



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

www.sonomawoodworkers.com

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November 2012

October Meeting Dan Stalzer – Working Green Wood



Dan Stalzer with His Chairs Made with Parts Shaped When Green

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November Meeting Notice

Where: David Marks Studio
2128 Marsh Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

When: Tuesday, Nov. 13th, 7:00 PM

What: Annual Guild meeting

By Larry Stroud

Our next monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 13, will be our annual Guild meeting, preceded by the election of next year's officers. The Guild meeting will be divided into two sessions:

1. **Built-ins that Fit Like a Glove**, featuring Greg Zall
2. **Making Your Piece Show Ready**, featuring Larry Stroud and David Marks

Greg Zall will be discussing his recent article (Dec 2012) in Fine Woodworking magazine about fitting cabinetry to walls. Larry will discuss the jury role of the Guild in approving pieces for exhibit at the annual show and shortfalls that the guild commonly encounters. He and David will discuss how members can avoid some of these pitfalls. Topics included will be wood movement, surface preparation, and finishing.

Directions: Take Hwy 101 and exit on Steele Rd/ Guerneville Rd. Go west on Steele Lane for about 1.5 miles to Marlow Road. Turn right onto Marlow and proceed north about 0.2 miles to Marsh Road. Turn left onto Marsh Road. David's home and shop are about 0.3 miles from the intersection on the left. Please enter the 2nd driveway (along the redwood fence) and pull back to the studio/workshop. There is a little room around the shop, but, if this gets filled, use the other driveway or the side streets off Marsh. Parking is not allowed on the shoulder of Marsh; you may be ticketed. Note: As Marlow Road continues South past Guerneville Road, it becomes Stony Point Road. So you can take Stony Point off Highway 12 and continue North if you are coming from Sebastopol or thereabouts.

Officer Meeting

By Mike Burwen and Bill Hartman

Chairman Michael Wallace convened a meeting of the officers at 6:00 PM before the regular October 2nd meeting. Attending were Mike Burwen, Michael Wallace, Jim Heimbach, Bill Hartman, Art Hoffman, Bill Taft and Larry Stroud. The following items were discussed:

Elections

Chairman Michael Wallace announced that Mike Burwen had consented to be the Nominating Committee for the forthcoming election to be held at the November meeting. Mike stated that his plan was to 1) Ask the membership for volunteers via email; 2) To put a call for volunteers in the Forum; 3) to ask everyone he can find for recommendations.

Programs

Program Chairman Art Hoffman passed out a preliminary program of speakers and events for 2013. The group discussed various alternatives and gave Art suggestions and recommendations.

Budget

Treasurer Jim Heimbach presented a summary of current financial performance and Bill Taft gave a report on the Show's financial results. Although the SCWA has about \$4000 in the bank, it is over budget and losing money on both regular operations and the Show. The consensus was that both dues and show fees would have to be increased for next year, and that would be a first order of business for the new officer group after the election.

Memorials

Michael Wallace raised the issue of having the Association do something to memorialize departed members as it did for John DiMarchi. The consensus was that John was a major SCWA contributor and thus deserved special recognition, but that the Association should not do that for everyone. Chairman Wallace disagreed with the notion that some members are special and some not.

October Meeting

By Mike Burwen

Photos by Philip Barlow and Richard White

Business Meeting

Chairman Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Mike Burwen announced plans for the upcoming election and called for volunteers.

Bill Taft discussed the Show. He announced that Grif Oakie's "River Rock #2" was voted winner of the People's Choice Award. He mentioned that next year's show would be about the same dates as this year's Show and that it would again be held upstairs in the Museum building.

Larry Stroud said that next month's meeting would feature the Guild, but that a date and venue had not yet been firmed up.

Art Hoffman mentioned that long time member Chuck Quibell would soon be undergoing surgery for a benign brain tumor and that a card would be sent on behalf of the SCWA. The card was passed around so that those in attendance could sign it.

