



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 33, Issue 12

December 2013

Party Time!

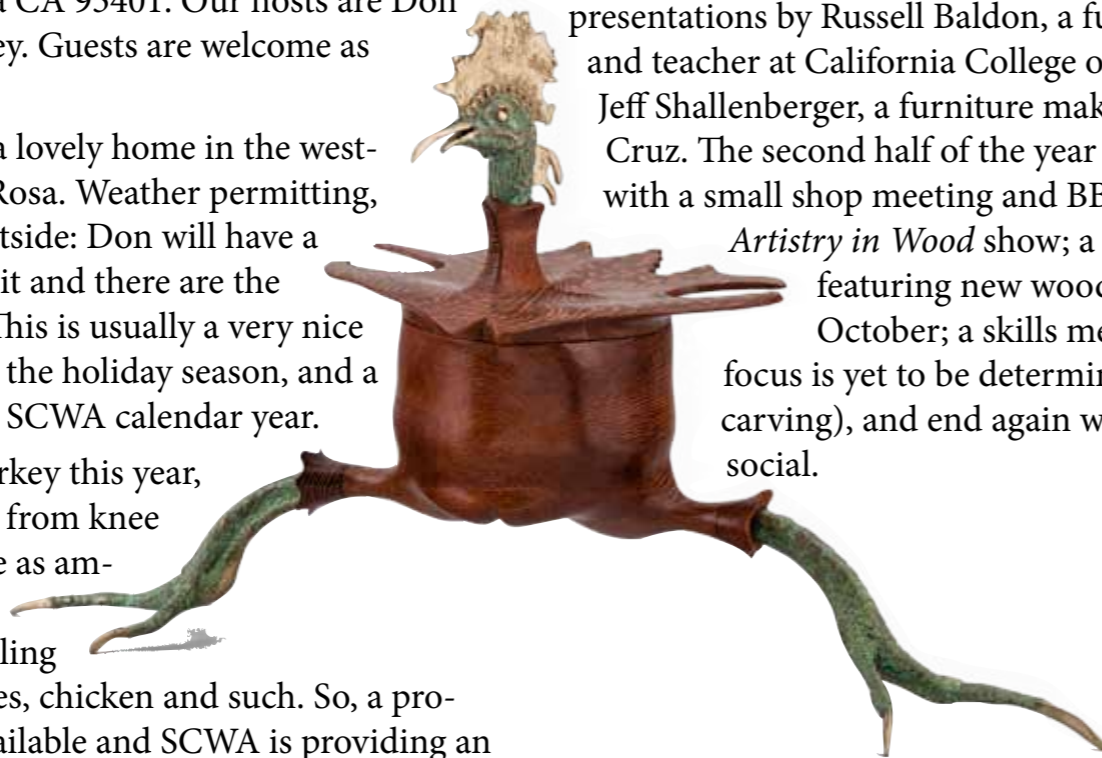
by Art Hofmann

The annual SCWA Holiday Party will be held on December 7 from 2 p.m. to roughly 6 p.m. at 570 Piezzi Rd., Santa Rosa CA 95401. Our hosts are Don Ajello and Linda Illsley. Guests are welcome as always.

Don and Linda have a lovely home in the western reaches of Santa Rosa. Weather permitting, we'll be inside and outside: Don will have a fire going in the fire pit and there are the koi to watch as well. This is usually a very nice event, a good intro to the holiday season, and a social capstone to the SCWA calendar year.

Don is not doing a turkey this year, since he is recovering from knee surgery and isn't quite as ambulatory as usual.

Instead he will be grilling some burgers, sausages, chicken and such. So, a protein course will be available and SCWA is providing an array of beverages. As usual, guests are asked to bring a dish to share, such as vegetables, a salad, a casserole or dessert.



We hope to see you in the new year as well, of course. What can we look forward to in 2014? The first six months of programs for '14 will feature English carver, Ian Agrell; Ron Ashby, owner of Shellac.net; guitar maker, Tom Ribbecke; a visit to Oakland-based Paul Disco's Joinery Structures; and presentations by Russell Baldon, a furniture maker and teacher at California College of the Arts, and Jeff Shallenberger, a furniture maker from Santa Cruz. The second half of the year will be busy with a small shop meeting and BBQ; the annual *Artistry in Wood* show; a meeting featuring new wood products in October; a skills meeting whose focus is yet to be determined (possibly carving), and end again with the holiday social.

