

RawHide Gazette

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"Without question, the RawHide Gazette is by far the best and most informative and comprehensive Guild publications of all of them! You are to be commended for your very fine and professional efforts. Keep up the good work. With admiration"
/signed/
Al & Ann Stohlman, December 1997

Volume 4, Issue 4

Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op

June 1998

Hide Highlights

- Next Meeting Announcement
- Uncle Bill's Corner
- Pricing Your Work
- The FIRST Far East Report from Japan

Next Meeting

June 28th at Linda's. See one of the previous months RawHide Gazette for a map to Linda's. This is the last meeting before the Summer break. The Meetings will begin again in September.

May Meeting Minutes

- The meeting progressing very smoothly and very quietly due to **Bill's** absence.
- Fred read **Bill Churchill's** email to group.
- Thank you **Mike** and **Terry** for invitation and for the refreshments. **Terry** told the group that the whole store was open to the group for the day. Let the members know of the discounts available to them. **Terry** introduced a number of products that he carries in the

store.

\$29.00 was collected for the raffle. Ruffled items were a camera case donated by Chuck and one large and one small rubber mat donated by **McPhearson Leather**.

Deb handed out flyers from the **Frye Art Museum**. She also handed out flyers from the **Washington State Capital Museum**. She will be instructing a class and the museum on "Old Western tooling Techniques" August 19 and August 26 (6-9p.m.).

Deb also introduced "**The Harness Shop News**" to the group. If you are interested in receiving it the address and phone are: 347 Elk road, Sylva, NC 28779; telephone is (828) 586-6389.

Dusty demonstrated 3-D texture and color techniques to the group.

Deb and **Fred** talked to the group about several different kinds of pens available for coloring.

After the meeting, members were free to shop throughout the whole shop.

Cover Contest

Deb, **Dusty** and **Imus** presented their covers to be voted on. **Deb** won the "Cover Contest" for the RawHide Gazette. As soon as pictures are available the winning entry will be part of the RawHide Gazette and placed on the Internet. Good job **Deb**!

In the future after the front Cover has been displayed at the **Puyallup Fair**, The

carving will be returned to the Carver. Reason — We have no OTHER place to display it except at the Meetings. This way more people should enter and then the Internet will be encouraged to enter. Our next deadline for the Front cover is October.

Movin' On

Noel Dewittie (Burien) is being transferred on the 25th of this month to Thornton, Colorado Store. Someone from Arizona is coming to Burien. More information as it develops.

Bill Churchill
Federal WA

Uncle Bill's Corner

I missed the meeting at **MacPhersons**. And as usual they had everything prepared so nice. I just know it was because an ex-Tandy manager was supposed to be there. I sure thank the **MacPhersons** and all of you.

I received an email from the **Stelmack** family. They are now in the land of the **RISING SUN** and **MT. FUJI**. They said that they are sorry that they missed the meeting. If I were in Japan, it wouldn't bother me a bit. It is a very beautiful country. I spent many years there enjoying the culture.

Before I go any further...I received a phone call the other day. It seems that someone thinks that his or her "Original Art" was exploited. A picture of a picture of this "ART" was taken and printed in

the Gazette and then put on the Internet. The party therefore feels that their "Original Art" was given away. Let me assure everyone that any "ART" brought to the CO-OP meeting to show is believed to be there for everyone in the CO-OP to see. Naturally that includes ALL MEMBERS including our friends that receive their copy of the Gazette on the Internet. Otherwise, why bring your work to the meeting to be seen. I WAS and AM at a complete loss as to why anyone would think something like this. I also very distressed that someone would think this was done to lessen the value of the "ART" in question or that this was done without their expressed permission. To me...It is an honor that my work is published ANYWHERE! If I were selling my work — to me this would be a wonderful advertisement (see *EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE below*).

I just talked to **Ann Stohlman** and she sends her regards to all. **Peter Main** spent two weeks with Ann and together they packed up "*The Stohlman Leather Shop*". That includes new leatherwork, the beautiful cabinets, workbench, tools, etc. Ann says that it is all in storage waiting for **Tandy Leather Co.** to get a large enough space for the Museum to house everything. She still needs your cards and letters. I will have a new address for her probably in the next Gazette but you can still use the old address until July or August.

THE FAIR — THE FAIR — THE FAIR — THE FAIR — THE FAIR
August is the month to turn in your projects. We WANT more Children's projects.

On a personal note, all of my classes are canceled until this fall. I am sorry, but something has come up and I am unable to have the classes now.

You know, one thing in LEATHERCRAFT is probably one of the most needed and sought after items on every Craftsman's mind — PATTERNS. Naturally you can go to your local Leathercraft store and buy the commercial patterns. Look how many the **Stohlman** family

has put out. You can't beat them. And the shame of it all, so many of them have been discontinued.

But too, there are so many other places to find patterns. Those of you that can draw are very fortunate but not all of us can. So the LIBRARY is your next best bet. GO TO THE CHILDREN'S SECTION, what beautiful patterns. Patterns of just about everything you can ever want. Another source for patterns is **Dover Publications, Bellerophon Books, Taplinger Publishing Co.** What I call ADULT COLORING BOOKS. Topics such as: Indians, Cowboys, Civil War, Bible, Ships, Ancient History (Greece, Egypt, Vikings, etc.). Another source is Magazines — the photography is perfect (most of the time) and then the advertisements are wonderful. Especially the PLATE advertisements that you see in the TV Guide all of the time. Train yourself to be on the lookout for Patterns.

In my classes I tell those that are interested in doing portraits (Family or Friend) to take an 8X10 BLACK AND WHITE snapshot. Black and white that has NOT been retouched. It gives so much better shadows and planes.

