



Wood Forum

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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June 4th Meeting with Andy Jacobson

by Art Hofmann

Next month's meeting (Tuesday, June 4th at 7 pm) will be at the home of Andrew Jacobson. Andrew is the owner of Design In Wood, Inc, a custom furniture making company in Petaluma. Design In Wood is known for producing extremely high-end custom cabinetry and furniture for clients throughout Northern California.

When building his house, Andrew realized it could serve double duty as a showroom for his business. Andrew designed and built with the help of his five craftsmen and other local woodworkers including Greg Zall, Michael Cullen, and Thomas Stockton. Andrew built the home and all of the cabinetry, millwork and almost all of the furniture in the house. Now the house is used to promote his business. The kitchen, for instance, was featured on the cover of Fine Homebuilding



magazine. During the meeting Andrew will show us around the home/showroom, discussing techniques, materials and hardware used, and answering questions from the membership on all aspects of wood-working.

Please note that parking is adequate, but limited, so car-pooling would be helpful. The house is located about 15 minutes from downtown Petaluma. GPS units sometimes lead people astray to the house, so please use the following directions: From downtown Petaluma, head West on Western Ave, go 2 miles. Turn Left on to Chileno Valley Rd, go 3.5 miles. Pass a Marin County Line sign on the right, immediately turn Left on to Wetmore Ln. Follow Wetmore Ln .75 miles to the very end. You will see a sign for Andrew's wife's business, "Chinese Medicinal Herbs", 296 Wetmore Lane. Come through the gate and park. Please do not park off of the property.

SCWA Officers Meeting *by Steve Thomas*

The regular meeting on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association was preceded by a meeting of the officers at 6:28 pm at the workshop of Greg Hay. All elected board members were in attendance: Bob Moyer, Jim Heimbach, Bill Taft, Art Hofmann, Larry Stroud, and Steve Thomas. The minutes of the previous meeting were not available.

Jim Heimbach made a motion concerning membership, namely to ask members who have not yet paid dues for their reason in not doing so. Resolved that Larry Stroud will send out a message to people who were members last year but have not yet paid dues this year using the latest information from Jim.

Art Hofmann moved to offer free SCWA membership to Greg Hay in lieu of a speakers fee. The motion was approved by consent. Resolved that Art Hofmann will speak with Greg about a stipend and the offered membership.

Bill Taft moved to eliminate divisions in the show. The motion was approved by consent.

Bob Moyer moved to hold longer board meetings for the next two months at times and places independent of regular meetings of the SCWA. The motion was approved by consent. Resolved that Bob will coordinate with all board members via email.

Jim Heimbach moved that the SCWA purchase the financial software package Quicken for managing the SCWA's finances if the cost does not exceed \$75. The motion was approved by consent. Resolved that Jim will purchase Quicken if it does not exceed \$75.

Jim Heimbach moved that the SCWA purchase a copy of Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised for use by the current chairperson. The motion passed by consent.

The Officers' meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

General Meeting *by Steve Thomas*

The May 2013 meeting was held at the workshop of Greg Hay located, in a bucolic setting south of Sebastopol, on the property of Reed Bros. who make "hand carved furniture for the garden and home." [By the way, before the turndown, Reed Bros. was a vibrant, busy business with 13 employees and an advertising budget over \$100,000 annually. Now, due mainly to the economy and the fact that the brothers are about to retire, the business has two employees and advertises only on their website, reedbrosfurniture.com.]

The meeting began with announcements. The nominating committee chairperson, Larry Stroud, announced that one member, Joe Scannell, volunteered to be editor of the Wood Forum newsletter. Joe and Larry will discuss the role over the next few days and if Joe agrees we will hold an election at the June meeting. Anyone else interested in the position may also run.

Bill Taft, show chairperson, announced that the entry date for the show is August 21. This will be the show's 25th anniversary at the museum. All members, amateurs and professionals alike, are encouraged to enter one or more pieces to the show.