Don Ajello announced that the Holiday Party would again be at his place either the 1st or 3rd weekend in December with the 15th being the most likely date. As in previous years, the event will be a potluck, with Don providing one of his famous turkeys.

Chairman Wallace then called to order a Special Meeting for the purpose of voting on the proposed changes to the SCWA ByLaws as published in last month's Forum. On a voice vote, the changes were approved unanimously.

Guest Speaker

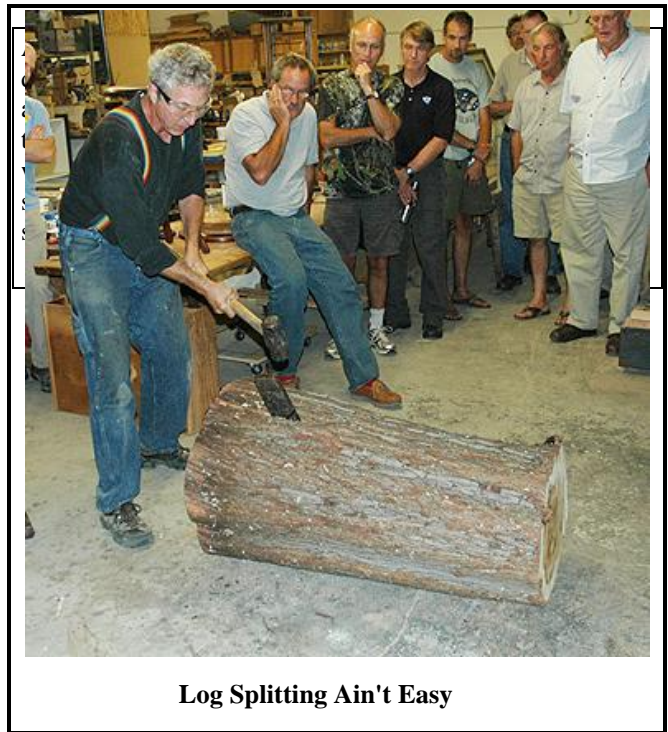
Art Hoffman introduced the guest speaker, Dan Stalzer, whom he said was an expert at making furniture from green wood. Dan immediately refuted Art's claim, stating that what he does is to make parts of green wood and then dries those parts before assembly!

Dan makes mostly chairs. His approach eschews the lathe in favor of shaping legs spindles and backs with a drawknife on a shaving horse. He says his approach leaves a "charming fingerprint" in the work.

Dan learned about working green wood from John Alexander, a well-known woodworker who studied

Appalachian furniture. That furniture is in part characterized by friction-fit round tenon joinery. "Experts" will tell you that round tenons are not supposed to work, but, if done right, they work very well indeed.

Dan said that, more than anything, he loves to teach people how to make chairs using his green wood techniques. He claims that it is much easier to teach people the proper use of a drawknife than it is to teach them how to turn on a lathe.



It turned out that this particular log was a lot tougher than Dan figured. Although he managed to split off a quarter of the log, he had to resort to the bandsaw to finish the job. Dan said that acacia, one of his favorite woods, is generally much better behaved. In any event, after nearly half an hour of strenuous effort, a billet was ready for the shaving horse. As you might imagine, attendees were not shy about giving Dan advice, suggesting such things as hydraulic log splitters.

Dan stressed the importance of being able to "read" the wood. For example, you need to distinguish between the "ray plane" and the "tangent plane", because the wood will cut differently. These two planes are perpendicular to one another and reflect the growth pattern of the tree. In addition, he said that no surface should be within the same growth ring.

With the billet in the shaving horse, Dan quickly cut the blank to a square cross-section, being careful to always cut

“uphill.” Once he had the blank square, he proceeded to shape an octagonal cross-section. He paid particular attention to the wood grain, given that the wood will shrink more with the grain than across it, so that the cross-section winds up a bit of an ovoid.