Now that you have all of these patterns how can you store them where you can find them and in good shape? Try putting them in the Cardboard tube that comes in Paper Towels. Write on the tube what you have inside. Store them Alphabetically. Another way, a little more expensive, is to get a THICK notebook and divide into sections: Animal, Vegetable, etc. and then store them in PLASTIC PAGE PROTECTORS. In one plastic page protector you can put 10 cat pictures and in another 15 dog pictures...etc.

Speaking of Plastic Page Protectors, all my instruction books are stored this way. For instance my **Al Stohlman's "Figure Carving Finesse"** instruction book. I have worn out four of them. At \$20.00 a pop that soon adds up. So I took my newest one and cut it very carefully apart and put each page (including the covers) in a PLASTIC PAGE PROTECTOR and then

into a Notebook. Even using them all of the time in classes they last years longer. You can also put tabs at the upper corner of the Plastic Page Protectors and immediately know where you want to look up in the book. This way you won't hurt the pages and it is so much easier to use.

Bill Churchill
Federal Way

EFFECTIVE NOW....

If you bring your projects to the meeting (and we hope that you do) the projects in all probability will be photographed and published in the Gazette and also put on the Internet. This is a great opportunity for you to have your proud work viewed by all. Those of you that are selling their work — Free Advertisement...This, after all, is what the CO-OP is all about...TO PASS ON YOUR IDEAS TO HELP OTHERS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LEATHERCRAFT.

WE NEED YOUR: Ideas, Snapshots, Instructions, Patterns, Articles — from all of our local members and from all our friends on the Internet.

The Executive Committee...

EFFECTIVE NOW....

All advertisement that appears in the Gazette has to be submitted to the Executive Committee two months in advance. The Committee will then decide if it can be printed. All of our PARTNERS IN LEATHER are FREE to advertise in the Gazette at anytime with absolutely NO CHARGE.

The Executive Committee...

To Rawhide Giz...

Looking for carving patterns from old TERRI HANDBAG kit and PAPILLON HANDBAG kit. Want the Pegasus Pictures. Please look!

Terri Shinaberger
(Tacoma Tandy)

Fred's Report

Fred passed along this information.

(Please call the Washington State Capital Museum to confirm dates and times.)

Where:

The Washington State Capital Museum
211 w. 21st Ave.
Olympia Wa. 98501
Phone:
360-753-1998

What:

Featuring an exhibit of the works by Bill Cleaver "Wild Bill Originals". These are of the finest historical reproductions in leather you may ever have an opportunity to view.

When:

The exhibit runs June 5 to Oct 25

Notes:

There will be a special Grand opening event June 10

Other special events at the Washington State Capital Museum are:

What:

"Little Buckeroos" Family Day

When:

June 27 (7—9 pm)

What:

Author Mike Allen shares his vast knowledge of the Rodeo Cowboys of North America

When:

June 30 (7—9 pm)

What:

THE LEATHERSMITH: DEB LAUDADIO will instruct a class on "Old Western Tooling Techniques"

When:

Aug 19 and Aug 26 (6—9 pm)
Class size is limited to 30. Please call the museum for more information.

The Washington State Capital Museum hours:

Tue—Fri 10—4 pm
Sat&Sun: 12—4 pm
Mon: Closed

Admission:

Kids \$1.00
Seniors \$1.75
Families \$5.00
W.S.H. Society members admitted free

Hosted by:

The Washington State Historical Society

New product

BEE NATRUAL LEATHER CARE'S "Rudy's" Tack & Saddle Conditioner & Finish

For more info contact Deb at 253 - 852 8464

A letter received from a new Member:

Dear Bill,
I am currently an Internet subscriber to PSLAC and would like to become a regular member to gain access to discounts offered by **HIDE CRAFTERS, TWL**, and others. I would also like to receive the "**THE COMPLETE RAWHIDE**" collection of Newsletters. I have enclosed a check for \$44.00 for both of these.

Your CO-OP does a very good job of promoting leathercraft and your newsletter is excellent. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Richard L Vine
Arvada, CO. 80005
EMAIL rlvine@gadas.com.

S.B.T.S.

Hey PSLAC'ers

That was quite a BBQ that we had, huh? FOOD-FOOD-FOOD!!! Had to let my belt out a notch or two! And so many things to try: Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Bar-B-Q Bambi, slads gal-lore and the Yummy deezerts. (Needed side-boards on my plate). Miss Piggy has nothin' on us when it comes to the good line!! We ALL outdid ourselves (I think). Just wish it hadn't been for Bob and

◆ PSLAC Partners in Leather ◆

◆ **Tandy Seattle** - Jana Stobaugh, Manager, 20003 - Aurora Ave N, Seattle, WA 98133, phone: (206)542-1677

◆ **Tandy Tacoma** - Larry Riekena, Manager, 5429 - S Tacoma Way, Tacoma, WA 98409, phone: (206)474-1777

◆ **Tandy Burien** - Noel DeWittie, Manager, 14611 - 1st Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98168, phone: (206)244-0351

◆ **Leather Factory, Spokane** - Kevin White, Manager, 28 West Boone Ave, Spokane, WA 99201, phone: (800)822-8437

◆ **MacPhersons Leather** - Terry Durban, Manager, 519 - 12th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98144, phone: (206)328-0855

◆ **!!!NEW!!! Leather Factory, Vancouver /Portland** - Durham Hefta, Manager, (*Grand opening in the Fall, 1998*)

◆ **!!!NEW!!! TWLeather-** Jim Linnel, Ken Gregson, Cal Zugge, Managers, (800)477-9923

◆ **!!!NEW!!! Hide Crafter Productions** - George Hurst, Manager <hcrafter@flash.net>

Karen's departure.

Have a good visit (2 Yrs) in Japan, but hurry back to us...You'll be missed!

