permitting free vibrations.

Had the violin makers of that period understood the importance of suitably distributing the wood, there no doubt would have been great uniformity in the acoustic value of their instruments. Records of many old instruments have been obtaind and, although measurements from the most celebrated are used for reference in modern computations, the bulk of the evidence is so at variance that graduations found in these appear to have been due to chance rather than to any well developed theory.

There is reason for this uncertainty of graduation revealed in old violins. In those days necks were shorter than they are today and the musical pitch was also lower . The resultant low tension in the plates made full tone value, as we now understand the term, impossible. Therefore, wood might be distributed in almost any manner and its effect on the tone was minimized. When the problem is viewed in this light it seems marveloua that any of the old instruments should be adaptable to modern demands. We can afford to be grateful for those occasions when the old masters were careless enough to leave ample wood in the tops and backs. We should be thankful for this and find no fault with their manner of distributing it.

In spite of age-old prejudices, there has never been a time when so large a proportion of violins being built were of superior tone value as today. Violin makers now posess the accumulated experience of four hundred years and also a better knowledge of violin acoustics than ever before.

Violins may be classified as belonging to any of several types and, although the master violin maker may confine himself to one of these, he never makes duplicates. Each is a masterpiece. A gem, with an individuality of its own, that defies duplication. Besides its individuality, each masterpiece also has a history of its own. The story is of complex origin that begins long before leaving the master's hands; a finished violin for the artist to fondle and caress to the delight of his audience. In order to see this unfold let us pay a visit to the studio of Mr. Herman Weaver.

On the work bench is a Mastertone violin in the process of making. The lines and arches follow, very closely, those of Joseph Guarnerius. The scroll, hanging near by, is not from stock but one that Mr. Weaver has carved from a choice and beautifully marked piece of maple. This has not yet been joined to the body. In fact, the body is not entirely assembled. The back is finished. So also are the ribs, blocks and linings have been joined perfectly. The whole interior is as carefully finished as the exterior will eventually be, when it is ready for the superb varnish he uses. There is not a spot, stain or blemish of any kind to be seen—not even a drop of glue.

The top lays nearby. It is of amazingly fine, straight grained spruce. The grain is so very fine and close that, where it not for being told differently, the visitor is ready to believe that Mr. Weaver rediscoverda Jacob Stainer's grove of Swiss pine.
(To be continued in the next issue)

COMMENTS ON VIOLIN MAKING TECHNIQUE

by Wm. Hall
Listowell, Ont.

The last issue of the Journal was extrs good, and if you can keep future issues up to the same standard, the Journal's success is assured. As you know there is a great deal of piffle written about violins, and one should be most careful against printing misleading information. I like in particular, the common-sense comments of Carmen White, he seems to avoid self-advertising, which is a pleasant feature, not always found in writers. I couldn't help laughing at his comments on finding a method to set the notes C for top and D for back, recommended by H/Allen. The same thing had me perplexed. Alao, Alton is another who recommends the eame pitch for plates. Final thickness for top 1/8". I could never get C although I tried dozens - perhaps I have a faulty "ear" also!

Re: Amber varnish? One can buy artists Amber varnish, and mastic varnish, or make their own. George Crump wrote an article in "Strad" about four years ago on this formula. I tried it on several violins, and it looked beautiful, but didn't harden properly. As violins kept in the case, bare marks from the lining. However, I do know that del Jesu varnish after two centruies acts the same way. As Miss Honeyman wrote me saying: a blob of varnish stuck to her thumb, as a result of her holding the violin in a heated concert hall, when she was awaiting her turn to play. Her violin is the one, that paper patterns can be had for one shilling and three pence. It is a genuine del Jesu. So if after two centuries of use, the varnish is still soft, where does the experts opinions come into the picture! Incidentally, my first violin was made from the Hoffman patterns, and has a splendid tone, but is crude in construction, due to faulty mould patterns - no two sides agreeing in outline. The same may be said of H/Allens. It requires a lot of experience to make a true outline of violin plates, and the finishing of edges. However, there are many good violins that haven't an artistic appearance, but have really got the tone. I've heard quite a few old Tyrolise in this category.