Petaluma Pecker Series: Green Pecker 2013 by Don Ajello

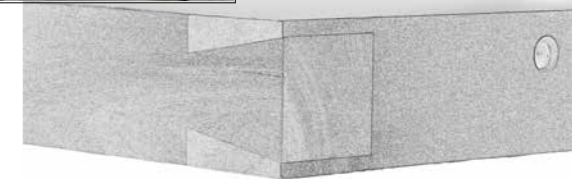
Photo by Tyler Chartier

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Inside this issue...



**Steve Wigfield
looks ahead
at retirement**



**Scott Clark discusses
his Show
entry**



Photo by Tyler Chartier

A memorable evening at Steve Wigfield's shop

by Steve Thomas

Sonoma County Woodworkers Association Chair Bob Moyer opened the November 5 meeting by introducing two guests, Karl Shoemaker and Michael Wallace, and one new member, Lizzy Ehrmann-Subia, who moved to Sonoma County in late July. Lizzy works as a therapist and loves woodworking as a hobby.

Don at Woodshop Mercantile announced he is now partnering with Sartor Quality Saw Works for their blade sharpening service. Don will pick up saw blades at your shop, deliver them to Sartor and get them back to you in about a week. Contact Woodshop Mercantile for more information at www.woodshopmercantile.com.

Jim Heimbach gave the Treasurer's report. The SCWA's current balance is \$5342.56. The SCWA has 102 members at this time.

Art Hofmann gave an update on upcoming meetings. The December meeting is the holiday meeting/party at the home of Don Ajello and Linda Ilsley in western Santa Rosa on Saturday, December 7. Don has hosted the holiday meeting the past several years and it's a wonderful place to socialize with your fellow Association members and their guests.

The January meeting will be with English carver, Ian Agrell. Ian has done carving on furniture for the California State Capitol, Pope John Paul II, and the Sultan of Brunei, among others. The location for this presentation has yet to be decided.

The February meeting will be with Ron Ashby, who is a shellac specialist. He will answer all your questions about this versatile finish.

And finally, sometime in the spring we will be going to the Oakland workshop of Paul Discoe. Paul is an expert in Japanese joinery and studied in Japan for five years. He is the author of the book *Zen Architecture*.

Larry Stroud had the honor of introducing Steve Wigfield, who has run the very successful Wigfield Woodworking for 28 years, building mostly custom doors and windows. He has been a huge asset to the SCWA by allowing the Association to hold meetings in his shop and providing help to other woodworkers in need of a little guidance.



In January of 2012 Steve began thinking about retirement and what he wanted to do in the future. He had been wanting to build a work bench, and felt if he was going to do so he needed to do it before he retired and lost access to the tools in his shop. Steve started working on the bench in March, and here in November he just needs to complete the tail vise to finish it up.

There are many dovetails in the bench - big dovetails. When doing dovetails, Steve lays out the tails first with a folding Stanley knife with thick, replaceable blades. With the knife, he cuts

a very deep groove, and highlights the markings with a pencil. He then cuts close to the line with the band saw, within about 1/32 inch, and hogs out most of the waste with the band saw as well. He will use a new back saw that he purchased from Blackburn on the half blind dovetails for the tail vise, but on the through dovetails the band saw has worked very well. (Note: the Blackburn website has great article on saw tooth geometry at www.blackburntools.com/articles/saw-tooth-geometry/index.html).

Steve does most of the chisel work with a 3/8 inch Buck chisel. When he's close to a fit, he moves to a slightly larger chisel. He prefers a longer chisel with a blade that's probably eight inches long, plus the socket and handle. The longer chisels make it easier to brace the chisel handle with his body and use his body weight to apply force and guide the cut. He then finishes up surfaces with a larger Barton cast steel chisel. He purchases many of his chisels and other tools from eBay and from www.jimbodetools.com which specializes in antique tools. One trick he shared for finding high spots when paring dovetails is this: he rubs the wood face with the edge of a 6 inch machinist's rule to burish the high spots.

His favorite tools for layout are a marking gage with a large fence, a saddle square, a Starrett all-metal bevel gage for setting dovetail angles, and a smaller machinist's square. The bench has been very time consuming. The first big dovetail took six hours to complete.