The chairperson of the website committee, Larry Stroud, announced there are now two new members on the website committee: Dan Lyke and Terrie Noll. The SCWA will use the web hosting service Wix to develop the new web presence.

Our evening's presenter was Greg Hay. Greg has been building furniture for close to 25 years. His shop is spacious and well equipped with some of the largest machines our members have seen, including a Martin sliding table saw that will accept a 24 inch blade and an 18 inch jointer, also by Martin. The shop had several large work surfaces and an extensive collection of Japanese planes, chisels, and hand saws.

Greg builds a variety of furniture and much of his work is through architects for custom installations. He began as a chair builder, a craft he learned from Dennis Young. (See page 5.) Since then he has made many chairs, and still makes them to this day. But the original Windsor style chair has spawned many different

offspring. He likes cherry, maple, and has learned to love elm. Sometimes he buys wood from Evan Shively, whose wood emporium in Marshall, we will be visiting in July.

Currently, he works mainly with architects and designers, who commission him to build furniture and installations in custom home projects. Greg confides that he often finds himself in the role of a listener and advisor.



He has learned neither to dominate nor lead these discussions, though he does occasionally offer feedback on designs from the woodworker's perspective. He will assert himself, however, if the design in question is structurally unsound.

When asked to make a table from a large slab of bay laurel (\$6K) that was going to be installed next to a window, he stressed to the architect that the wood would not be stable in that location, but the architect was insistent. The table was built and delivered as requested, but was placed in the very place Greg had cautioned against, where the table was exposed to direct sunlight, and subsequently indeed "blew up." There was the inevitable finger-pointing afterwards of course, all of which highlights the importance of knowing how wood works and reacts in a given environment.

Greg has one steadfast rule: everything leaving his shop must be perfect. There is no tolerance for gaps, fillers, or visible glue lines. That is the standard; period. For a successful business, he says, you must learn to do things fast and accurately, but if it's not perfect it gets re-done.

Greg stated that often people buy what they like, but the pieces may not work in their home. Everything is relative to the environment into which it will be introduced. This illustrates why working with architects can be useful. As a woodworker, he understands different design styles, but other designers can put things together in ways he hasn't thought of before. Sometimes Greg feels the piece may be ugly, but it's what the customer wants. Bottom line: the customer is always right – unless there are structural problems with the design.

Greg does some of his own finishing, has a finishing booth in back of his shop. He knows what he's after, the look that he likes, but sometimes he has to hire the finishing out if it is beyond his capacity. He favors conversion varnish as a finish.

We saw a slide of a 'Cottage Table', a very simple design he was commissioned to do. The design was originally from a company in S.F., but was modified by John Wheaton Associates. The drawers are well fitted, a feature which sold many instances of this table.

Greg has furnished entire restaurants with tables, as well as employee lunch tables and lounge furniture for Netflix in Los Gatos. We saw a slant top desk from the early days, mostly hand-made, and blind sliding dovetails. Greg says that these were among the most beautiful work he has ever done. One client brought him some chairs, a design originally made for the LBJ library. Greg discussed these extensively. We then saw a slide of a pair of slabs that became a table at a winery in Sonoma. One slab table was 24' long. Some exhibited steel legs: the joints between the wood and the steel looked flawless.



Another job involved a 200 year old Pakistani chest whose top had been lost in a move. Greg was tasked with replacing it. It was challenging just finding an old piece of wood suitable for the job, and then it required matching the existing finish, including all the dings and scratches. The outcome appeared (from the slide we viewed) to be a perfect match. Greg said this was work he enjoyed.



Some of the large slabs Greg has worked with required extensive work to flatten and stabilize. A stunning example was a cross-sectional slab from a huge cypress tree (see photo, page 3). Greg used CA glue to stabilize the punky areas, filled occlusions with clear epoxy, and filled checks and other openings with cast bronze inserts. Much work was involved over a long course of time, and the finished piece did indeed look stunning. It now lives in Hawaii.