The Europeans seem to have an entirely different approach to violin makers, than we have on this side. On their part tradition plays a major rol , in that the art is handed down from one generation to another, in much the same way, as violin playing haa been done, from one school to another, going back to Corelli, and then through his pupils, spreading throughout Europe, and finally to the new world. The same may be said of violin making, when we find pupils from the Cremona shhool, settling first in Mittenwald, Markneukirchen, Holland, Mirecourt, etc. In England I have not read of anyone from the old Italian schools settling there, although the early English makers copied mostly from the Stainer model. In Dublin, Ireland, Perry made the old fine violin with what is termed the Italian tone. Possibly his instruments were copied from violins in the possession of some of the fine Italian artist teachers who settled there for a time, amongst them being Geminini, and at a much later date Guido Papini.

In those far-off days there was quite a tie-up between artists and composers Mozart had as his friend and Irish tenor, whose name I forget, but he played an important part in some of the roles Mozart created for him. So as Mozart's father Leopold, wrote a wonderful treatise on violin playing, it is only natural to suppose, a knowledge of the good violin-makers filtered through at the same time. This is what I mean by tradition having an important meaning on the other side. Even the sons of the noted expert Wm. Ebsworth Hill, served an apprentiship in the famous violin making centre of Mirecourt.

In my opinion what is needed most to give a shot in the arm to violin-making is to concentrate on guidance for the amateur. The professional does not need it, what he requires is a market for his products, which can only be procured by creating a demand for hand made instruments. What better way for doing this than by having well informed

amateur makers, who have learned the value of using good models, and wood, they in turn, inform those who are thinking of buying a violin for little Mary or Johnny, of the importance of buying a hand made one. For over 40 years I have attended musical festivals, and have been astonished at the poor tonal qualities of instruments used by contestants. It was no surprise to me to find talented children playing on cheap factory fiddles, with poorly fitted bridges, and steel strings, when I found teachers who were indifferent to the quality of instruments used.

It is too bad about the prices charged at your Music festival. It seems a common practise all over, and something should be done about it. On T.V. we get the rottenest programs imaginable, Our so-called experts are either downright ignorant, or indifferent, in furthering the cause of real art. When the Russian violinist Leonid Kogan, appeared in Toronto, the reception was luke warm, owing I'm sure to the political propaganda, concocted about Russia. In England this artist was accepted for what he is, and was accored a fitting welcome. He is truly one of the greats of violinists. I prefer his playing to D. Oistrah's. One really gets to know the capabilities of a violin when the former plays the Tschaikowsky D major.

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ON JUDGING THE QUALITY OF A VIOLIN cont. from Page 13

and somewhat less of the perfect inlaying of the purfling. To my mind "I couldn't care less" if they had no purfling at all, in fact in my next fiddle I am tempted not to insert any purflin believing it to be a detriment to tone and of no practical value at all. Do not get the impression that I do not admire good workmanship in a violin but it is a secondary matter. I am in perfect agreement with Clifford Hoing when he says: -

"I agree most decidedly that tone should be the first consideration in a violin or viola but I consider that an instrument with fine tone and appearance should rate better than a poor looking one. Fine workmanship is mostly an indication that (all things being equal) the instrument will have a better tone than the poorly constructed fiddle".

I feel we should not worry over the workmanship of a good toned violin. The craftmanship necessary to produce a lovely tone will not fail to show in that violins general appearance, but first and foremost it must have tone and I will not rest contented until I see on the entry form for a violin contenst -. "Instruments will be judged 100% for tone, excepting in the event of a tie, in which case general workmanship will decide the winner."

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MUSIC

whose voice

needs no words

to sing its message

crossing all barriers

to understanding
brotherhood peace

... Gladys Mickal Bell
(Editor "Violins and Violinists" on her Christmas Card)

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IS THE MACHINE MORE ACCURATE THAN THE EYE

by F. J. Heinonen
Toronto, Ont.

