



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

www.sonomawoodworkers.com

Volume 32 Number 7

August 2012

July Meeting About Arthur Espenet Carpenter with Grif Okie, Tripp Carpenter and Kathleen Hanna



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July Meeting

By Michael Wallace

This month's meeting was all about Art Espnet Carpenter. To help us understand more about Art, the Association invited member Grif Okie, who was mentored by Art and knew him has a friend, Trip Carpenter, his son, and Kathleen Hanna, who was the curator for an exhibit of Northern California woodworkers at the Petaluma Art Museum.

Business Meeting

Prior to the meeting, the officers had a brief executive meeting. Attending were Wallace, Heimbach, Taft, Hofmann, Stroud and Lasher. The issues discussed were the upcoming show, the By-Laws rewrite committee and the budget. Bill Taft described the current preparation work for the upcoming show and submitted a budget that was more in-line with expectations. Currently, 28 individuals have thus far notified Bill that they are going to submit work for the show. Wallace attempted to force the issue of having judges give more feedback to the pieces that don't win awards. Bill resisted the idea. As the argument got to be heated, both parties decided to move on and discuss other matters. Heimbach presented a budget variance report. As is to be expected, we are doing fine in some categories and others we're not. Missing is \$500 in revenue for the extra web site gallery that a few members paid for. Attempts to collect have not borne fruit.

General Meeting

Grif Okie described his mentoring relationship with Art Carpenter. He met Art in 1972 after walking into Art's gallery in the Fillmore. While reading from a tribute that Grif wrote for him at his memorial (see next article), Grif remembered Art as a sharing individual who kept no secrets and was willing to show anyone what he was doing. He made himself available to everyone even while he was trying to get some work done. Art sold his work in stores like Gumps and in galleries and tried hard to keep his prices down. Art went into woodworking when he came west and saw work that was being done by Bob Stocksdale. Not knowing how to actually turn bowls, he built his own lathe and tools. He invented a device that would burn chips flying out of the wood and used old washing machine motors for power.

Next was Trip (Chip) Carpenter. Chip, a furniture maker in his own right, still works at the house and studio his dad built in Marin County. Trip served as the editor of the book: "Arthur Espenet Carpenter - Education of a Woodsmith". Art wrote this book over many decades. In the book, Art describes his early beginnings and his

evolution as a one of the premier woodworkers in America. Trip showed several slides from the book, and talked about his times growing up with Art as a father. Trip learned at 6 how to make items on the lathe. As he grew older, he would help his dad in the shop, and today still uses the same templates his father made. While his dad was, according to Trip, shy, he would be willing to talk to anyone. Trip writes about the many apprentices that Art had coming out to their home and shop providing him an education in woodworking. While Trip plans to continue his dad's work, he does have his own style. The book is available through the following website: <http://www.zhibit.org/espenetfurniture>. The price is \$60 and Trip says it's a limited run production. He has only a few copies left and once they are sold, that's it.

The final presenter was Kathleen Hannah. She showed a documentary about Art, some of which was done before Art passed away. She explained that she's looking for a voice over narrator, as the one she had, Gary Knox Bennet, sort went afield of the script. Our own Grif Okie is featured in the movie. A major portion of the movie is an interview with Art. He described his early history, how he came to San Francisco (furthest away from his parents in New York City) after spending time in the Navy, how he built his home (on the San Andreas fault line!) and helped to start the Baulines Craft Guild. Along the way, there are interviews with many artists who worked and studied with Art, include Deby Zito and Gary Knox Bennet. Kathleen said she's looking to get this in a finished form so it can be shown on PBS.

After the presentations were over, many attendees commented that it was a great evening. A bit out of our normal agenda, but it was a delight to learn more about Art, his work and his legacy.

Tribute to Art Carpenter

The following is a tribute to Art Carpenter written by Grif Okie in 2006.

Arthur Espenet Carpenter came to California from a stint in the Navy during World War II. He had grown up in the East and graduated from Dartmouth, but when he got to San Francisco, he saw the beautiful bowls being made by Bob Stocksdale, and was determined to make a living in a similar fashion. It was only a matter of years before he was turning out bowls and other beautiful utilitarian objects that sold up and down the California Coast and were soon included in The Museum of Modern Art. Not bad for a diminutive, feisty man whose tools were an old washing machine motor—for a lathe—and old, recycled files—for gouges and chisels.

It was only a matter of time until this hard working, creative man started making chairs, tables, desks, music stands, and his incredibly innovative “band-saw boxes.” He came up with remarkable inventions—the dovetail jig to be used with a router for making large carcass joints (now marketed by many copycat firms); peg-tables for laying out bent laminations in any shape or size (also sold by others); and an array of many art objects that are now a common part of the American woodworking lexicon. He delighted in making the most whimsical boxes and elfish knobs, using found pieces of wood or carving them to suit.