The discussion then moved to finishes. California's restrictions on volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are causing manufacturers to change the formulation of their finishes. For example, Steve has been



Photos this article by Jose Cuervo

using the Maloof finish, but finds that it doesn't dry the way it used to. He used it on his bench, but the finish is still soft after 6 months of curing. A mixture of Arm-R-Seal and Maloof (50/50) worked really well on a test piece, but the mixture must be kept in an air-tight container to avoid having it set up right away. He also likes shellac. He applies a heavy cut of shellac with a cloth to turned tool handles, achieving 6-8 coats in 10 minutes.

Aaron Crespi, another furniture maker in Petaluma, used Good Stuff on his bench and Steve now wishes he had used it on his bench. It soaks in well, dries hard, doesn't have a high build, and it's easy to apply. In the past Steve was using 100% tung oil with japan drier, which worked well, but japan drier is no longer available in California. Pure oil won't dry very well.

There are many elements of a workbench design that need to be fully understood to design and build a workbench. For instance, the trestle tops need to be the right distance apart and the right length so the bench is well supported but vises and dog holes don't conflict with the trestles. A good purchased design should have all these things worked out, but Steve discovered that the design he used has a mistake in dimensions of components of the tail vise. This resulted in the need to make several modifications to make it work. The design of Steve's bench is Frank Klaus' design from the book, *The Workbench Book* by Scott Landis. Other customizing by Steve included alternate material selection. For the tail vise Steve is using teak and maple in areas where wood pieces slide against each other. The natural oils in the teak will lubricate these joints.

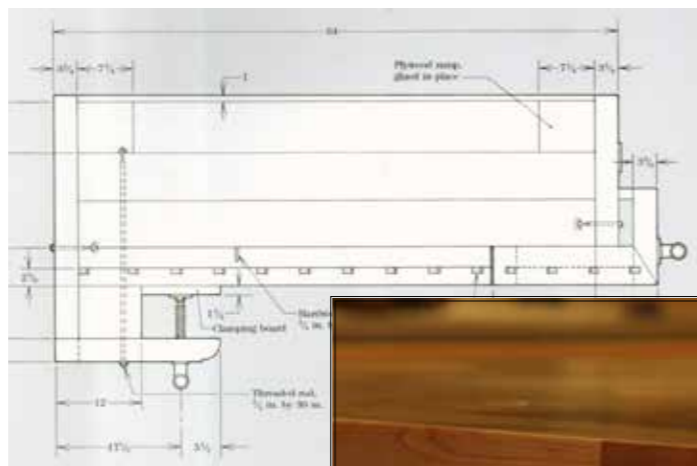
The bench can be broken down. The top sits on white oak dowels in the trestles, and the rails attach to the trestles with threaded rods. Steve placed the front rail

lower than the rear rail (contrary to Klaus' design) so he could, sometime in the future, add a tool cabinet under the bench.

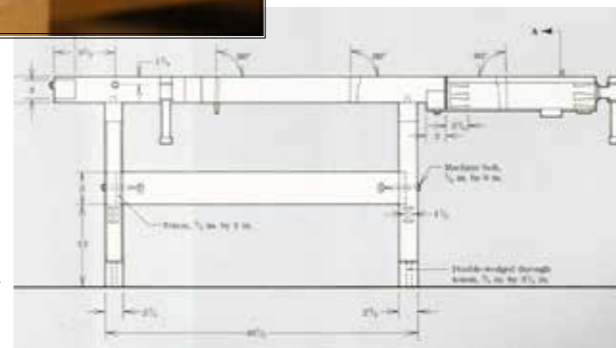
Steve is posting photos and discussing issues with the online community on a website catering to vintage machines. Old power tools are also a passion of his. He completely restored a 1964 Unisaw which he will be taking home with him when he retires. He is currently

restoring a 6 inch jointer, and he recently purchased an Oliver mortiser which needs restoration.