I experimented with the Mockel system of graduating the plates. I put the violin in the sun in the hopes of seasoning the wood, and what happened? The seams began to open so I had to take the top off so I set pieces inlaid into seams so they were flush with the rest of the interior of the plates. Under normal conditions this would not be necessary; but after going through all the work of graduating the plates

I was anxious to try this system out according to Mockel. It has been lots of fun as I have been trying to learn Deutch for about a year now.

Well, while I had the top off, I thought I might just as well give it the linseed oil treatment all over the inside. I have been playing the violin a bit although it is still in the white. Well, I must say it is the best thing I have ever played on. Even tone on all strings, double stops and harmonics come out very nicely. But, it stands to reason that the system is so accurate that there is very little need for templates.

As a rule I would write out every word in German and look them up in the dictionary. In that way killing two birds with one stone. I think, if anyone is interested in violin making they should get the book "Mockel-Winckel Die Kunst des Geigenbaues". I got my copy from William Lewis Comoany, Chicago, Illinois. Speaking about Gilbert, who published a violin making book, I read an article, where he got a great consolation when he saw Mockel's Stradivarius measurements.

The system calls for a series of concentric ellipses, maybe nine or ten ellipses. Each ellipse is drilled to a given depth. Of course, the base has to be absolutely level to start with. The only drawback is you will require a drill press with depth guage. That is the reason I say the machine is more accurate than the eye. I would also say it is a great time saver, and it also simplifies the work. Of course, everything is worked out in millimetres although a conversion table might be in order. You would have to make a chart of the ellipses on a paper first and then put a carbon copy underneath and transfer it to the wood. Naturally, you cannot work on a violin without using your eyes but the machine is the nucleus.

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INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF VIOLAS AT ASCOLI PICENO

by Clifford Hoing

A good number of members of the Violin Makers Association will have read the report of the above exhibition that was published in "The Strad" October, 1959 issue, and will have noticed the rather misleading post-script at the end of the article.

For this reason I think it should be mentioned that, according to official information from the organizers, there were actually few very large violas in the exhibition. Moreover there was only one "Tertis" model among the 130 or so exhibits! This is a clear indication that only a very very small number of makers are impressed with the design and tonal results of these instruments. Less than 1%. In actual fact, the sizes of the violas in the Exhibition, were limited to instruments from 41.5cm. ($16\frac{1}{4}$") to 43cm. (16 7/8") in body length. Some violas of $16\frac{1}{4}$" were highly placed.

It is felt that reports intended to give quite a wrong impression of the

(continued on Page 20)

HOW THE CREMONESE MASTERS POLISHED THEIR WOODS

by W.L. Laubi
Dubendorf, Switzerland

Along with scrapers, modern violin maker's methods recommend the use of sand or flint papers of different grades for the smoothing and finishing work on wood surfaces. However, the results so obtained cannot be compared with the lustrous surfaces of the instruments of the classical period, where the grain of the wood appears in its wonderful clean and smooth purity.

Numerous inquireies indicate that many violin makers (some well known), find if difficult to reproduce these classical effects. Needless to say that many other materials, such as bow-hair, wood-shavings, agate-stone, horse-teeth, etc., have also been tried, but without better results. Although there exists a large literature about violin making, (unfortunately almost all of it written by amateurs, because the top grade makers did not write about their experiences and methods, just as the great painters did not explain their techniques), only scanty information can be found about this interesting question.

An old french treatise from the last century gives a hint that nature itself supplies a material unequaled by any other modern abrasive. Eminently suited for this purpose is Equisetum Limosum, a variety of swamp herdgrass, familiarly known as horstail grass (French: prele - Italian: equiseto or coda di cavallo - German: Winterschachtelhalm), commonly found in wet places such as water edges, swamps etc. The special limosum variety grows only in certain areas and is not very common.