Art’s inventiveness was for a purpose—he wanted to make things in an economical way, and he also wanted to make them affordable for the average person. He had little patience for the chair that didn’t sit well, and he never believed in selling his work “for whatever the market will bear”. He had trouble raising the price of his “Wishbone Chair” to \$600, when other people were selling their chairs for twice that or more. Arthur didn’t need the fancy life—his whole living compound in Bolinas was a series of small enclosures that were beautiful and comfortable, but incredibly spare—they were not unlike camping out! But what a camp! From the moment you parked your car and looked out into the gigantic raspberry patch, to walking down the path with the purring cat wrapping your legs, you knew you were someplace special. Art would mysteriously appear out of the back of the shop to welcome (?) you. As you went into the warm shop with the wood stove creaking, you never knew if Art was happy to see you or slowed down in his busy, inventive and fun quest for the day’s goal. There was a sense of magic there, at the very center of the San Andreas Fault—you could see the swale running through his property! Everywhere you looked, there was a toy, a gem, a half-finished part—all wonderfully playful and rich-grained wooden gizmos with a story--if you could get Art to talk about them. And he would, in some moments—he was very generous of his time—but he was also kind of shy and never liked to talk too much about himself or his work. But he would help everyone who came by with their woodworking problem—kind of the original “Google for woodworkers”.

In the 1970’s Art Carpenter was the “pied piper” for a large group of willing, talented and enthusiastic young men and women who wanted to do something creative and exciting with their lives, rather than join the ranks of corporate America or commute to cubicles for an insurance firm. He inspired us all with his energetic optimism and playful spirit, kept an eye on our Baulines Crafts Guild, and, lately, showed us how to stay young when we started getting old. We are all going to miss those bushy eyebrows and twinkling eyes.

Calendar

August 25 – September 23: *Artistry in Wood Show*: See Schedule later in this *Forum* edition.

October 2: Patrick Stafford, Furniture Maker and Educator

From the Chairman

By Michael Wallace

Our annual Artistry in Wood show is only weeks away. I expect it will be another great show. I'm led to believe that many people are participating this year, so it's always great to see the variety of work that's being done.

As of this writing, it appears that I will have missed my opportunity to exhibit again. I've got a streak going of over 5 years of not showing, and, while I had every intention of doing so, my plans just didn't come together. However, there's still some time left and who knows what I'll do in the next couple of days.

A number of us have been working on changes to the By-Laws, but we were unable to complete the work in time for a vote in October. However, those who were at the officers meeting called to discuss the subject, agreed to put forth a transition set of changes that will need to be voted on by the general membership. These changes will eliminate some elected positions and turn them into appointed positions instead. An example is the Forum editor. I know of no other organization requiring that such a position be elected; ditto for Postmaster. We'll be putting out the specifics soon.

Now that we're heading into the latter part of the year, we need to start planning our monthly meeting shows for next year. Is there anyone or any topic that you would like to see? Contact me or Art Hoffmann. It would be great if we could get an early start on this, as people's schedules often get booked early.

That's all I have for this month. I'm going out to the shop now to see if there's something that will inspire me.

See you at the next meeting!

2012 Artistry in Wood Show

By Bill Taft

The 24th Annual Artistry in Wood Show at the Sonoma County Museum opens on **August 25th**. Show Entry Day is **Wednesday, August 15th, 9 AM to 4 PM**. If you wish to enter the Show and cannot deliver your entry on Entry Day, please contact Bill Taft at wptaft@aol.com or call Bill at (707) 794-8025 to make other arrangements. Please note that the entry deadline is **Wednesday, August 15th, at 4 PM**. For those entering work in the Show, Entry Forms are included in this issue of the Wood Forum. Entry Forms can also be found on the SCWA website, www.sonomawoodworkers.com. For anyone entering for the first time, just bring your work and your paperwork to the museum on Entry Day and we will take care of getting it submitted. Any questions that you may have will be answered at that time.

The Annual Show Awards Meeting with the Judges is **Wednesday, August 22nd, at 7 PM**. This is the premier meeting of the year; an opportunity to view all of the entered work and listen to the judges who will be announcing the awards and giving us their comments.

The Artistry in Wood Show runs from **August 25th**, through **September 23rd**, at the Sonoma County Museum. The Museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays, from 11 AM to 5 PM.

Artistry in Wood 2012 Show Schedule

- **Entry Day: Wednesday, August 15th, 9 AM to 4 PM**
- **Judging and Annual Show Awards Meeting: Wednesday, August 22nd, 7 PM**
- **Museum Members Show Preview: Friday, August 24th, 5 PM to 7 PM**
- **Show Opening Day: Saturday, August 25th**
- **September SCWA Meeting at the Museum: Tuesday, September 11th**
- **Show Closing: Sunday, September 23rd**
- **Pick-up day for all entries: Monday, September 24th, 9 AM to 4 PM**

Black Palm: Hardwood or Grass?