Shaping With the Drawknife

Parts that need to be bent are treated to a session in Dan’s homemade steamer. The steam chamber is a tube (PVC?) about 6” in diameter and 4 feet long. Dan fitted the tube with smaller diameter PVC piping that he then attaches to three home pressure cookers that he picked up in Goodwill. He mentioned that, if you use his system, be sure to get stainless steel cookers because aluminum will stain the wood.

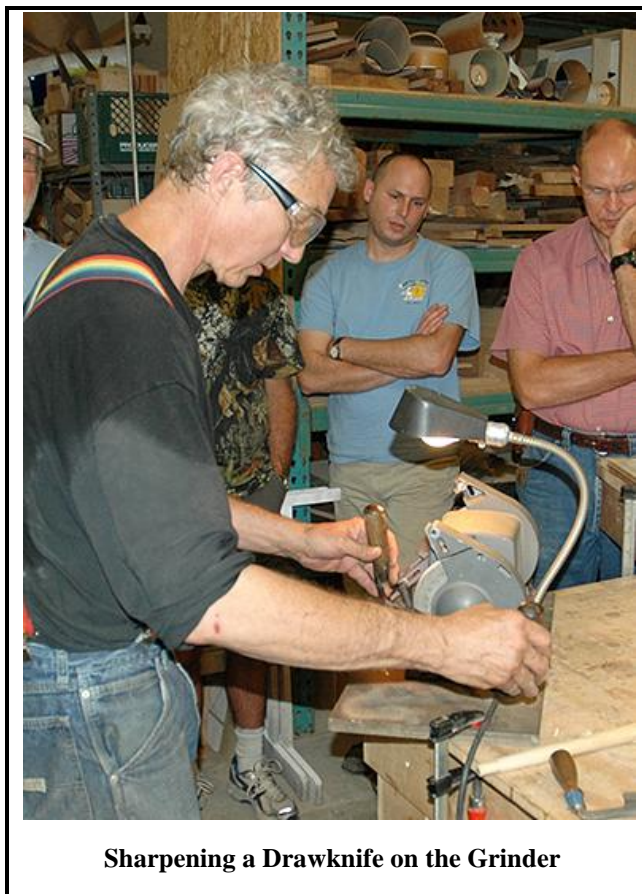
He then went on to describe and demonstrate his method for making round tenon joints. First he drilled a hole in a piece of thin (1/4”) scrap which serves as a template. He then examined the end grain of the piece that will be tenoned. He drew a line parallel to the ray plane through the center and then drew two cap lines parallel to the tangent plane, separated by a distance close to the diameter of the template hole. The three lines formed an “I-beam”

shape. Next he shaved the tenon down to the I-beam caps and shaved the rest to an approximate round.

Dan said his tenon pieces are air dried and the mortise pieces are kiln dried down to 6% moisture content. The tenon will thus take in more moisture than the mortise and will expand, locking the joint. Dan said that a properly made joint will not come apart even before any moisture-induced expansion occurs.

Dan then showed examples of chairs he has made. He pointed out that, if you attend one of his 6-day classes, you will take home a chair just like one of them. Dan charges \$750 per student with 6 people in a class. He offered to run a class for SCWA Members. If you are interested in attending such a class, let Art Hoffman know.

Dan then opened up the meeting to Q&A. The first questioner asked about seat materials. Dan said he generally uses a hem material which he orders from an upholstery supplier. He mentioned that hickory bark is the traditional Appalachian seat material and can be used as well.



Sharpening a Drawknife on the Grinder

The next question addressed the slats he uses for the seat backs. These are only 3/16” thick and are quite flexible.

They fit into mortises cut into the side verticals which he said he cuts with a router. These pieces are loose in the mortises and are held in place by the structural members of the chair which are all round-tenon joined pieces.

