to form the handle. The box was assembled with eighth-inch rivets having a one-inch pitch.

For many of the boys it was their first exposure to metal-work. For others, it was their first use of feet and inches and all those confusing fractions, so unlike the innate simplicity of their native metric system. And for most, it was their first experience with dust pans and brooms and working alongside a total stranger from exotic land such as Nigeria or Oklahoma.

If the truth be told, a few of the toolboxes were less than spectacular when it came to workmanship. But each was built to spec. And each passed a rigorous inspection, not only from the Instructor but from the student's peers for here again, it was All or Nothing.

The resulting box was acid-etched with name of the apprentice and with the logo of the particular school. The details of the toolbox -- and of this story -- vary from school to school, with a Northrup toolbox being distinctive from a Spartan, as a Loughead differed from a Fleet. But the principle remained the same for all: With the manual arts, you learn through experience. Building your own toolbox was simply the first step on that path. But there was a far more subtle lesson being taught, one having to do with the nature of airplanes and teamwork.

Many a mechanic... and not a few executives... still have their 'apprentice box', often prominently displayed on their Trophy Wall among their photos, diplomas and other tokens of accomplishment.

How about you?

Ever used a cleco? (or know how they got their name?) Ever made a buck-head? Have you been properly introduced to Mr. Smiley?

Building the basic box is akin to building the basic