

# SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY  
CREAMER

SAW  
DOCTOR



*I thought this month I would share with you an email I just received from a sawyer in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. You will see my answers directly following each question.*

Hi Casey. I have been sawing hardwood and softwood for over 30 years on a hand-set mill, 50-inch circle insert B style. I would like to see if you agree with me on a few observations. —Dennis

**1. Wood guides are good, but leather tacked or glued on to them is better.**

*I certainly wouldn't want the tacked-on version, and I can probably live without the glued-on version. If there is a problem, I don't want a metal tack to touch the saw. As for gluing, if there is a problem, I would worry about the heat melting the glue and leaving a deposit on the saw that would create even more heat. If you use the guides properly, good hardwood should be fine. A friend used to use osage orange wood for his guides. I imagine locust would also work well, but white oak is okay too.*

**2. Never force the saw left or right with the guide.**

*Yep, I am 100 percent with you there.*

**3. Winter shanks take a little more power and wear faster than regular shanks.**

*I disagree. Winter bits (Standall bits) do take more power than regular bits because of where the nub is, but the winter shank shouldn't draw any more power than a regular shank. It does make your gullet area slightly smaller, so if you are on the verge of plugging the gullets, that would feel like you are using more power.*

**4. Most older mills came with a collar that was too small.**

*Yep, I am with you there, too. The clamping ratio is important, but remember everything comes at a cost one way or another. If you get a bigger collar, you may have to get a bigger saw to be able to saw the same depth of cut. In that case, what have you gained? The important thing is the distance in height between the collar and the headblocks. If you have enough room to run a bigger collar without having to raise the carriage, then by all means you should run the biggest collar that will fit beneath the headblocks. On the*



*other hand, if increasing the collar diameter means raising up the carriage to clear, then you won't gain much by running a larger collar and the larger saw you would need to be able to saw the same depth of cut.*

**5. If you have flat collars, don't worry--they sawed for years with them--but tapered are better.**

*Actually, we have known for many years that tapered collars on saws, grinding wheels and anything else that is mounted on a collar, are superior. Also, keep in mind that in the old days they got along with bigger running tolerances because there was less need for optimal efficiency, simply because in the old days, profit margins were bigger. Let's also remember that there was a reason why somebody invented the planer.*

You asked, Dennis. I hope you enjoyed the answers. Remember that every opinion should have a good reason to back it up.

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**Questions about sawmills and their operation should be sent to Forum, The Northern Logger, P.O. Box 69, Old Forge, NY 13420, FAX #315-369-3736.**

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