Dan was asked to describe how he sharpens his draw knives. First he pointed out that all of his knives are old pieces that he has refurbished. No two are the same, but he says the steel in all of them is excellent. To sharpen, he first runs the knife over a grinding wheel, using the grinder's tool rest upside down as support and to guide the movement of the blade. The tool is held at an angle to the wheel so that nothing gets in the way. The pass over the wheel creates a hollow grind. He then hones the blade on both sides using a flat waterstone. The whole process took no more than a couple of minutes to complete. Dan said he seldom has to sharpen a knife more than once a day, even if he is at the shaving horse for many hours.

The final questioner asked Dan if he could supply plans for a shaving horse, and he replied that there were lots of them available on the Internet. Ed. Note: Try <http://www.greenwoodworking.com/ShavingHorsePlans> or simply Google "Shaving Horse Plans".

Dan's presentation was very well done, and we could tell that he is an excellent instructor. At the conclusion of the presentation, he received a standing ovation.

Chairman's Notes

By Michael Wallace

2012 is winding down. Our Artistry in Wood show is closed and the Officers are talking about next year's calendar. The nights are coming on earlier now and there is a chill in the air. Daytime is beautiful, and, for many of us, this is the last time to get something done in the shop before the holiday season kicks in.

When I took over as Chairman, there were many things that I wanted to accomplish. Although I was successful in many respects, there were a number of objectives that I was not able to bring to fruition. I think it is time for new blood. Therefore, after four years as an SCWA Officer, I have decided not to run again.

SCWA is a wonderful group. We have a great show, excellent presentations and Members who amaze with their skills and the depth of their knowledge. I love being part of this group and I plan to continue my membership for years to come.

I especially want to thank those that supported me during my tenure. Your good words often made my day. I have two more columns to go before the end of the year, and I've got a few more things to say and do before I step off the stage. Until then, I'll simply say: "See you at the next meeting!"

Growing Tropical Timber: A Profitable Opportunity?

By Mike Burwen

At a recent SCWA meeting, I mentioned that I was looking into the business of growing tropical hardwood, and some Members asked me to write about it in the *Forum*. I hope you find it interesting.

Growing hardwoods in the tropical areas of the world for commercial purposes has become big business. The demand for hardwoods to be used as veneer, flooring, furniture, boats, etc. is increasing. The emerging markets of India and China (traditionally large wood consumers that have exhausted much of their local supply) are creating huge demand for wood, especially tropicals such as teak, mahogany and East Indian rosewood. Another major driving force is the destruction of tropical rainforest.

Although you could buy or rent some land and plant the trees yourself, it makes more sense to have someone else do that for you. There are hundreds of growers scattered about the globe, but it is wiser for Americans to stick close to home. That means Hawaii or Central America, particularly Costa Rica or Panama because of their relative stability and business friendliness.

The way it works is that you purchase a given number of trees before they are planted. At harvest time, which typically varies from 7 to 25 years from planting, you have the options of keeping the wood for yourself, selling it or having the grower turnkey everything including harvesting, milling and sales.

The initial cost is typically on the order of \$50/tree. Usually, you have to buy at least 100 trees, so the initial minimum investment is on the order of \$5000. The difference in this initial price between species is relatively small, and you can choose from a wide variety of species native to many parts of the world. The most common species are teak and Cuban mahogany because the demand is steady and the trees grow fast – and big.

Projecting your investment return is difficult. There are costs beyond the initial investment for thinning,

harvesting, milling, care and management. In addition, the world market prices for hardwood timber fluctuate like any other commodity; although in the long term (as we all know) they seem to be continually increasing. On the plus side, the trees belong to you, and you can sell them at any time during their life cycle. In fact, some growers maintain a secondary market for just that purpose. Unfortunately, they will not guarantee prices.

One grower estimates that, assuming a 5% per annum increase in the price of teak, an initial \$5000 investment (100 trees) will produce a return (net of all expenses) of over \$50,000 in 20 years. If you are interested in how that number was derived, go to http://tropicaltreefarms.com/teak_projections.htm.