On occasions Greg collaborates with others for carvings, finishing, or metal work. He also contracted out for upholstery work on a beautiful stuffed chair. But he likes to do his own finishing because he likes his own product. He is also skilled in carving, adding ball and claw feet and carved details to many of his pieces.

Greg chooses the wood species for a specific project, but two of his favorites are hard maple and cherry. He also uses claro walnut for the Windsor chairs he makes in several styles. He believes he can only break even on his chairs which he sells for \$2,200 each.

Some of the projects he highlighted included a chair he designed for the LBJ library. He worked many hours creating the prototype. Once it was chosen, it was a challenge to create the jiggging to produce the chairs in production. He eventually produced 25 to 30 of them for the library and others.

Other special projects included a deck area and lots of interior work in a Chinese pavilion at the McEvoy ranch on Redhill Road near Petaluma. (SCWA member Greg Zall also worked on this project.) Another was a huge room divider made of a single, enormous slab of big leaf maple installed on steel posts. Parts of the slab were carved and worked while the rest was left natural to create a dramatic addition to the room. Not only was there a lot of woodworking involved, but getting the thing into place was an engineering feat.

After the presentation, some of our members lingered to learn how Greg uses some of the unusual equipment. The sliding table saw was fascinating with all of its digital and mechanical bells and whistles; definitely not your father's table saw. In sum, Greg was a gracious host, generous with his information, and this presentation of his work from the beginning of his career to the present day, which displayed an astonishing range of skills and talent, was well received by the members.



SCWA Alum Alive and Well and Living in Japan

Dennis Young is a woodworker who lived and worked in Petaluma in the early 80's. Before that time, he had worked in the woodworking trade in Japan under severe conditions. He had no experience before he went to Japan either with the language or with woodworking. He was disliked by the other apprentices. If you did not perform adequately or were deemed out of line, you were kicked or hit. After some years there, Dennis went to England to study chair making at High Wycomb, a center of the English chair making industry for generations. There he honed his skills, and with six years of this unique apprenticeship under his belt,



he moved to the U.S., made furniture and had some helper/students. Family considerations made him opt for settling in Japan.

Dennis has become part of the long term history of woodworking in Sonoma County. Old timers recall him clearly. They were highly impressed with his skills and work ethic, both of which he had attained through hard work and dedication.

For any Dennis Young fans out there, he is apparently still Japan-based and has a nice blog:

<http://dennisyoung-kagu.blogspot.com/2011/01/japanese-tools.html>

2013 Artistry in Wood

The 25th Annual Artistry in Wood Show will run at the Sonoma County Museum from August 31st through September 29th this year. Entry Day is Wednesday, August 21st and our meeting with the judges will be held on Wednesday, August 28th. More Show information and Entry Forms are available on our website.

A Special Thanks from Bill Hartman

I would like to thank all the members who purchased a copy of the book, *Mind & Hand*, at last month's meeting. The proceeds were donated to my Woodworking program at Rancho Cotate High School. No one knows better than us how much money it takes to keep a shop operational. Thank you for thinking about my students and helping out. And if you are curious about what we do, please feel free to come to my classroom while the students are working. Please stop by Finley Hall at the Sonoma County Fair to see my students' furniture projects. I believe we will be exhibiting the tiny house we are building this year at the fair.

Cheers, Bill Hartman

Officers of the Association

<u>Chairman</u>	Bob Moyer	762-3713	<u>Secretary</u>	Steve Thomas	568-7062
<u>Program Chair</u>	Art Hofmann	542-9767	<u>Guild Chair</u>	Larry Stroud	823-1775
<u>Treasurer</u>	James Heimbach	355-9013	<u>Show Chair</u>	Bill Taft	794-8025

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 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 woodworking. 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 _____

Address _____

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