The day was perfect for the B-B-Q too!

Good Raffle...Tony sure could have gone into the glue business! Speaking of Tony, Congrats on the Harley and Chevy Van— But what-cha going to do with a fold down bed?? HEE HEE.

Uncle Bill, keep on cleaning your garage you are not the only one who benefits from it. We all missed the last (May) "GIZ" publication, but for those if you who worked the BRANE TEE-ZER here are the answers:

Across:

01. Cow rawhide
02. Rachel Kiefer
03. Lamb
04. PSLAC
05. Slunk
06. Pony
07. Doe
08. Ann & Al Stohlman
09. Kids
10. Elk
11. Peter Main
12. Tree
13. Goat
14. Tony L.
15. Side
16. 3D Tandy's
17. Embossing
18. Yes
19. Deer
20. Art
21. Boeing
22. puyallup
23. Jana
24. Don Betts
25. Fred
26. Fredrick Churchill

Down:

01. Craftool
02. Helen Wert
03. Awl
04. Roy
05. Satinshene
06. PK
07. Kim
08. Bob

09. Ken Imus
10. General Seymour
11. Pig
12. Aid
13. Shoulder
14. Tony Ezettie
15. Pro
16. Noel
17. Robb Barr
18. Stelmack
19. Dale
20. Skin
21. Back
22. Larry
23. Tap

So how many got all the answers rite?? Try making a cross-word sometime..It's hard!! By the way, somebody GOOFED when they wrote the last newsletter that was Tracy Kelley's Cougar briefcase !!OPPS!! AND SHE DID A FANTASTIC JOB ON IT

SEE YOU ALL AT THE MEETING

"FAT & SASSEY—STANDING ON THE SIDELINES"

Leather Project Pricing

(ed. Note: There were so many insights and good ideas last month from the IILG e-mail that I'd thought I'd pass them along. This PRICING subject reminds me of my first meeting with PSLAC that was held at Andy and Jan's place in Mukilteo. Andy gave us a lecture on PRICING and the part I remember the best were the reasons to charge a "fair and equitable price":

When you charge a price that is too low for the product you cheat three people:

- (1) *You cheat yourself by giving your time away,*
- (2) *You cheat your fellow leather craftsman by artificially driving the prices down, and*
- (3) *You cheat the customer by making him think that he may be able to find similar prices later on.*

Andy also handed out his pricing sheet. Dig out your old sheet and see how his sheet compares to the following.

So without further comment here are some of the comments from the IILG:)

o-----o

From: "Gregory A. Gaub"
<flux@snapbag.com>

Pricing is the hardest thing. I actually had a hard time setting my prices that high, since I enjoy making the stuff so much, it's hard for me to ask much more than the cost of materials. But then again, people tell me that the prices I "have" set are low, considering that everything is hand made from scratch.

You'll find that the only people who can truly help you decide on the best price is yourself. How much do you feel comfortable asking for, and does that amount give you enough profit?

One of the "formulas" I learnt in a marketing class:

Materials + Labor x 2 = Wholesale price
Wholesale x 2 = Retail price

Wholesale is how much you would expect to get from a store that sells your work, and retail is how much the consumer should be paying (whether you sell it yourself or through a store/gallery). I've found that the prices resulting from that equation are entirely out of line, but that's because that formula is geared towards people who are mass producing (cranking them out as fast as possible), NOT for people like us who are hand crafting everything individually and customized. Unless you only pay yourself \$1 per hour for your labor, the cost is prohibitive to consumers.

That's why I say it's an issue of how much you want versus how much people will pay. Since I have other things to do, I can ask high prices and "take what I can get". If I were actually trying to make a living, I would develop a few items that I can make well and quickly, come up with a fair price for them, and "push" them on my web site.

o-----o
From: Rosaddlery
<Rosaddlery@aol.com>

No matter where you go to have work done, they charge you for doing it, and, they are doing it to make a profit. The mechanic, when repairing your car, does not do it for free or even for a reduced price. He has the flat rate book he can refer to determine the number of hours it is supposed to take to perform this or that operation and what rate to charge. The same is for doctor or dentist you go to. So, why are we afraid to charge what we are worth? Aren't our skills worth something?

I do not do a lot of small items, mainly saddles, harnesses and repairs to same, but when I do get an order for a hand tooled belt, for example, many people feel they should be able to get it for less than they would pay in a department store or western store. Why? The western store normally doesn't even stock hand made items, but is selling a mass produced product that people will pay a high dollar for because it has some high faluting name attached to it. Yet, each of us, who tools, is putting a part of ourselves in the project. An artist does not sell his or her painting cheap, so why should we sell out leather goods cheap?

I, a long time ago, decided that if my time was not worth what I was making an hour working for the insurance company I retired from, then, I would not try to sell leather items of my own making. I have a sign posted that the flat labor charge is a minimum of \$15.00 per hour. If they are not willing to pay that price, then, they are not going to get my product. Do not sell yourself short. We are artists and should be compensated as such. You only hurt yourself in the end if you under charge.

o-----o
From: "Karlheinz Reichl"
<kreichl@sprynet.com>

I also agree full with your statement on prices. I just started my leather business (out of my home) about one year ago, and feel allot of the times somehow uncomfortable with pricing my items. There is

a lot of truth in your letter and I think I will try to go by those guidelines. I find that people that do not appreciate good quality handmade items will always think that some of our prices are outrages, but they will learn, sooner or later what they are getting for the price, they are willing to pay.

o-----o
From: rvaneman@wt.net (Rick Van Eman)

Another problem we have around here (most of Texas) is that state prisoners are allowed to make and sell handcrafted billfolds, belts, etc. though the prison store and/or to friends of friends. They are allowed to buy at wholesale rates, and sell cheap. They keep all the profits to buy whatever they're allowed to buy in prison.

