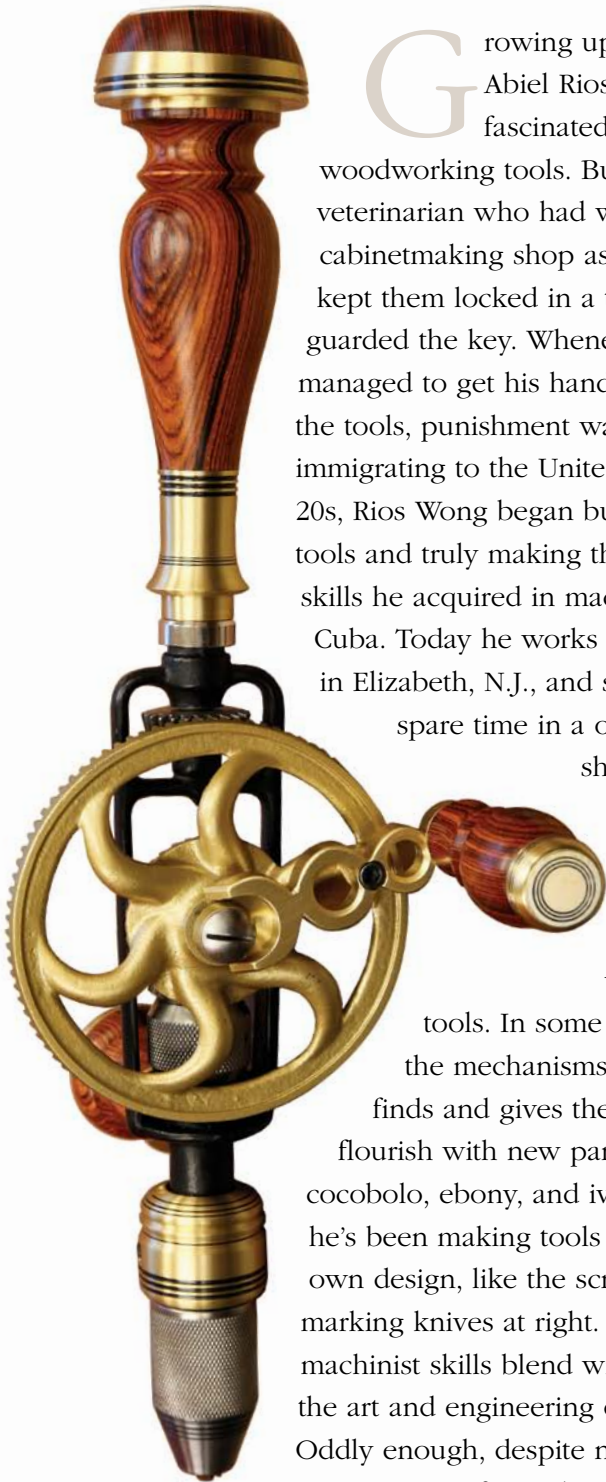


# Hand Tools—Retooled

Growing up in Havana, Abiel Rios Wong was fascinated with his father's woodworking tools. But his dad, a veterinarian who had worked in a cabinetmaking shop as a young man, kept them locked in a tool chest and guarded the key. Whenever Rios Wong managed to get his hands on the key and the tools, punishment was swift. After immigrating to the United States in his mid-20s, Rios Wong began buying beautiful old tools and truly making them his own using skills he acquired in machinist school in Cuba. Today he works as a longshoreman in Elizabeth, N.J., and spends all his spare time in a one-car garage shop crammed with machinist's equipment making and modifying woodworking tools. In some cases, he restores the mechanisms of flea-market finds and gives them an ornamental flourish with new parts in brass and cocobolo, ebony, and ivory. More recently, he's been making tools entirely of his own design, like the scratch awls and marking knives at right. As he works, his machinist skills blend with his passion for the art and engineering of centuries past. Oddly enough, despite now having made many scores of woodworking tools, he still doesn't have a chest full of his own—they get snapped up as soon as he makes them.

—Jonathan Binzen



Photos: Fred West

**How They Did It** Turn to p. 90 to see how Rios Wong makes a custom brass knob with ebony in-fill.

**Audio Slide Show** To see an audio slide show featuring many more of Rios Wong's tools, go to [FineWoodworking.com/extras](http://FineWoodworking.com/extras).