Its hollow stalks are built up of silicious components which under the microscope show a tooth like formation similar to a natural file. The sections between the knots, softened in warm water, gently flattened and rubbed in the direction of the fibers, yield that extremely smooth and pure brilliance we so admire in classical instruments.

The difference between flint paper and equisetum is that flint paper leaves faint scratches, while the equisetum smooth down the wood cells and removes the dust from the pores, allowing the real structure of the wood to appear. Naturally, varnishing on such prepared wood surfaces becomes easier, especially on old woods.

Incidently, it might interest some readers to learn that scientific research made in Switzerland during last year's legal proceedings concerning faked violins, revealed that the old Cremonese masters already used that material for polishing purposes as microscopic particles of equisetum have been detected in the pores of genuine parts.

It would appear that the use of equisetum is not entirely a lost secret, as some present-day violin makers know about it by name, but do not seem to be aware of the exact variety (there are at least 8 varieties known), or how to use it.

Equisetum is available at one Swiss Franc per dozen (to polish one violin 1-2 doz. are sufficeint), plus costs, from W.L. Laubi, Forewoods, Dubendorf, Switzerland.

Editor's Note:

A study of several books on Botany discloses as many as 20 varieties of Equisetaces or Horsetail. The variety mentioned is Equisetum Fluviatile L. (E. limosum L.) and grows from Alaska to New Foundland South or Oregon, Wyoming, Nebraska, Illinois, Ohio and Virginia. Also in many parts of Europe and Asia. It thrives in shallow water and bogs. We suggest you determine the correct variety through your University service. Mr. Laubi sent me a sample. The grass is evidently dried slowly, so as to keep its shape then cut into about two inch lengths. I have not been able to experiment with it owing to the fact that I have no finished plates on hand. Horsetail freezes in the winter so will not be procured by most of you till next summer.

THE SECRET OF BOB WALLACE'S TOP WOOD

by Clarence Cooper
Victoria, B.C.

Throughout our Journal, the letters from those who had the good fortune to obtain a piece of top wood from Bob Wallace were most unstinting in their praises of this unusual wood. As a forester and lawyer I was intrigued to know why it was so good. I wrote Bob enquiring what species it was. With his usual generosity Bob sent me a very select piece to try. Forthwith I promptly enlisted the help of a fellow forester, Mr. W.A. Porter of the Dominion Science Service, Victoria, B.C., who is an expert on identification of wood. My friend Alex Porter examined this wood under a microscope and identified it as Douglas fir.

It should be explained that there are only five species of Douglas fir in the world. There are three in Asia and two on this continent, with a variation of one species. The small number of species would account for the reason Douglas Fir has not been used in violin making and maybe has never been tried much until Bob Wallace made his find. For this continent the major species is actually in two types, that is a coast type and an interior type. The impressive fact is that this Douglas fir is obtained at the high altitudes and is an interior type. Initially this would account for its being suitable for violin tops, in addition to the characteristics of the internal structure of the wood itself, as will be described later.

All wood is made up of a mass of various types of cells. The coniferous woods, of which Douglas fir is one, are composed of cells which are called Tracheids. These Tracheid cells are the real fibre of the wood. They are long and narrow and have pots in the sides with relatively thick cell walls. Now the secret is in these cells, because it so happens that Douglas fir, except for parts of Larch wood, is the only conifer that has spiral thickening on the inside of these cells (Tracheid). The spiral thickenings are like coil springs. The fact is that Bob Wallace's wood is, in substance, a mass of coil springs extending throughout the length of the wood. No wonder it has a ring throughout its length, a fact of which I satisfied myself by tapping on the piece he sent me.

Now don't get the impression that all Douglas fir is suitable for violin tops because there is a great difference between the Coast type and the Interior type of Douglas fir. The coast type would be too hard and heavy, whereas the interior type from the high altitudes of Arizona is lighter and very similar to Sitka Spruce in appearance and texture, and apparently has good acoustic qualities also.