Out here in the free world, I have to compete with those guys all the time. People won't buy from me, even though my crafts may be of higher quality and more personalized. When I ask why, they say they can get it cheaper from a prisoner.

So, Like you, Steve, I decided not to sell common items as my mainstream. I like to give them away as incentives to my upcoming leather art items or trade for something I need.

In a way, this unfair competition has made me more creative. I am not bogged down with orders for the "same old things". I have more fun making things that people wouldn't normally associate with hand made leather crafts.

o-----o
From: mriley <mriley@aub.com>

I agree a lot with Ron, Doc, Steve, etc. on this pricing thing, but would like to spout off for awhile about my own notions & ideas. First off, if you want to make money with leathercraft & really enjoy doing it, go for it. As Ron says, your mechanic doesn't mind charging for his work, & there is no shortage of mechanics or anything else, for that matter. There ain't no easy run. Here in California I don't see any competition from prisoners like you do in TX. but we do

have tons of imports from Taiwan, China, etc. It's amazing what you can buy for a few bucks, that will hang together long enough for people to get tired of it & want something new. Don't try to compete with the run of the mill stuff. Here are some things I am learning.

People want things that are different. As someone else already said: be creative — research, brainstorm, etc. If you like it, so will someone else. Factor in some common sense, though. There are people who will part with their money for quality, & originality, & knowing who made it. Mark your work. Also, when you take your work to craft fairs, farmers markets, cowboy shoots, rodeos, etc., DO something. While it might be hard to set up to do tooling, lace up things. Use a stitching pony if you have one, or just in your lap. Braid things, even if it ain't your thing. People will be impressed. It shows you are the maker, not just an importer. It gets their attention. When you get people to buy your interesting things, they will start coming to you for wallets & belts, etc. also. It's a matter of educating them to quality & custom items. They will be a whole lot prouder of your things than cheap stuff.

I think two of the most important things are quality, & service. Service is easy. Just do what you say you will do, when you say you will do it. Don't quote an unrealistic delivery time just to get a job. Be realistic. Quality is the biggie. Good enough should not be in your vocabulary. Even if you are a raw beginner, take the time to do the best you possibly can, even if it takes a lot longer than it should. How come there is never time to do it right but there is always time to do it over? Learning to be real careful & methodical will pay off in the long run. There is no detail so small that you can rush it. Leads to bad habits, which are hard to overcome. I try to make my edges real smooth & consistent. This allows me to mark my sewing or lacing lines good. A wavy edge throws every thing off. A nicely finished edge shows quality. Also, the finish you put on the product can make a big difference. An item with no stamping or tooling at all can still show a lot of quality. Something tells me I ought to shut up fer now.

"It ain't what you got but how you use it that counts"

o-----o

From: Filagreer
<Filagreer@aol.com>

I agree whole heartily with your comment. Now if we could educate the public a little more, as I am trying to do. I have Mexico to contend with and people thing nothing of spending a few bucks that will only last them a very short time. My neighbor went down there and bought a purse and brought it back to show me. The leather was paper thin and backed with stencil paper. The lining was very thin also. I finally had to tear the junky one apart and remake her one like it. Now she is strutting around better than a Peacock, showing everyone what a custom made purse should look like.

o-----o

From: Aljan31209
<Aljan31209@aol.com>

Larry—I, too, have to contend with a lot of things coming over the border from Mexico. One of our tourist trap areas in town carries a lot of things from over the border. They sell these little western saddle purses made from REALLY BAD leather. A friend of mine had one and when it got wet from rain, it smelled of urine!!! I tell a lot of my customers that my stuff was NOT made in Mexico and that I make all of my finished products myself. I think some of the people in our area are starting to get an idea of what is quality, but it sure takes a long time to educate them. That is one thing our leather guild is trying to achieve — education.

o-----o

From: "David T."
<moongazer@nidlink.com>

I must admit my guilt when it comes to pricing my stuff too low. I'm more than a bit embarrassed to charge what I really think my work is worth. Mostly I make things to give as gifts or for my own enjoyment. I do try to charge a fair price though. As I do more work, I'm also developing a good rule of thumb for my hourly rate.

I also have to agree with Martin (Quoted below) that doing your best is important. The thing I have learned recently is that the edges make ALL the difference! I look at something I did that I didn't bevel and slick the edges vs. something I did and the difference is just amazing. Take the extra few minutes to run an edge beveler. They aren't THAT expensive for decent ones from Leather Factory or Tandy and to slick the edges.

I've slicked them with water and/or beeswax (Using a round plastic slicker, the creaser on a plastic bone folder) with gum trag. (You didn't really think I would try to spell that did you?) and canvas, and with edge coat. Since I tend to prefer the natural oiled leather look I tend to stay with plain water to slick, then coat with gum trag. Then I oil the whole piece with neatsfoot and then tan-kote. It makes for a really durable and beautiful finish.

Do the edges, its like putting frosting on a cake!

o-----o

From: Filagreer
<Filagreer@aol.com>

I have found a good slicker that works real well and it is pretty cheap. It is those wooden paint stirrers. Man oh man do I get a real shiny edge, it is almost like a mirror.

o-----o

From: "Karlheinz Reichl"
<kreichl@sprynet.com>

Ron, you are so right about this. Here is another thing that I have trouble with; I saw a Tandy store sell some of those mass produced belts and roper wallets. (Correct me if I am wrong, those belts and wallets where from "NOCONA". They sure look mass produced to me.) I know it's a free market, but I think its ironic that a store that makes profit from us leatherworkers sells items from our big "competitors" (-not necessarily competitors in quality!)

