



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

www.sonomawoodworkers.com

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July 2012

June Meeting John Economaki, Tool Designer Extraordinaire



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July Meeting Notice

By Art Hoffmann

Who: Tripp Carpenter, Kathleen Hanna, Grif Okie on Arthur Espenet Carpenter

Where: Tom Segura's Shop, 2058 Laguna Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

When: Tuesday, July 10, 7:00 PM

Our next meeting will be held at the shop of Tom Segura. If you want to sit down, please bring your own chair, as Tom does not have many available.

This meeting will be devoted to exploring the life and work of Art Espenet Carpenter, one of the grand old men of California woodworking who died five years ago. The presenters will include his son, Tripp Carpenter, our own Grif Okie, and Kathleen Hanna, who curated the fine show that was put on last year at the Petaluma Arts Center entitled *Family Tree- 65 Years of Fine Woodworking in Northern California*.

An innovator with no predecessor to copy, Carpenter was a pivotal figure in the woodworking community, whose original work helped inspire the sculptural style known as West Coast furniture design. He was famous for sculptural pieces, such as his wishbone chair and clamshell roll-top desk. His contemporary designs were so celebrated that his work was featured at the inaugural show of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., alongside the work of Wharton Esherick, George Nakashima, Sam Maloof, and Wendell Castle.

Carpenter had many students and apprentices, and became one of the grand old men of California woodworking, inspiring many. Our speaker, Grif Okie learned from Art, as did David Marks, David Keller and scores of others. Carpenter's son, Tripp, began working with his father at the age of six. Kathleen Hanna is a highly regarded curator and exhibition designer. These three will hold forth with stories, slides and a short film about this modern master.

Directions are as follows: From Sebastopol, take Hwy 116 east. Go left onto Vine Hill Road, then right onto Guerneville Road. Left on Laguna Road. Go 1 mile. Tom's shop is on the right side of the road. From 101, Take Guerneville Road Exit. Go 6.6 miles on Guerneville

Road and turn right on Laguna Road . Go 1 mile. Tom's shop is on the right side of the road. The driveway is marked by three street numbers: 2058, 2060 and 2062.

June Meeting

By Mike Burwen with photos by Richard White

Business Meeting

A business meeting convened at 5 pm, June 20 at Dempsey's restaurant in Petaluma. Officers present were Wallace, Heimbach, Lashar, Burwen, Stroud, and Hoffman.

Michael Wallace said that he wanted to hold a separate meeting to discuss ByLaw revisions in mid-July. (At this writing, it looks like that will happen on July 17.)

The state of the library was discussed. Librarian Dennis Lasher mentioned that most of the library is on VHS and ought to be converted to a digital format. It was decided that Dennis would put together a list of the library materials and send that list out to the membership to see which items should be retained.

It was decided that a silent auction will be held, probably in October. Members will be asked to donate suitable tools, supplies and literature, and the Library will contribute those things it no longer plans to keep.

Michael Wallace stated that, despite his recruiting effort, some of our better-known long-time members have chosen not to renew their SCWA memberships and will therefore not be able to exhibit at the show this year. If anyone has any ideas about what we can do to get these people back in the fold, please contact Michael.

In addition, it was mentioned that we have only a few female members and that we need more of them. Again, anyone with ideas about recruiting members of the fairer sex should contact Michael.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

General Meeting

Following Chairman Wallace's welcome, Mike Burwen took a straw poll of the members about the *Forum*. Seems that most everyone likes it the way it is. However, Mike

said that anyone with ideas for changes or additions should contact him.

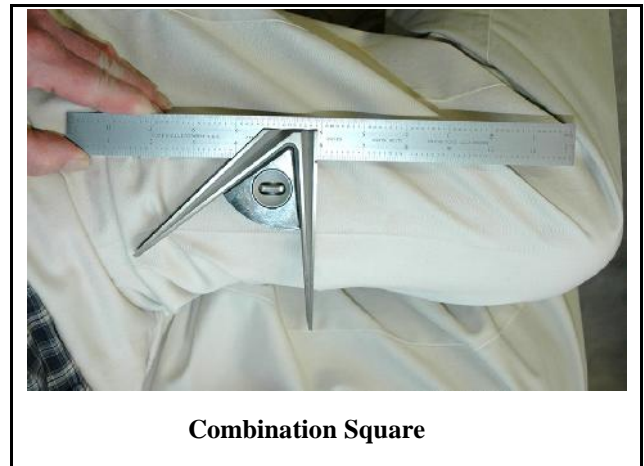
Michael Wallace briefly discussed the upcoming show, stating that we will again be in the upstairs location we had last year and that will probably be the Show's home for several years to come. Anyone planning to exhibit can get more Show information and/or a registration form from the SCWA website

Michael then introduced our guest speaker John Economaki. John started the company Bridge City Tool Works in Portland, Oregon 30 years ago, but he began his professional life as a high school shop teacher. Early in his career, he saw a movie about Sam Maloof and was blown away by it. He then attended a three-week Maloof class, an experience that convinced him that he wanted to be a maker of fine furniture, a profession he followed from 1977 – 83.