By Mike Burwen

The subject of black palm came up at a recent meeting I attended. Some people had never heard of it, while others claimed to know it. Since I wasn't familiar with it, I decided to do a bit of research to learn what it is all about. Herein is the result:

Black Palm comes from a very large variety of palm (trees grow >100'). It is native to Southeast Asia, but apparently the only commercial sources are Queensland, Australia and South America. It is also grown in Africa for its edible fruit. Although it is a big tree, the trunks are filled with a soft pulp and only the outer layers are suitable for woodworking. These layers are only 2" – 3" thick resulting in pieces that make for very narrow lumber and small turning blanks.

Palm trees are monocots, related to grass and corn. Botanically speaking, they are not anything like what we normally consider as hardwoods. Nevertheless, black palm can make for some very attractive pieces with a pronounced grain pattern. In the west, it is often used to make pool cues, pens, knife handles and other small objects that benefit from its striking appearance. In areas where it is readily available, it is sometimes used as flooring.



Black Palm Wood Flat Grain



Black Palm End Grain

The end grain is nothing like that of normal hardwood. It is a uniform texture stippled with black dots (monocots), and is prized for novelty items.

It works like many tropical hardwoods. With a typical specific gravity of .68 - .77, it is relatively dense, and some pieces can have a specific gravity over 1.0. The wood is hard on tools and is described as “tricky” to work. Some craftsmen recommend treating it with a hardener or sanding sealer to give it a more homogeneous density and reduce tearout. The wood takes a fine polish.

Black palm prices are typical of exotics. US mail order sources get up to \$30/bf for lumber, but small bowl and spindle turning blanks are more common than lumber. A 1.5” x 1.5” x 12” spindle blank sells for about \$5. The wood is also available as veneer which sells for around \$15/sf. The veneer is sliced from glued-up boards to obtain a reasonable width.

If you want to try it and can’t easily find a local source, a Google search will turn up several online sources.



Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

ARTISTRY IN WOOD 2012
Sonoma County Museum
August 25 - September 23, 2012

Official Entry Form

Contact Information

Name*: _____ Company* (if any): _____
 Street: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone # Days: _____ Eves: _____ Email: _____

Submission Description (Use page 2 of this form for additional entries)

Title of Piece*: _____ Division*: Amateur Open Display
 Category*: Furniture Turning Art Miscellany

Insurance value: \$ _____ Approximate Size of Piece: _____

Materials and finishes used*: _____

Artist's statement*: _____

* These items may appear on the label accompanying your entry. Additional information about your piece may be submitted on this form but may be subject to editing by the museum staff.

Eligibility:

- Artist must be a SCWA member (Non-members must join SCWA at annual rate of \$25)
- All pieces submitted for judging must bear the name or names of persons involved in their fabrication
- All pieces will be juried into the show by the SCWA Guild in accordance with Jury Guidelines
- Display only pieces are ineligible for awards
- Drop off Date & Time: Wednesday August 15, between 9am & 4pm
- Pick up Date & Time: Monday, September 24, between 9 am and 4 pm
- Mail this form and payment to: SCWA, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402
 (or bring this form with your piece at drop off)

Quantity	Amount
Total	\$

Entry Fees Large pieces: \$20 for the first piece, \$15 each additional piece
 Small pieces (<18"): \$15 for the first piece, \$10 each additional piece
 Display pieces: \$10 for up to five pieces

I hereby loan the aforementioned piece(s) to the Sonoma County Museum for the exhibit, "Artistry in Wood 2012 from August 15 – September 24, 2012. All pieces in the show are insured for fire, theft, negligence and intentional misuse. Sonoma County Woodworkers Association and Sonoma County Museum will take all reasonable precautions to safeguard the work on display.

Signature: _____ Date _____

About the Association

The *Sonoma County Woodworkers Association* is a 32-year old association of more than 100 professional and amateur woodworkers. Monthly meetings are held at member's shops and other venues to share experiences, ideas and techniques, and to hear well-known woodworkers discuss their work. Each year, the Association sponsors the *Artistry in Wood* juried exhibit at the Sonoma County Museum at which members are invited to submit pieces. Annual dues of \$25 cover membership for one calendar year

Wood Forum is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles, notices, photographs, announcements and comments for inclusion in the publication. Advertisements are accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch. Submit your entries to:

Michael Burwen, Editor
Email: mike@pamg.com
Phone: (707) 658-2844

Officers of the Association

Chairman	Michael Wallace	824-1013
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Guild Director	Larry Stroud	823-1775
Artistry in Wood	Bill Taft	794-8025
Librarian	Dennis Lashar	823-8471
Forum Editor	Michael Burwen	658-2844

Membership Application

I would like to join the SCWA to meet other people interested in the craft, the art and the business of fine woodworking. Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$25 for the annual dues. I understand that this fee entitles me to attend monthly meetings and to receive the Wood Forum newsletter by email or via the SCWA's Web site.

I am enclosing an additional \$15 to receive the Forum by regular mail.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ Address 2 _____

City, Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Please send check and completed application to: Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

www.sonomawoodworkers.com



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PO Box 4176

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