OK, just wanted to get that of my mind.

o-----o

From: Rosaddlery
<Rosaddlery@aol.com>

You know why the leather smelled like urine? The reason is that some of the tanneries in Mexico use urine as a tanning agent. Another piece of info, for those not in the know, is that genuine morocco leather is tanned using guano, (I believe that is how it is spelled), or in other words, pigeon poop. Read in a book that in one of the countries in the Middle East, only students are allowed to clean up the poop from around the city buildings and that they sell it to the tanneries.

o-----o

From: jim doubler
<jdoubler@sprintmail.com>

I once read an article on pricing leatherwork.

When you tell the customer the price and he turns pale and leaves the price is too high.

When you tell them the price and he hands over the money, the price is too low.

When you tell them the price and he turns pale, mumbles and then hands over the money, then the price is just right!

o-----o

From: "Karlheinz Reichl"
<kreichl@sprynet.com>

Just a story that happened to me:

Last year I went to my first (and so far last) "cowboy gathering" where I had a booth. The second day, this lady comes by and shows a lot of interest for one of my handmade belts. We talk a little and I asked where she got the dress that she wore. (She wore a leather western dress on that I thought I had seen in a magazine before) she told me where she got it (I think it was Colorado) but I can't remember which company it was. (Sorry). I only remember it was one of those "big name" companies. However, she had paid \$4500 for the dress. Back to my belt, she asked me how much it cost. I told her that I wanted \$55.00 for it. She got that really shocked look on her face, and she said that she thought this was just to high of a price, she would pay for that belt for



**Design from "Ornaments-Designs"
by K.J. & M. Placek**

that price she could buy a "brand name". Even my argument that the belt was hand tooled, etc. did not change her mind. She than asked me if I would sell it for \$25.00 I don't want to print here what I told her, but I can tell you I did not sell her that belt! For a long time I wasn't sure if I shouldn't have just made the sell, but after reading all you're opinions on pricing etc. I'm sure I did the right thing and I feel good about it!

o-----o
From: CSchlim <CSchlim@aol.com>

\$55.00! The last belt I made was for \$200. Me thinks you price too low. Figure the hours you took — tooled or stamped? Remember that you are not doing this for less than minimum wage! The \$200 belt was a commemorative belt with scenes of the man's working life all around the belt. It was a retirement gift. No problem with the price.

o-----o
**From: Cowcutter
<Cowcutter@aol.com>**

\$55.00! If that was a carved belt, seems a bit low to me too. I keep a good quality

Chambers roller-tooled belt around the shop so my customers can compare hand carving with the mass-produced belts on the market. Not everyone can afford a Rolls Royce; I suggest to them that if they're just looking for the "cowboy" look, go out and buy an off-the-rack, mass-produced item. Thousands of those belts are made each day and there is a large market for them, however, if someone wants a customized, handcrafted item, then they should expect to pay quite a bit more.

o-----o
**From: Rosaddlery
<Rosaddlery@aol.com>**

Speaking only for my pricing, and myself I do not have a set price for

belts, etc. My price depends upon what they want on the belt in the way of a design. Also, if they can be content with a standard pattern, such as one of Tandy's craftaid patterns, or if they want me to do a design for them. Another thing to take into account, is the quality of your own work. How does it stand up to the work of other craftsman? Is your work better, or, perish the thought, worse? Just some food for thought.

o-----o
From: Thomas Keach <thombar@alpha-omega.net>

Heinz's belt may have been priced exactly right. Really depends on the amount of labor he has in it. To some degree the skill of the artist is also a factor as is their reputation. I would imagine you under priced your belt - same scene if it was done by Al Stohman. ;-) So there are a lot of factors that enter into the pricing of any of our work. My point is each artist, to some degree has to decide what s/he is comfortable with earning per hour, figure materials, add a profit, consider what the article is - you can't get \$10 per hour doing key fobs no matter how much time

they take you. But you should be able to get twice that doing a saddle.

o-----o
**From: Cowcutter
<Cowcutter@aol.com>**

FYI, I believe one of our members (BootsHem@aol.com) does make footwear. I have seen pics of some of his other work, VERRRY NICE! BTW Boots - - take a look at the May issue of THSN, good info for your stitcher search.

When one of my customers goes into shock after a price quote, I remind them that it cost the cow more than that! I also guarantee that our leatherwork will last them longer than it lasted the cow

o-----o
**From: WESTLETR
<WESTLETR@aol.com>**

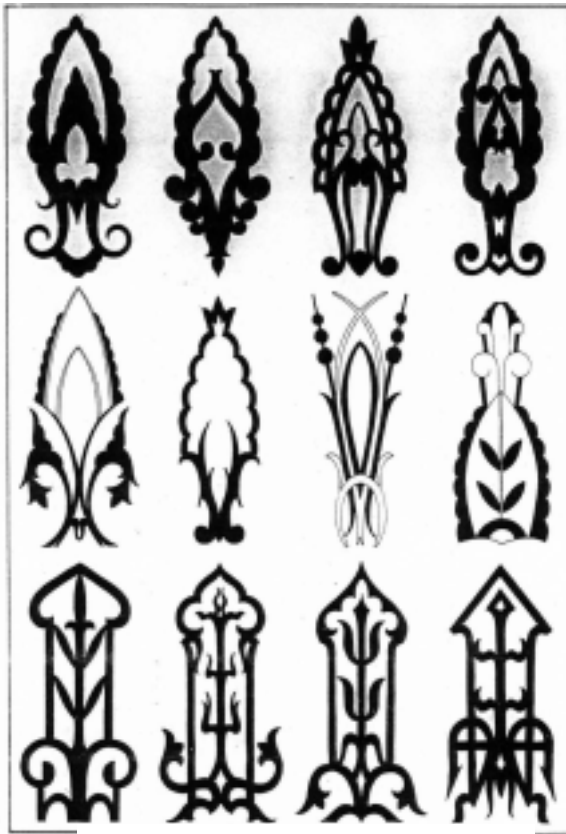
Just a thought on the pricing thing. On the back of my business cards I have a little saying that a old horse shoer gave me a long time ago, and it goes like this:

I have no quarrel with the man who charges less for this work, for only he knows what his deeds and knowledge are worth, for mine is the knowledge and time passed down through time, from the father to the son and beyond. When the times comes for my work to be judged it will be by masters that have come before me.

o-----o
From: Cyborgs <Cyborgs@aol.com>

She's willing to pay a commercial company \$4500 for a dress, but won't pay an artisan \$55 for a handmade belt. Typifies the warped sensibility that the general public has.