Google the phrase “growing tropical hardwoods” and you will find dozens of references on this subject. Some of you younger SCWA Members who can wait 20 years might think about throwing a few bucks into a kitty and sharing an investment in timber. Writing off your trips to Hawaii or Costa Rica to watch your trees grow might even recoup your investment!

A friend of mine bought several plantation mahogany trees many years ago in the Phillipines. Fifteen years later, he had the trees harvested and brought to the US by barge. He had the trees milled and kiln-dried in the States and used the lumber to build an elegant 7000 sq. ft. house in Reno. He claims he saved over \$100,000 by having the trees grown and importing the logs. I don't recall how many board feet he used, but every interior wall and ceiling was lined with mahogany, the exterior was mahogany and the extensive built-in cabinetry was mahogany. The interior walls were finished with a lacquer that was sprayed on. On the last day of spraying, one of the painters chose to light a cigarette while spraying one of the rooms. The explosion made headlines!

Tanoak: A Local Hardwood

By Mike Burwen

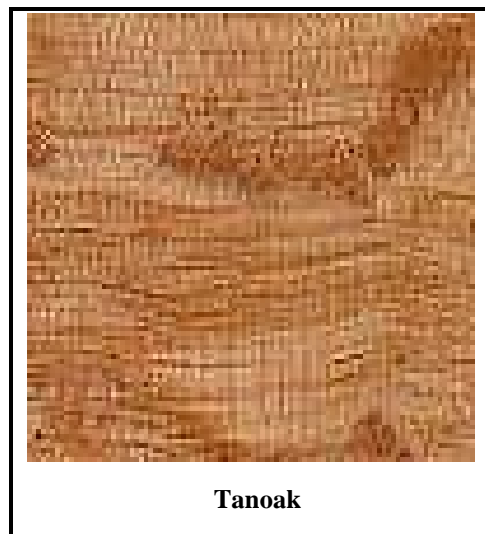
I've written about a few species of tropical timber of interest to the woodworker. This article is about a local species, namely Tanoak. (“Tan Oak” is incorrect.) I thought of it because our last speaker, Dan Stalzer, said it was one of the species he used frequently in the construction of his chairs. Of course the main reason he uses it is because it is essentially free! However, he did laud its woodworking properties and its suitability for the kind of green woodworking that he does.

Tanoak (*Notholithocarpus densiflora*) is considered by plant geneticists to be a link between chestnuts and true oaks (*Quercus*). Its flowers look like chestnut's, and it bears acorns like oak trees. Its native range reaches from Santa Barbara into southern Oregon, primarily along the Pacific coast range but there are some inland areas where it is found in abundance as well, such as around Mount Shasta and the Sierra foothills. Although most of it grows in mixed conifer forests, particularly among Douglas fir and redwoods, there are large pure stands in places.

Tanoak is known to live for as long as 250 years. It can grow to 140 feet high and 5 feet in diameter. However, both size and growth rate vary widely as a function of soil, moisture, sunlight and other conditions. The largest known specimen is in Ophir, Oregon. It is 120 feet tall and 8.25 feet in diameter.

Tanoak is a hard, heavy wood that in many ways resembles the true oaks. The wood is light reddish brown when freshly cut, but it ages to a medium-dark brown. There are broad rays which are conspicuous on quartersawn surfaces. It is highly rated for hardness, resistance to abrasion, stiffness, and bending strength. It machines like eastern oaks and finishes well. Commercially, it is used for flooring, furniture, pallets, veneer, and paneling. It is particularly popular for flooring because of its warm appearance.

Locally, tanoak retail prices run from \$1.80/bdft for 4/4 common rough to \$4.10 for 4/4 surfaced rift sawn. Of course, if you are so inclined, it is common enough to be had for the taking!



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

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

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

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