

## *The Irrepressible*

## Gilly Cambra



It's a long story. When I called Gilley to ask if he'd be willing to be interviewed for this article somehow the range of topics included several relatives, koa logs, local politics and cesspool construction. It was fascinating, and long-winded; the man has a lot to say.

Born in Puunene Hospital in February 1934, Gilley was raised in Puunene's Camp 5. You know, near the Stables and the store? Just down the street from the big ball field and the Puunene pool? You're excused for not knowing where any of that is, it's all gone, everything but the stories.

Gilley arrived third in a family of 12 children born to third generation Portuguese immigrants. His mother, Dorothy, was valedictorian of her high school class. His father Louis was employed by HC&S for over 50 years without missing a day. He was a Luna, which was a mounted gang

boss in charge of a team of field hands. In Louis' spare time, after work and on weekends, he built houses and naturally Gilley helped. During the war years on Maui, Gilley earned extra money as a shoeshine boy to the military men. In school and afterwards he was an avid baseball player, eventually catching for the best team players Maui produced. He dived and swam in relay teams that set long-standing records. He was an amateur boxer which should come as no surprise to many who have challenged his authority. Fascinated with things that run fast Gilley spent years tinkering with motorcycles and later thoroughbred horses, but that's getting ahead of the story.

The Cambra family moved to Makawao in 1950. The familiar home, now virtually surrounded by logs and stacks of lumber, was in the rural fringes of a remote upcountry town back then. Gilley left Maui High

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## The Most Important Tool in the Shop

The most important tool in your shop could also be the most abused. While most professional woodworkers meticulously maintain their woodworking machinery, keep their chisels, saw blades and drill bits razor sharp and are careful to select the proper tool to use for each task most pay little or no attention to how they are using their bodies.

Until recently, when I was rear-ended twice within one week and suffered a whip-lash injury, I was guilty of just doing what had to be done in the shop without much thought to how my body was being affected. Often after long days in the shop I would have aches and pains and just thought it was part of life and, sad to say, part of getting older.

Now, through working with an excellent Physical Therapist, I have learnt quite a bit about body mechanics. I had an ergonomic assessment done at my shop and it revealed numerous ways I was mistreating my body and exasperating my injury.

A study of body mechanics will reveal that there are postures and movements that will protect your body especially your back and neck. There are certain movements and positions that once understood and followed

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## *The* Bulletin Board

**Meeting:** Saturday, October 10, 3:00pm, in the Hui Children's Art Building, 2841 Baldwin Ave.

**Show:** "Roots Of Inspiration" exhibit at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Schaefer Gallery. November 8 to December 23, 2009

**Show:** "Traditions: Allen, Rabold & Rea" Featured artists. Viewpoints Gallery at the courtyard, 3620 Baldwin Ave., Makawao, HI. December 12, 2009 through January 12, 2010.

## Gilly

after freshman year to work in the pineapple fields for a while. With nine sisters, most of them younger, Dad needed some help bringing in the bacon. But machinery, particularly cars and motorcycles continued to fascinate Gilley. He co-founded the Valley Isle Timing Association in 1954, which hosted the first publicly attended drag races at the old Puunene airstrip. At home, the garage became a custom machine shop handling engine repairs and modifications. There was never a sign out front but if you were looking for repair or customization to your fancy upcountry ride in the late '50s or '60s, you likely found your way to Gilley.

Gilley gave up racing cars and bikes in 1970. He and several others briefly resurrected thoroughbred horse racing at the old Maui fairgrounds track. At the peak of that 4-year stint he had 12 or 13 horses on the Makawao property. The dream was to breed a winner from stud stock leftover from the champions owned by the Maui "rich folks" who played at horse racing seriously decades earlier.

In 1980 Gilley's attention shifted to wood. At first it was just building luau tables for friends and family but the right lumber was hard to come by and expensive. Logs were there for the taking at the Makawao dump. Backyard trees were always available and then there were those huge monkey pods dying on his old Puunene stomping ground. His first milling tool was an Alaska chainsaw rig that was effective but anything but quick. By '82 Gilley had erected a Belsaw rig in the backyard powered by a Toyota car engine. I met Gilley when the concrete footings for the saw were still green. He was working on the typical challenges an amateur enthusiast encounters when all of ones information is gained through trial and error. I had been offered a commission to build a dining set out of island pine but was unable to find the necessary wood. When a Kona storm brought down a huge Japanese Black pine on my client's property I knew who to call. Gilley was on it. His handling of the tree was masterful and it gave him his first big milling job.