Bob Wallace has a top wood which is a find for us violin makers and we can take advantage of the opportunity now to get a stock of it. Also, for posterity, Bob Wallace should get photographs of the tree and its cones and a proper record kept of other facts, with the archibes of our Association.

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INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF VIOLAS AT ASCOLI PICENO cont..

actual circumstances, will not assist any cause. This sort of thing has happened before, of course, and the advantage has never been in favour of the author. Previous statements will all be suspect. Any future pronouncements will be ignored by those who prefer the truth.

It was surely not a very noble thought to omit all mention of the prizewinning violas just because a cherished idea did not receive the desired honours.

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"MY VIOLIN"

by Bob Wallce

Editor's Note: The two preceeding pages show two photographs. One the Portrait of one of my best friends, although I have only met him through the mail. Someday I hope to meet Bob "in the flesh". We will have much to talk about.

The other picture is of one of Bob's violins of which he is justly proud. Bob Wallace is the Editor of The Arizona Association of Violin & Guitar Makers Journal. A monthly paper which he started patterned after The Violin Makers Journal. We were ourselves happy to assist in its birth and wish it deserving success. We thank Bob for these two pictures which he has contributed to go with his following article.

This violin was made by Robert N. Wallace from Gilbert Arizona, U.S.A. This is the first copy of a Joseph Guarnerius completed on December 25, 1950. It is a copy of Mr. Herman A. Weavers copy of the cannon, except the edges are sanded perfectly flat. I have since won a first prize in a violin contest with the same model with an inlaid violin. I fell deeply indebted to Mr. Weaver and without his kindly advise and fine plans, I would not have had anywhere near the success I did making this violin. I think Mr. Weaver is "uno bueno hombre" (one fine man).

The top wood is out of the fast becoming famous high altitude rockymountain top wood that I cut myself. This wood is being used more and more here and abroad by modern violin makers. The back, sides and scroll were a present to me by Mr. Weaver and is very famous because it came out of the roof of the Senate Building at Wash. D.C. and had been there I suppose since it was built. The two small cracks in the back were caused by shipping.

Following are a few of the many comments I have received on this violin. Mr. Joseph Wallo of Washington, D.C., our Guitar Editor says it has a tremendous tone and that one well known violinist played it while visiting Mr. Weavers shop and complimented it very highly.

Your Editor, Don White writes that it has a powerful pure tone. Mr. Garland Green, publisher and noted recording and square dance fiddler and violinist, says it was definitely the best I have made to date. Mr. Miles Dresskell, violinist and professor of strings at Arizona State University said all it needed was playing.

Mr. Dewitt, a violinist and violin appraiser said he had always dreamed of owning such a violin and that it was the best he had ever played on. He asked that a price be put on it.

Mr. Carmen White of San Angelo Texas, violinist and violin makers says; "Received the beautiful violin, it is wonderful, really has some tone in it. You have done a wonderful job here, tone workmanship and varnish. Your tone is even and brilliant. Bob my hat is off to you! You have made a fine instrument, just as fine as anyone in this world could have done. This is a fine fiddle you have sent me. I intend to show it around."

Mr. Albert Wharton of Peoria Arizona, Dean of Arizona violin makers, thinks it is the best violin I have.

I want to thank all my friends for their kind remarks.

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A LETTER FROM JOHN LAWSON

London, England

I note from your last letter that members have fixed an arbitrary minimum of 100 dollars on their instruments which are to be exhibited at a local store. I am inclined to agree with your comment. This is reducing the art to its basest and basic commercial value. The pleasure of experimenting and building better instruments is, I always though, the real purpose of this hobby. If the instruments can be sold, all the better. Asking such a high price for amateur work is simply condemning those instruments to permanent inactivity. The amateur too often forgets that the world's yardstick of value rarely takes into account the hundreds of hours of toil by the craftsman; it merely judges on the results. I fear that the members of the B.C. Association seem to have acquired an inflated set of values, a fault which can only lead to disaster. The trouble is that there does not seem to be a true valuation for amateur fiddles - the experts can't be bothered. We might well ask - ruefully! - "What's in a name?"