Steve showed several of the hand planes he has restored



over the years, and the chisel handles he's been turning for his chisel collection. He showed an old Stanley Keen Cutter, an early form of Bedrock plane with a frog design superior to the standard Bailey planes. He also showed an old Stanley No. 40 scrub plane with beech tote and knob that was heavily rusted when he purchased it, but cleaned up very well. Steve uses Evapo-Rust to remove rust from old tools. Leaving the parts in a bath overnight removes the rust but leaves paint in good condition. He's tried electrolysis for rust



removal, but it can do too much damage. Many of the chisel handles he's making are made from an apple tree he purchased and had milled into lumber. He finishes the totes, knobs, and chisel handles with shellac and Renaissance wax.

The meeting then transitioned to a discussion of shaper tooling. Early in Steve's career he would grind shaper cutters by hand. It worked well but was time consuming and required great skill. Nowadays he commissions knives from Connecticut Saw and Tool. They grind the knives to his templates and specifications. He showed a number of cutterheads featuring advanced technologies, and many hundreds of knives he's made and had made over the years. He uses a Martin shaper with a tilting arbor and fully loaded electronic controls. He is very pleased with the way this machine performs. The machine is almost always run with the power feed unit. The machine commands respect, but is very valuable for the type of work Steve has been doing.

In conclusion, Steve turned to his jointer and gave us a tip about dealing with bowed boards. He found early on that standard recommended procedure for flattening bowed boards didn't seem to work very well. This calls for running boards with the crown side up, removing material from the ends of the board first. Steve found that after flattening boards this way the next morning the boards would be over corrected and still

bowed. Steve experimented and found that if he flattened the bow itself, with the crown down, stresses in the board were relieved and the board stayed flat, an excellent tip that alone was worth the price of admission for the evening.

This has saved him a lot of money over the years considering the high cost and close tolerances of dimensioned lumber, which sometimes leaves you with less than a quarter of an inch of play room.

The assembled membership gave Steve a big hand of

applause at the end of his presentation. He is truly a wise and modest man, whose life has been spent making a tough business work out for himself, his family, and his employees. Steve will be retiring in four or five months. He's looking for a buyer to purchase the machinery and take over the shop lease. Any takers?

Steve's presentation was followed by a business meeting. Twenty-three members were present, constituting a quorum of members. SCWA Chair Bob Moyer presented the slate of members running for the 2014 officer positions: Chair, Bob Moyer; Program Chair, Art Hofmann; Editor, Joe Scannell; Show Chair, Scott Clark; Guild Chair, Larry Stroud; and Treasurer, Bill Taft. Votes were taken for each position individually, with a majority of members present voting in the affirmative for each. The Secretary position remained unfilled.

Larry Stroud then spoke about the informal mentoring program that guild members have used in the past. Just as Steve gave Larry advice on many woodworking topics, Larry in turn has helped other less-experienced members with their woodworking projects. Most Guild members and other accomplished woodworkers in the SCWA are generally available for short mentoring sessions to other SCWA members. It's all rather informal, and members new and old, experienced or novice, should feel comfortable asking a Guild member for help. Sweeten the deal by offering to bring lunch, and it'll be a win-win for all concerned. Larry concluded by announcing that Kalia Kliban and Scott Clark were voted into the Guild.

The evening concluded with comments and recommendations from the members. One recommendation was to form a nominating committee to actively recruit members for officer positions throughout the year. Chair Bob Moyer thought that was a good idea and would bring it before the officers to discuss. Another recommendation was to provide a list of members who are available for mentoring, and another was to post profiles of Guild members on the website. Bob will look into these recommendations as well.

Making A *Basket of Leaves*

by Scott Clark

This was a fun piece to design and offered me new challenges and learning opportunities. The basket's oval shape is completely natural and due to tanoak's shrinkage properties. I did the lathe work while the wood was green, then left it to dry. At about 1-1/4" in wall thickness, it took a year and a half to air dry. I was careful in evenly orienting the wood's grain, so the piece shrank into a very uniform oval of about 12" x 10". Once cured, I reduced the wall thickness to about 3/8" by carving. I first used rotary carvers to rough shape the exterior, maintaining the ogee-curved contour. Then I switched to hand rasps and sanding to finish shape both the interior and exterior surfaces. Tanoak is really a marvelous wood to hand tool.

Having planned the pyrographic leaf rendering for the inside, I wanted a lighter toned interior surface to enhance the subtle shading I was to do. So at this point I bleached the inside to lighten the canvas, but the pyrography itself is a final step. I then sealed it with shellac to keep it clean through all the handling to come.