Over the last three decades Gilley's passion for wood and the tools to work it has steadily increased. The old garage came down 17 years ago and was replaced by a building more suitable to house his growing collection of vintage machinery. He has patiently

restored dozens of out-dated, rusting hulks gleaned from industry and school shops both here and on Oahu. The Belsaw is still running but now is powered by a far quieter 70 HP electric motor that turns finely tuned, imported blades. The band saw mill cuts a thinner kerf and an Alaska chainsaw still produces the widest, flattest slabs from the huge logs that find their way to Gilley's hands.

When I got together with Gilley for the interview we wound our way through the crowded shop to the office. Along the way he told me stories of each tool we encountered. The walls are paneled in a multitude of island woods each of which could spark a new story if I dared to ask. The story of his life, to date, is long, varied and interesting. I left knowing there was a lot more to tell.

*Peter Naramore*

## Parquetry, Marquetry, Inlay



At our last general meeting in July, Ricardo presented a brief demonstration of a wood inlay technique using veneers of contrasting color and grain. There was sufficient interest and enthusiasm for this deep topic to warrant further exploration at future meetings.

At our upcoming October meeting we will demonstrate sand shading and the double bevel cutting method. For the historically minded I have assembled the following quick retrospective.

It is generally acknowledged that very early craftsmen began to embellish utilitarian objects in order to enhance their beauty and to set their work apart from the ordinary furniture and wooden objects with inlaid materials can be traced back to the Egyptians who preserved outstanding examples in their Pharaoh's tombs. Greece became

the heir of much Egyptian culture due to consistent trade. By 500BC the introduction of iron in classical Greece quickly replaced bronze as the favored metal for all tools. This undoubtedly advanced the woodworking arts by reducing the labor necessary to create fancy inlaid work. The Romans greatly admired Greek culture and sought to imitate the beauty and skill of their surviving works, thereby perpetuating and furthering the many skills of decoration. The Islamic world provided the necessary wealth within its culture for elaborate works to be made for the aristocracy that included many inlaid materials including wood, stone, precious metals and jewels.

The craft of creating pictures in wood in a jigsaw-like fashion, as we know it, seems to have arrived in Europe with the Renaissance. By the fifteenth century Italian artisans were creating complex wooden panels with a combination of inlaid solid wood and veneer in a technique now referred to as intarsia. Individual artists were recognized and sought after by kings and heads of church. At this time the craft was an especially laborious process that was often the product of specialty shops. Woodworkers and furniture makers whose work included such an extravagancy as intarsia would likely commission a specialist. Architectural elements were more often the subject of early work. These beautiful, pictorial panels were usually surrounded by borders of inlaid veneers in a wide variety of geometric repeating or opposing patterns created with techniques similar to marquetry. A related style of woodwork known as parquetry likely evolved from this, which uses thicker pieces of wood for flooring and wall decoration. As the fame of Italian intarsia grew throughout Europe so did demand. Complex, significant works began to appear in Germany, Spain and, in time, virtually every other European country. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century France had become the leader of European culture and arts.

An important development in the production of multiple panels of marquetry was created in France and made famous in association with its most notable proponent, Andre-Charles Boulle. Using a chevalet (a fixed, horizontally mounted fret saw) a skilled artisan could create up to 20 identical panels at one time. The Boulle method would alternate multiple layers of precious material such as wood, brass, bone or tortoise shell and fit the contrasting positive

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## Marquetry

and negative shapes together for a complex, striking effect.

Marquetry was embraced by the practitioners of the Arts and Crafts movement throughout Europe and America in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Art nouveau particularly promoted the craft to its highest artistic levels with designs incorporated in organic furniture forms by luminaries such as Louis Majorelle and Emile Galle. Post WWI brought yet another major design shift throughout the world known as Art Deco. Throughout the 20's and 30's leaner, more streamlined designs prevailed which were particularly evident in furniture. Inlaid embellishments were generally more restrained but still elevated work that included them. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a renaissance of a sort to the world of studio furniture making. Our fascination with simple, easily mass produced "modern" furniture continues to prevail yet an appreciation for artistically designed pieces including marquetry have begun to appear.