What you guys need is a publicity man who is on the ball!! For a start, why don't you get someone to write up the Association and its activities for the newspaper. For goodness sake, let the folks of B.C. know they have a fiddle-making centre of their very own. Contact TV and radio men and suggest they do a featue. Approach big business men and suggest they put up the money for a prize violin-making competition. The said businessman would pay, since his company (and its products) would be linked in the publicity. If this sounds too terrible it is certainly no worse than sticking up the fiddles for sale and expecting 100 dollars..... Our modern times run on wheels oiled by publicity; why not let it do us some good too?

May I comment on the article by Mr. Larsson in the last issue? I strongly disagree with the idea of a copyright. The whole idea of publishing such a newsletter is to share knowledge, not hide it, as all the fiddle makers in history have usually done, to our loss today. And do you really think a copyright is going to stop anyone copying something he reads in the Journal? That is to naive to believe. There would be no way of checking, so why worry about such things? Rather, I would put in bold lettering - "Everything appearing in this Journal is for the betterment of the world's knowledge of this great art and if we are able to add to that knowledge, we shall be happy. Therefore, we place no restrictions on the use of the material published herein, either for further publication or in practical work." That, to my mind, reflects the true spirit of what our Association set out to do in the beginning.

I was most interested to read Erika's piece, which was sound common sense, except that she overlooks the fact that kiln-drying of timber takes only a few days. Air drying is a luxury of the past, so wood we are using now might still have been affected by atomic action (through infected rain, etc.).

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Nothing is harder than a true evaluation of our contemporaries in our own field. Most of us--including critics and creative people themselves—suffer from an emotional curvature of the spine that prevents us from seeing straight into the heart of a living artist.

Slab!

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WOOLF NOTES

by The Editor

New Year Greetings will hardly be in order by the time you read this, just the same I feel I must express the [illegible] hope that all our readers will enjoy a Happy and Healthy (with a capital) New Year and may you all build that Master Violin in 1960.

I must thank the scores of kind people that wrote wishing me the Season's Greetings. I have around 60 or 70 letters, with kind sentiments, waiting to be answered. Yes, you've guessed it, I'll never get them all answered, so will you all please accept my sincere thanks and I really will try and write you when I find time. Please remember I still have to work for a living and I try to make the odd fiddle once in a while.

I believe we are off to a good start with the first number for 1960 and I have material enough for an even better issue next month. Don't let this stop you sending that little article you are working on, I need all I can get also you are not helping others by keeping it all to yourselves.

It seems I really started something with my suggestion that we should be careful with the spelling of Stradivari's name. (Perhaps that's wrong!) My friend Clifford Hoing mentions this in a letter to me. Quote:

"Sorry to have to correct you but I think you are wrong about Stradivari and Stradivarius. You will find most dictionaries state that Stradivari is the Italian and Stradivarius is the Latin version of the same name.

Moreover the wording of a Strad label always says "Antonius Stradivarius" as the name of the maker. The same applies to Guarneri who used the Latin version "Guarnerius" as his name on the label.

It is therefore more simple to use "Stradivarius" as the plural of "Stradivari", the former being pronounced as Stradivarias. While things belonging to Strad are said to be "Stradivari'a".

On the question of timber names. Our English Sycamore or Sycomore is a specie of Meple better known as the Great Maple but the tree called Sycamore in Canada, U.S.A. and Scotland is known here as the Plane tree. Most of my instruments are made with English Sycamore backs.

Several species of Spruce are suitable for fiddles if the wood is carefully selected. But selection is a matter of appearance as well as acoustics and for that reason a scientific method of selection of timber for fiddle making can never be satisfactory for making the finest fiddles."

The last two paragraphs have nothing to do with Strad but they are of interest and you can have them for Free with Mr. Hoings compliments.