I spent a week branding the exterior texture. The double stake, double randing pattern (basket making terms) is scaled in size as it descends the wall. To



accomplish this I made eleven nickel-chromium, branding tips for use in my homemade, high temperature branding apparatus. The device is made from an old automotive battery charger, re-wired to send the DC current through a ni-chrome wire tip. The tips are simply fashioned from ni-chrome wire that is sold for use in kilns and heating appliances. When energized it glows red-hot! On this project I used 17, 18, and 20 gage wire. By wrapping the wire around steel pins of various diameters, I create a coil of the necessary size. The number of wraps determines its length.

The pattern is laid out on the wood with pencil. Measuring the circumference of the vessel, I strike divisions based on the largest brand I'll be using at the rim. Then I draw radial spokes from rim to foot, which act as guides for the branding. Applying the red-hot brand to the wood, each set of marks is methodically burned in. A steady hand and consistent timing is necessary to produce a uniform surface. I typically only work for fifteen to thirty minutes at a time, taking lots of breaks.





When complete, a whole cleaning process is necessary to ready it for finishing.

Since it is a basket, I wanted a warm, wicker looking exterior. I finished it with Danish oil, but darkened the color slightly by mixing it with a brown dye before applying. Once the exterior was finished, I started the pyrographic interior work and worked out the handle design.

The process I chose for making the handle was new to me. Not having any experience with wood bending, I had originally planned to carve the entire shape, as I had done on a previous piece. But I heard about a special bending lumber being produced by a company in Washington called Pure Timber LLC. They have

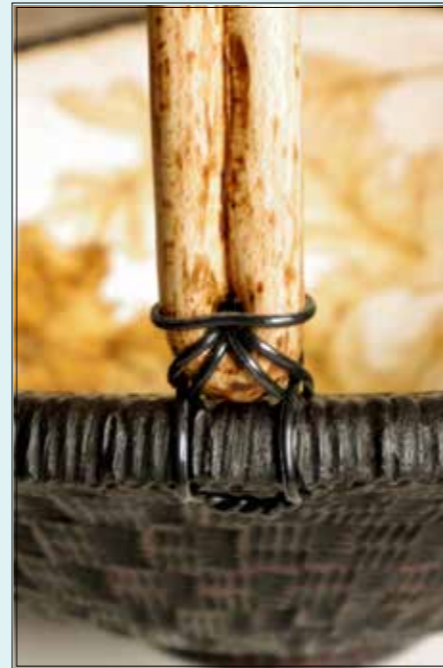
developed a process for compressing wood to make it completely bendable while cold! Check out their web site, <http://www.puretimber.com>, and you'll see some amazing work being done with it. I purchased a selection of wood from them and chose maple for this project.

It took me two tries to get it right. The twist in the handle is carved, while the curve is bent cold. For the first try I cut a $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of my maple stock to length. I carved the twist, then using a plywood form, bent the curve. Numerous stress cracks appeared. So for the second attempt, I first bent the piece, then carved the twist. This made the carving more difficult but produced a flawless surface. This cold bending material is quite amazing. I left it clamped on the form overnight. On removal of the clamps, the roughly 10" radius sprung out only half an inch. The handle was finished with some pyrographic shading, then an application of the same dark Danish oil I used on the basket's exterior.

On the interior leaf motif of the basket, I used a clear shellac finish. I love the transparency of shellac and the glow that is achieved without developing into a plastic look.

The handle was attached using a fine gage, plastic-coated wire I found in my collection of garage junk. Through a couple holes on each end of the basket, and one in each handle end, I worked out a lacing pattern that blended well with the rim's texture.

The problem solving aspects of a project like this is the fun part. I'm looking forward to applying what I've learned here to future work. This cold bend lumber will undoubtedly show up in one of my next creations.



All photos in this story are courtesy of Scott Clark

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Wood Forum is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles and photographs for inclusion in the publication. You can send your submissions to the Wood Forum Editor at joejakey@comcast.net or at SCWAMESSAGES@gmail.com. Advertisements are also accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch.

Membership Application

I would like to join the SCWA to meet other people interested in the craft, the art and the business of fine wood-working. Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$35 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 website.

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

Name _____ Email _____

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Please send check and completed application to:

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