I had an experience once with someone like that. Picked up one of my very intricate belts and dropped it once he noticed the \$75 price tag. After suggesting he handle things with more care unless he wished to purchase it, he commented that he could get a belt like that at Gibraltar Trade Center. Which is a local flea market, a very LARGE one. I told him to have a good trip to Gibraltar and say Hi to a friend of mine there that I do custom sword sheaths for. He turned to me and



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by K.J. & M. Placek

stated that was no way to treat a customer. To which I replied, "you're not a customer, you're a critic, I can treat critics any way I'd like." He humphed and left. The lady watching the entire exchange bought not only the belt, but also several hundred dollars worth of other items. Price your wares fairly and stick to your values. Nice thing about leather, it's not going to spoil on the shelf.

o-----o
From: LthrWrk
<LthrWrk@aol.com>

The mention of a flat rate book. I am gonna make one and put it together to look like a published piece. For the person that goes into shock simply take out the book — with HUGE letters on the front tooled of course: "Leather Flat Rates"

o-----o
From: Rosaddlery
<Rosaddlery@aol.com>

Since I am primarily a saddlemaker, your one comment prompts this response.

I have been charging \$400.00 to do a full-carved design on a saddle, (that is in addition to my basic saddle price, which has been \$1250.00). I now find, after viewing many of the web sites of saddle makers in the western half of the country, that I may be cheating myself. I find that most of them who are on the web are charging \$800.00 to \$1,000.00 for a full carved design and are getting \$1,650.00 to \$2,200.00 for a basic saddle, and some of them admit to only having been making saddles for 4 to 6 years. Here I am, building them for over 35 years. Guess I've spouted enuff.

o-----o
From: "R.WILSON GROVE"

<bobgrove@erols.com>

I was not going to get into this, but you all are right. We need to stand firm and charge what our product(s) are worth. I will share this with you. A few weeks ago a friend came to me and asked me to make him a guitar strap. Knowing him for years I knew he was looking for something for nothing. So I told him that if he really wanted a handmade strap that I would be more than happy to make him one, that the prices started a \$100. But, If you did not want to put that much into one I suggest you go to the music store and start there. He said "G— D— that much I believe I will look for one at the store". A few days later he came back for a visit and advised that any guitar strap that look decent at the music store was \$49.95 and it had no tooling on it, just black leather with two (2) ranger type buckles on each end. After some discussion he decided on a fully hand carved (western floral) strap with his initials on it. The price \$175.00 unlined and \$200 lined. He advised that he wanted it lined but he wanted a break. He wanted it for

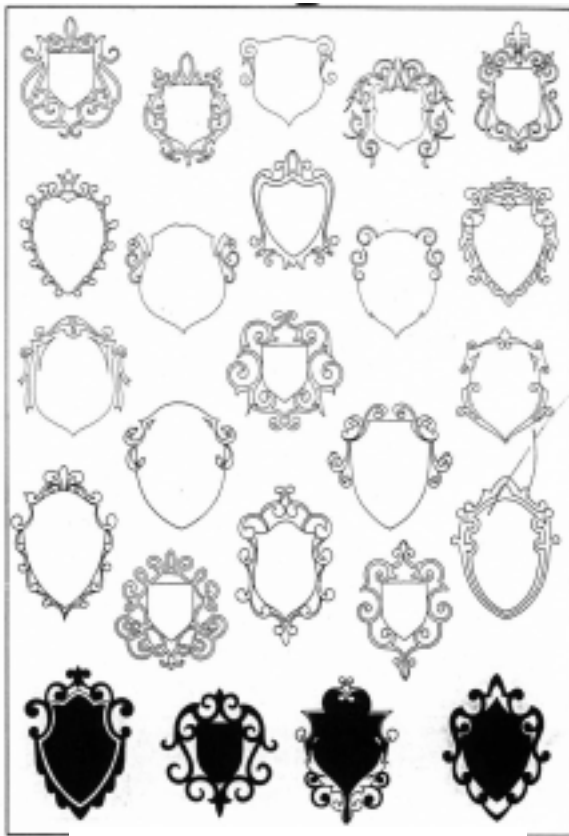
\$175. I said I am giving you a break. The lined version is normally \$15 higher. But if you want it for \$175 I will tell you what we can do. You can look the scrap bin over and find a piece or two that will work and I will show you how to sew it on. A great deal for you. You get a free lesson plus you can tell people that you helped in making it. Or I will line it with one piece (none scrap) for \$200. He chose the \$200 version and was very pleased.