Now Clifford, I cannot agree with your remarks. My statement last month was taken from The Oxford Dictionary and should bear weight. Here is what Fowler says in "Fowlers Modern English Usage." The last wor d in English reference. Quote: "Strad. short for Stradivarius, violin made by Antonio Stradivari, of Cremona, Italy (1644-1737)" Note that the "ius" is used for the instrument made by Stradivari (i).

Now here is something which will put both Clifford and myself in the wrong (And possibly Fowler!) An Italian lady, out from Italy two years ago, now teaching a class in Italian at our local Night Schools states: "Strads name was really Stradivario, (note the o) The custom in those days was to Latinize the wor ing of labels. Hence the "Antonius Stradivarius" always appeard on his labels.

I hope more of you scholars will write in and put this thing straight. It would be nice to call the old masters by their correct names.

THE HELMHOLTZ SYSTEM

I promised Norman Miller I would try and say a few words in support of his suggestion to use this system instead of just tuning to some undependable piano. The pitch of A was around 412 cps. in Strads' days and has been constantly raised since that time. I have always wondered why the old violins built for this low pitch sound so fine in our own days of very high pitch. I have thought that if we made our instruments to suit A at 412 cps. and then tuned them up to 440 cps. we might evolve better violins. Also what might our violins sould like if tuned down to A at 412 cps..... I dread to imagine.

NEW FLEXOMETER BY ROELOF WEERTMAN

I have several letters from Mr. Weertman among which he describes a new improved Flexometer which he has designed. With this he can test not only strips of wood from maple or spruce intended to be used for plates, but also to test the finished or partly finished plates for correct deflection. I hope to give the diagram and particulars in our next issue. Mr. Norman Miller of Australia tells me that he is actively interested in Archery, making his own arrows. It is necessary for each arrow to match exactly in elasticity and bendability to each other of a set. To determine this they have what they call a "Spine Tester". Norman uses this to test elasticity in violin wood and to balance the relationship of pine to maple for relative thickness, a description of his machine will also appear in the February issue.

Mr. Roelof Weertman has just been on a visiting spree. Before Christmas he visited (and argued) with Joseph Michelman, Dr. Hopping and Mrs. Carleen Hutchins as well as many of his musical friends in New York and elsewhere. The following little poem written by Mrs. Weertman indicates in some measure the jolly time they must all have had.

It was with so much pleasure
I went shopping in the store
To find for you this silken scarf
That I hope you will adore
It has on it the instruments
Of the long ago, romantic past,
When no master would ever think
Of letting the varnish "dry too fast",
And all the well-known artists
Of the famous "fiddle guild"
Know all the secrets of th hos
An exquisite "cello or violin to build!!
We thank you for your hospitality
Oh, that fine dinner at the Golden Post,
But the battle royal between the two Giants
That's what I did enjoy the most!!!

OTTO MOCKEL'S TEST FOR A GOOD VIOLIN

A letter from Mr. Wm. Hall of Listowel, Ontario tells among other things of interest, a test described in Otto Mockels book. Here is the quote from Bills' letter:-

Here is a Mockel idea for determing the carrying-power of a violin, it is simple, and logical: Take an empty cigarette cardboard packet (20 size). In one of its centres make a 12 mm hole. With scotch tape, secrely bind the edges, after removing the paper contents. Strip violin of strings, take cigarette packet, blow into the hole the smoke of a cigarette, or cigar, cover the hole immediately with thumb; then place packet on where the bridge sits, remove thumb and tap the back plate with knuckles. If violin is evenly calibrated there will ascend from the package round smoke rings, with each tap on the back. Then the smoke hangs around the hole, and does not ascend in clear rings, the violin won't have good carrying power....I have tried this and find it accurate. It is as near as I can get in translation.

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ROELOF WEERTMAN'S BOOK:

Owing to the festive season and its consequent disruption of routine the instalment of Roelof Weertman's book will not appear in this issue.

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