In 1983, he contracted pneumonia and quit making furniture even though he had a 3-year backlog at the time. The idea of having to work day-in and day-out wearing protective gear was a turn-off that held little appeal.

While thinking about what he wanted to do with his life, the notion that the available measurement tools for woodworkers were “mostly crap” struck him. Thus Bridge City Tool Works was born. His first tool was a square built to extreme accuracy which he guaranteed would be held for the life of the tool. For \$2700, he placed an ad for the square in *Fine Woodworking* magazine, which he said was three times the price of anything else on the market. To his amazement, he sold about \$3000 worth of the tool – at least it paid for the ad!



In the winter of 1984, he went to a woodworking show on the West Coast and sold \$5000 worth of tools. The show was valuable in that it gave him considerable insight into where his market was likely to be. Armed with this intelligence, Bridge City took off and within five years, it recorded sales in the several millions of dollars.

The '90s ushered in the Gulf War and the banking crisis. These events so affected the economy that Bridge City, along with thousands of other businesses, was hit hard. At that point he was sending out 1.6 million catalogs a year, which, he realized, the company could no longer afford. Thus, he quit sending catalogs and started a “commemorative” limited edition series of tools, which he sold on a restricted basis to his old customers. John mentioned that one of his '90s vintage commemorative tools, which he sold for \$80, recently fetched several thousand dollars on eBay!

John says the tool market peaked in 1992. He attributes most of the market decline to the changing nature of the population. He says that late baby boomers are very different from early baby boomers and prior generations in that the newer generations are time and space constrained. As he put it, “you can't put a dust collector in a condo.” He also noted that leisure time is taken up by Cable TV, the Internet and other things based on new technologies, and that “you can buy two rooms full of Ikea furniture for half the price of a good tablesaw.”

John believes that his potential market today is made up of people who want to make nice things quickly without needing a big shop. To meet this new market, John has essentially reinvented Bridge City. He dropped the rosewood and brass that were hallmarks of his tools and moved to stainless steel. Although stainless is more expensive to fabricate than brass, John says that today's customers think stainless steel is “cool.” Instead of making traditional tools better than anyone else, he turned to designing and building unique tools that could do their jobs faster than anything else on the market, thus addressing the time constraints of the marketplace.



Saddle Square

He also changed his manufacturing MO. In 2001, he had a 20,000 square foot factory and 65 employees. Today, he farms out all the manufacturing to U.S. companies, primarily in Oregon. Nevertheless, he adheres to his principle that tools should be aesthetic as well as utilitarian. As he put it, “nobody will ever toss a Bridge City tool in the back of a pickup.” He mentioned that 25% of his customers never use tools. They are people who just support the notion of quality.

All of Bridge City’s marketing today is online. When John designs a new tool, he notifies his customers and advertises on the website, asking for expressions of interest. When the list of interested takers gets big enough to justify a production run, he asks those people for firm orders. Only then will he actually make the tool, thus avoiding the need to carry any inventory.

John admits he has chosen a difficult path. He says that all boutique toolmakers put together earn less than one top ballplayer. Though the market is small and hard to reach, he remains true to his roots, and remains as concerned about how a tool looks as much as how well it works.

After the discussion of his business, John went on to describe several of his newer tools and the concepts behind them. Rather than go into detailed descriptions of these tools here, the reader is directed to the website bridgecitytools.com for in-depth descriptions of the tools, and, even better, videos that show the tools in action. John is hooked on Internet videos and intends to build his own production studio later this year.

John is especially proud of the innovations in his tools. Some of the ones he showed and discussed are:

- Using levers instead of knobs for tightening – in homage to his arthritis!
- Using double irons in planes.
- Cryotreated plane irons that need only a touchup to the top and a strop on the bottom to sharpen

- Replaceable plane profiles allowing a single tool to be a rabbet, an ogee, a straight plane, etc.
- Software apps that work with his tools to accomplish, for example, computing compound miter angles.
- Putting adjustable skids on the sides of plane bodies that allow an ordinary plane to serve as a mini thickness planer.
- The “Kerfmaker” saw that cuts perfect slots and grooves using the blade from a Japanese dozuki mounted upside down.

After conducting a demo of the Kerfmaker, John concluded his presentation. He stayed for Q&A and then met one-on-one with several members.