I take the attitude that if you want my work than you have to pay what it is worth. This may have started off as a hobby years ago but it has grown to more than that now. Leather cost it not the same as it was 30 years ago and I for one cannot afford to give it away nor can I afford to give my time away. When people advise that they can get it cheaper some where else, I encourage them to go get it. It saves me time from having to sit down to do it. I take pride in my work and it will be right when it is completed. I take the same pride and hard work in a wallet or belt as I do in making a saddle. I consider my time valuable. You guys charge a base price of \$15 per hour. That is good. I advise my customer base that the hourly rate is \$20 per hr. I adjust from that depending on the difficulty value of the project. I have some friends and family that hang around and many of the simple projects are past onto them where I can charge a lesser hourly rate and past on some bucks to them and a saving to the customer. That allows me more time to do the more serious projects. However if the customer insist on me doing the entire project than they must pay the going rate.

o-----o
From: LthrWrk
<LthrWrk@aol.com>

OK... I don't want no criticism here because some of this might be controversial. Some mighty damn fine leather crafters in this guild so not trying to step on toes. Ya know I am really new at this, but part of this in tongue in cheek.

I would really like actually doing this — putting a Flat Rate Book together of some



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sort. The idea was that if a shocked customer sees something "published" they usually don't scoff so much.

Gonna need some input here. Since I don't make "everything":

Minimum Hourly Rate. \$18.50

Materials \$12.00 SqFt. Minimum 1/2 SqFt

Design, Tooling on any items Multi-lication Factors.

Novice Crafter... A \$5.00/hr

Semi Skilled... (has not learned to finish edges yet) \$8.00/hr

Skilled... (Finished edges, high gloss and Smooth) \$12.00/hr

Experienced Skilled (Tooling has 'depth and definition, lifelike', Carving is rounded, beveling has no waves, edging is 'perfect'. \$18.50/hr.

Apprentice Master... Add to the above.... the kind of work that jumps out and 'grabs' even the Masters. Someone who is setting trends. hmmm I guess that would be Peter??? Rates become \$25-50Hr....

Master Leathercraftsman Unlimited \$\$\$/hr. The likes of Al Stohlman, Bill Boyd... Not only are they recognized by the best of the best.... they also taught and shared so much.

I know a lot of people are just making items that are not tooled. Just stamped... so that should be very different.

Comments and constructive criticism is welcome. Open or private — and see what I can consolidate.

o-----o

From: mriley <mriley@aub.com>

A couple signs I've seen here & there, for anyone who hasn't seen them.

Labor rates:
\$20.00 /Hr.
If customer watches, \$25.00 /Hr.
If customer helps, \$30.00 /Hr.
&

"If you want it bad you get it bad, & the worse you want it, the worse you get it."

o-----o

**From: "Randal G. Stone"
<stone856@gte.net>**

As a novice leathercraftsman, I priced my goods by taking the price of the kit and doubling it. For instance, if someone wanted a checkbook cover, and Tandy charged \$7.95 for the kit, I charged \$16.00 for the finished checkbook, even if I cut all my own parts and didn't buy the kit. This didn't include any tooling, but I always threw in initials for free. A simple basketweave design or a small-tooled design would send the price up to \$20.00. More tooling, lacing, conchos,

etc. would all add to the final cost.

Now that I have gained a little experience, I see that I have been giving people some real bargains, and that I need to increase my prices to reflect my skill level. My problem is; "How much to increase my prices?" A flat rate book sounds like a great idea to me, but since we are an Internet-based guild, how about starting out with a flat rate web page? Let's get it out there for the whole world to see, so that they can see just what good leather is worth.

If you want to try this, send me your ideas on rates and I will edit them into a web page and then submit it to the guild officers to see if they want to host it on the IILG's site. If not, I can host it for those who may still want to make use of it.

I'm not trying to steal Charles' idea, I just think it's such a good idea that I don't want to see it die before it can get published. You could think of this as a "market-test" to work the bugs out. Besides, Not all leathercrafters have a computer in their shop, and I believe most customers would respond best to a print copy anyway.

o-----o

**From: Daniel Webster
<dwebster@helius.com>**

I have read this thread about pricing of wares with enjoyment and much interest. I have not done enough selling of my products to really make a good comment about the issue. Most of my stuff has been given away or if I sold it, the price was rather high. Once the price was agreed upon the price stuck and I would be the one to lower it if the quality was not up to what it should be. It didn't happen often.

My comments are from an economist's point of view. The price of an item or service should be the price that the market will bear. If you can sell a plain belt for \$100 then do so. If you sell the same belt for \$25 then you may want to be prepared to make a lot of them because the price will probably generate the demand for more. You may not make much money, but you will sell a lot. This is the



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concept behind the Wal-Mart and K-Mart type of stores. Embossed belts are cheap to make and get sold cheaply as well. Quality is seldom a factor in the pricing equation.

In other businesses that I have been involved with the price of an item was the price of purchase + 40%. Because the articles we make start from scratch, the pricing model is usually Cost of Materials + 40-50% for wholesale and another 40-50% added on for retail. The 40-50% markup to get the wholesale price should cover all of the time; taxes and overhead needed to create the product. The Cost of Materials has nothing to do with the price that you charge for your time, but it does include all of the dies, stitching, lacing and small pieces.

For some of us, this type of pricing would cause us to do well while others who are newer and less experienced would go broke very fast. Notice, however, that the product should never be sold at wholesale to the final buyer. You are then the wholesaler and the retailer in this sce-

nario. Selling at retail should give you a markup of 80-100%+ increase over the Cost of Goods. Again this model may not produce the price that we "feel" we need to make for our talent and service.

Because our art is exactly that, an art, the pricing becomes very subjective. I personally am a skinflint and try for any bargain that I can get. When it comes to buying art I am hard pressed to fork over a lot of money for something that just sits on a table or hangs on a wall unless I really like it (or my wife does) or I know that it will be enjoyed by others who will see it. However, when I am looking for utility, bargain hunt-

ing takes on a new meaning. I then look for quality as well as price and will pay more for the quality if I must.