For more information on marquetry and its related arts refer to the following:

Marquetry.  
Pierre Ramond  
The Taunton Press

A Marquetry Odyssey.  
Silas Kopf  
2008. Hudson Hills Press

*Peter Naramore*



## MWG Membership Application/Renewal

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

BUS. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS 1: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS 2: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, ST & ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please Remit:**

Dues (Annual \$50.00): \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL (Chk No \_\_\_\_\_): \_\_\_\_\_

Membership in the Maui Woodworker's Guild includes participation in all activities, show entires at member rates, bi-monthly meetings and newsletters and a one page display about you and your work on the MWG Website (mauiguild.com). Participation in Guild activities is expected of all members. Membership runs from February to February and is \$50.00 per year. Please include your check for the appropriate amount with this application. Mail to:

**Maui Woodworker's Guild, P.O. Box 96768, Makawao, HI 96768.**

## Tools

will become second nature and will be extremely beneficial.

Just as you would not engage in a sports activity without stretching before and after (You do stretch, don't you?) you should begin each day in the shop with properly stretching your muscles and loosening up your body.

We all know to squat to lift instead of bending over but other practices such as adjusting the height of your work surface to allow the utilization of your latissimus dorsi reduces stress in your neck muscles. It takes some time to properly adjust your work surface, but just as you take time to make a jig, it will pay dividends in the long run.

Another important principle I am trying to incorporate is to turn my whole body not twist my upper body. Keeping the spine in alignment is critical. Also, using my whole body not just my arms and shoulders is reducing fatigue and muscle overuse.

I encourage you to learn to take care of this most important tool so that you will have many pain-free years of working in your shop.

This article is not meant as medical advice. You are encouraged to consult a licensed health care professional for specifics for your particular condition or situation.

*Ricardo Vazquez*

## Custom Furniture Designers Reveal "Roots Of Inspiration"

Eighteen Hawai'i studio furniture makers have designed and built an original work for the "Roots Of Inspiration" exhibit at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Schaefer Gallery. Open from November 8 to December 23, 2009, each piece is accompanied by the story of its "root of inspiration" with written and photographic evidence. Each of these one of a kind pieces was inspired by a Hawaiian source and offers a rare glimpse into the creative process of furniture designers.

The idea for "Roots of Inspiration" came from a combination of sources, primarily a book titled "New American Furniture: The Second Generation of Studio Furniture-makers" which accompanied an exhibit conceived by Edward S. Cook Jr. The concept back in 1989 was to invite a group of renowned furniture makers to choose a piece of antique furniture from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts as a point of inspiration and to create a unique new piece. The show was successful and inspiring to many. The participants were responsible for re-starting the hand crafted one of a kind furniture movement in this country from their small, "studio" workshops.

With this idea as a springboard, the modern concept was extrapolated to one where spe-

cific Hawai'i inspiration was required. Furniture, like many art forms finds its creators consistently borrowing from past examples and unlikely origins. Hawai'i has a limited history of furniture design, much of it borrowed from European and mainland U.S. styles introduced by transplanted cabinet-makers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore the root of inspiration for the selected contributors to this event has been broadened to include anything created by man of unique Hawaiian origin. The responsibility of the entrant to document his/her work's inspiration with a written description and photograph will underscore the theme.

The woodworkers selected for this exhibit come from a wide variety of personal experience. There are approximately 8 from Maui, 5 from Oahu and 5 from the Big Island: one woman and nineteen men. All currently make their living primarily from building furniture. Their experience varies from ten to more than fifty years. Many makers have areas of specialization such as inlay, carving, turning and veneer work. All are consistently involved in the re-interpretation of familiar, useful furniture forms.

The work created for this event promises to be as unique and original as the concept. Neither artists nor curators have seen the body of work yet to be assembled at the Schaefer gallery this November. Don't miss it!

*Peter Naramore*

**Website: [WWW.MauiGuild.Com](http://WWW.MauiGuild.Com)**

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