Kerf & Tenon Tools

Calendar

July 10: Tripp Carpenter, Kathleen Hanna, Grif Okie on Arthur Espenet Carpenter

August 25 – September 23: *Artistry in Wood Show*

October 2: Patrick Stafford, Furniture Maker and Educator

From the Chairman

By Michael Wallace

Well, it's now officially summer, time to cue the fog! I was walking the dog the second day of summer and my neighbors greeted each other wrapped in heavy jackets because of the cold rain front that moved in that day. Wacky, no? One of the big reasons I moved to California was because I hated the bitter cold of the East Coast during Dec - March. Brrrr! We may have our bad weather days, but trust me, this is almost heaven for woodworkers. Lots of sunny, warm days. Throw open the shop doors and hack up some wood!

Our *Artistry in Wood* show preparations are moving forward. See Bill Taft's article for more info.

That brings me to my biggest wish this for the show. Having observed last year (when I was the Show Director) the actions of the judges and the comments they made in writing on the pieces, I am hoping we can improve that process.

We pay our judges. Some people think that we underpay for their expertise, others think differently, but we do give them each a \$250 honorarium for the day they judge. I think anyone who puts a piece into the show should get a written evaluation of their work by these judges. I don't expect a full page write-up, but a few honest comments are better than nothing at all. Although some have told me that we don't hire our judges for their writing ability, my counter is that they have an opinion and should express it. How a piece is constructed, designed and executed by someone who has put a lot of time into it, deserves feedback.

We have at times asked the judges to verbally comment on pieces other than the prize winners during their walk-through on judging day, however there isn't enough time in our meeting to do that. I think we could somehow guide their evaluations and, at the same time, have them capture their thoughts so that the exhibiting craftspersons get a good idea of what worked and what didn't. I think this would be fair, and, since we pay our judges, we should get this value from them. Again, I'm not insisting that they write up a 300-word critique, but there's got to be a way to capture their evaluations.

What do you think? Send me an email and let me know.

The officers have been working on a revision to our By-Laws and we are having a meeting on July 17th to formulate the proposal. If you would like to participate, let me know. Our By-Laws are out of date and need revisions so that our Association can be better managed. We need to

plug some holes and streamline processes. My plan is to roll out the proposed changes in October and have a final vote in November.

Well, it's another nice day, time to open that shop door!

See you at the next meeting!

2012 Artistry in Wood

By Bill Taft

August 25th marks the opening of the 24th Annual Artistry in Wood Show at the Sonoma County Museum. 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, Wednesday, August 15th between 9 AM and 4 PM and we will take care of getting it submitted. Any questions that you may have will be answered at that time.

Show Schedule

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

Satinwood: Is it an Imposter?

By Mike Burwen

There are at least 38 species from 25 genera that have the word satinwood as all or part of one or more of their common names. The two species that are most often denoted as “genuine” satinwood are West Indian Satinwood (*Zanthoxylum flavum*) which grows on many Caribbean islands (and even some of the Florida Keys), and East Indian Satinwood (*Chloroxylon swietenia*) which comes primarily from Sri Lanka. Both species are members of the Rutaceae family which includes citrus. The woods of the two species are indistinguishable without a high-powered lens.



Satinwood Table: Genuine or Imposter?

Then there is African Satinwood, which can be any one of roughly 30+ different species, Brazilian Satinwood, Asian Satinwood, Australian Satinwood and Cambodian Satinwood. These woods are known in the trade as “imposters.” Some of them are sold under other names as well such as Obeche, Avodire, Movingui, Yellowheart and Afromosia.

The genuine satinwoods have the most appeal to woodworkers. However, because the trees are on the small side, most of the wood available is in veneer form. If you see satinwood being sold as lumber, it is probably not the genuine article. That doesn't mean that imposter wood

isn't good-looking. To the contrary, it can be very attractive with pronounced figuring. The imposters are not as dense as the genuine, have larger pores and are not as close-grained. The genuine articles are quite dense at around 55 – 60 lbs/cu ft while the imposters are considerably lighter. Obeche, for example, has the same density as basswood.

Prices of satinwoods vary greatly. Brazilian satinwood is readily available in the US as lumber at about \$8 – 10/bf, while West Indian satinwood runs about \$35/bf if you can find it as lumber. As veneer, satinwoods run about \$3 – 4/sq ft. Quarter-sawn veneer is more expensive than flat-sawn. Veneer flitches tend to be narrow, around 4 inches in width.

As a highly figured wood, satinwood finds application in many areas including ornamental turnery, musical instruments, decorative veneer, inlays, marquetry and even tool and umbrella handles. Working it can be hazardous, as some species can cause contact dermatitis. On the other hand, an effective analgesic can be made from the leaves – “so you pays your money and takes your choice!”

The chances are that the average woodworker will ever learn the true identity of the satinwood he acquires - another example of the wood business being run by marketers rather than scientists.



Satinwood Armoire, c. 1890



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
Vice-chairman	Michael Burwen	658-2844
Treasurer	James Heimbach	355-9013
Secretary	Bill Hartman	696-0966
Program Director	Art Hoffman	542-9767
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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