I recognize that I may just be rambling on and stating the obvious, but I felt like maybe I could add something to the discussion. If you are not selling product because the price is too high for the buyer, you may be marketing in the wrong market. If you sell your product too fast and can't keep up with the requests, then you may be pricing your product too low and need to make a change. Many businesses have died because of overcharging and undercharging. It is always a guessing game.

I do like the flat rate sheet idea. I personally think that the prices should be given with a range from high to low and an average of all pricing. This would help those who sell very few products, or are new to leather working, to price our products fairly for our competitors, our customers, and ourselves.

o-----o
From: "Randal G. Stone"
<stone856@gte.net>

I have permission from Chuck to work on the idea of a flat rate book, and one of the first things I need to do is establish skill levels, and the effect each skill level will have on pricing. My ideas are:

1) Novice: a beginner, just learning. Still has to refer to the instructions. Still mostly assembling kits. Assembly/tooling often crude.
-20% of the flat rate.

2) Skilled: still learning. Still refers to instructions occasionally. Still assembles some kits, but starting to cut most of his/her own pieces. Assembly seldom shows faults, tooling lacks smoothness. Relies almost entirely on ready-made cutting and tooling patterns.
-10% of the flat rate.

3) Craftsman: still learning, but seldom needs to refer to instructions to complete a project. Cuts almost all of his/her own pieces. Assembly sound, tooling smooth and shows good depth. Starting to design his/her own cutting and tooling patterns. May be teaching the less skilled. Should be establishing a reputation locally. No adjustment to the flat rate.

4) Master Craftsman: teaches others. Creates goods completely from scratch. Assembly faultless, tooling smooth and consistent, outstanding depth. Creates patterns for others. Well known locally, starting to be known nationally. Published in one or more trade magazines. People far and wide commission work from you.
+20% of flat rate

5) Grand Master: others seek you out to teach. Items held up, as an example of the way things should be. Work is outstanding in all areas. You write the instructions for others to follow. You design patterns for others to use. Known Internationally. Published in all the trade magazines. 1 or more how-to books published with your name on the cover. People collect your work.
+50% and more of the flat rate

Please read these over and let me know what changes you would make. I'm just

working off the top of my head here and may be way off. If I am, please let me know.

o-----o
From: Cyborgs <Cyborgs@aol.com>

Well, here's mine:

Prototype work: \$90.00 per hour 4-hour minimum

Custom Tooling: \$45.00 per hour or by quote

Custom Finishing: \$35.00 per hour (this is on already tooled or embossed items)

Free estimates, all other work by quote.

o-----o
From: "David T." <moongazer@nidlink.com>

Normal Project (One I have a pattern for already) no tooling or simple stamp: \$20/hr

Custom Project (Requires pattern development/possible prototypes): Bid by project, but I normally figure on at least \$15/hr. If I screw up and have to redo work I eat that time. Custom Tooling on normal project: \$30/hr tooling time.

On all my projects I provide free repairs for any defect in workmanship for the life of the product. I do charge for repairs due to abuse, neglect, old age (Such as worn lacing, stitching, etc.) I'll also clean, buff and apply oil or conditioner to a project at no cost if it is brought in to me. (Saves on the repair costs and makes for good customer service!) Besides, this keeps people coming back and seeing your new items in progress. You'd be amazed at how many sales that make for a minor investment of time and a little saddle soap.

Family rates: Materials cost plus reasonable fee so I don't get taken for granted. (\$40 normally) Of course the family rate usually means someone is subsidizing me so I can try out something neat and new. No guarantee on the final product!

o-----o
From: "Gregory A. Gaub" <flux@snapbag.com>

In case no one else noticed, or if this is of

interest, Pike's Peak Saddlery, Inc. markets a publication called "How to Establish Prices for the Saddle Maker". They have an ad in the LCSJ (page 25 this issue) which says "a product pricing system for the part-time or full-time saddle maker and leather crafter". He asks \$39 +\$3 shipping.

o-----o
From: "Randal G. Stone" <stone856@gte.net>

Howdy! As most of you know, I'm working on Charles' idea for a flat-rate book for leathercrafters. Now I need a little more input from you. I need to know the time it takes you to complete the following items (to the nearest half-hour) and where you fall on the skill level ratings (novice, skilled, craftsman, master craftsman, or grand master). Please answer as accurately as possible. The more members who answer, the more accurate the final results.

All items should be from the time you pick up the first piece of leather, to the time it is completely finished and ready to go out the door.

Plain men's billfold. No tooling, sewn, not laced.

Plain checkbook cover. No tooling, sewn, not laced.

Plain belt, No tooling, no stitching or lacing. Edges slicked and snaps installed, keeper included.

12" of double loop lacing. Include time spent lying out and punching slits.

o-----o
From: "Randal G. Stone" <stone856@gte.net>

I counted on hand sewn, as it doesn't call for any expensive equipment. If you machine sew, you'll end up saving time, which is the reason for purchasing that expensive sewing machine in the first place, right? If

you save time, but charge the same price, that should help pay for the cost of the machine.

o-----o

Apologies for Display of Art Work without Written Permission

PSLAC and this editor of the **RawHide Gazette** sincerely apologize for using the original Northwest Indian designed Wolf picture without permission. There was no intent to use this or any other artwork for any purpose other than that example of PSLAC member techniques.

The art work will be removed from the Internet Web site as soon as my computer is set up and I have all the tools to "republish" the May 1998 RawHide Gazette issue. As they say in Japan:

"Sumimasen, -gomenasai" ("sorry").

Bob Stelmack
Hamamatsu, Japan

Far East Report:

Yours truly (back row, second from right) at Hamamatsu Air Base with Japanese AWACS DMSF (Daily Mission Support Facility) crew.

Bob & Karen
Hamamatsu, Japan

