



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 34, Issue 1

January 2014

And so begins another year...

by Art Hofmann

The Holiday Party at Don and Linda's house in west Santa Rosa was a fine event. Don was busy at the grill preparing tri tip beef and sausages, and there was an excellent assortment of side dishes on the table near the living room. About twenty or so members, spouses, friends and relatives socialized in the commodious living room, or at the picnic tables under heat lamps. It was a comfortable atmosphere, indoors or out. As promised, Don had a fire going in the fire pit, and the koi were active and alert, hoping for some tidbits and crumbs from the feast. Our chairman, Bob Moyer, thanked our hosts on SCWA's behalf, and thanked also the incumbent officers, departing officers, and new officers who have recently stepped up and will serve next year. 2014 promises to be an interesting year of monthly presentations, leading up to the *Artistry in Wood* show at the Sonoma County Museum in late summer, or early fall.

Our first meeting of the year will take place on January 14th (that's right, 1/14/14) at 7 pm at the shop of Scott Borski in Petaluma. This is a new venue for us. The featured speaker is the master British carver, Ian Agrell,



who maintains a presence in his native country as well as in San Rafael, where his firm, Agrell Architectural Carving is based. Trained in England, Agrell has been producing decorative carvings for private homes, religious structures and public buildings for over thirty years. This is all hand work, done with carving chisels and mallets. No machines are used. His clients run the gamut from one of the past popes of the Catholic Church, for whom he has decorated a chair, to the flamboyant Lady Gaga, who has appeared in public in carving-adorned garments. Agrell has agreed to discuss his work on the basis of a slide presentation. If you want more information, please consult his website at <http://www.agrellcarving.com/>

Next meeting: January 14, 7pm at Scott Borski's shop, Petaluma

Scott Borski's shop is located at 609-2nd Street in Petaluma; this is south of the Petaluma theater district. If you are coming from the north, aim for downtown Petaluma, and continue south on Petaluma Boulevard to H Street. Hang a left turn, and go a block to 2nd Street, then turn right. Parking shouldn't be a problem at this hour, but who knows. Coming from the south, take the Petaluma Boulevard South exit from Highway 101 and continue on it as it goes under the freeway until you reach H Street, where you will take a right, then another right on 2nd Street. The phone number, should you need it, is 778-8481. If you want to eat first, there is a fine little café on the corner of H and 2nd Street called Aqus. They have a nice 60 item menu that you can peruse on their website: <http://tinyurl.com/Aqus-Cafe>.

Hope to see you on January 14th well-fed and feeling well, too.

Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Membership Renewal

Greetings! It is time to renew your membership in the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. You can renew at the various dues levels listed below. Your dues cover your electronic subscription to *Wood Forum* and entitle you and your immediate family to attend our excellent monthly meetings and to participate in our highly respected *Artistry in Wood* show. Please fill in your member information in the Renewal Form below and mail it with your check, made payable to SCWA, to: **SCWA, P.O. Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402**. You may also renew your membership at the next monthly meeting. Renewal forms will be available at the meetings.

There is a subscription fee for the printed version of the *Wood Forum*. This fee just covers the cost of printing and mailing. If you wish to receive the *Wood Forum* through the regular mail, please so indicate in the space provided on the Renewal Form and include the mail subscription fee payment with your dues renewal. We encourage all members to receive the electronic version.

Any suggestions for our association, e.g., subjects for future meetings, may be made in the "additional comments" area and would be greatly appreciated.

2014 Renewal Form

Please circle the level at which you wish to renew:

Sustaining (\$35)

Enriching (\$50)

Name:

Address:

Home Phone:

E-mail:

Wood Forum Subscription: _____ Regular mail (Additional fee - \$15 per year)

Additional comments: _____

Christmas Presents

by Bill Taft

For many years I have been making Christmas presents for our grandchildren.

Most years an idea about what to make comes to me easily. This year, that didn't happen. Here it was November already, and I still didn't even have any ideas. Looking at the photos of what I had made in prior years, two things stood out: I had made way too many boxes, and it has been many years since I made them carved animals.

So it was settled; carved animals it would be.

Picking the animal to carve was easy. Do you know what a pika is? I do because the pika is my grandson Tyler's favorite animal. He told me all about them a couple of years ago. I think that he got all of his information on one of our trips to Yosemite. Pikas live in the high mountains above 8000 feet. They look like a small rabbit with round ears. Because of their ears and size, many think that they are a member of the rodent



family. They are actually a member of the hare family, hence the rabbit-like features.

Researching the pika, I found many photos of them, all taken in their natural environment. The photo shown below has the pose that I liked best, maybe because it looked the most rabbit-like. I used this photo to draw the shape I wanted to carve.

I carved six of them, one practice piece using some scrap 2 x 4, and five more made using pieces of gifted wood received from fellow SCWA members. One is from a log of Osage orange from Bruce Johnson.

Two are from a piece of big-leaf maple that Brian Fraser Smith gave to me. It is a remnant of the maple slab that he used to make the base of the Console Table he entered in this year's Show. The other two were made using a piece of figured red gum that I got from Craig Collins. Why did I use three different woods? Three of our grandchildren are in one family, so I used different woods to make each one distinctive.

For me, carving small shapes (the pikas are less than four inches long) doesn't involve the normal carving tools such as knives and chisels. I used a Dremel rotary tool with high speed cutters and rotary files for carving, and very fine rifflers and sand paper for finishing.

I started the process with a block of wood about two inches thick, three inches high and four inches long. In order to remove most of the excess wood, I glued a copy of the sketch of the Pika to the side of the block and

cut the outline of the shape using my scroll saw. I also trimmed the front and rear corners using the saw to get the block closer to the shape of the Pika. The rest is all carving (using a Dremel tool).



All of the rough shaping was done with two 1/4 inch diameter high speed cutters. One cutter is cylindrical and the other is conical with a spherical tip. These cutters are designed to be used for freehand routing and carving. My Dremel tool has two speeds, fast and very fast. I found out that these cutters work best using the slower 'fast speed.'

I carved the practice piece to the rough shape that I wanted, leaving about a sixteenth of an inch of stock for finish carving. Then I did a little more work on the ears and feet to make sure they would turn out to look like I wanted them to look. When I was satisfied with the practice piece I carved



the other five pieces to match it.

I did not carve the face (the eyes, nose and mouth) on the practice piece until I was ready to carve the faces of the other five Pikas. The practice piece facial carving was only done to make sure that I had enough stock to make the features and to work out how to position the facial features. Satisfied with what I had done,

I finished-carved the other five Pikas, completing the body and feet first, and then finishing the ears and face. The finish carving was all done using numerous



different shaped engraving cutters, followed by finishing using tungsten carbide polishing cutters. Once the carving was completed, they were sanded smooth and the features were cleaned up using rifflers and sandpaper. They are finished with two coats of Watco Butcher Block Oil & Finish, which is advertised to be 'food safe' when dry. I like this finish as it is easy to use (wipe it on and let it dry). It does not require any additional work to get a good finish.



Making these Pikas was a treat for me. I had forgotten how much I enjoy carving. Maybe I'll carve something for next year's Show.

(Photos in this story are courtesy of Bill Taft).

SCWA Board Meeting June 21, 2013

A meeting of the Officers of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association was held on Friday, June 21, 2013 at 6:14 pm at the Cotati Cottages. SCWA Chairperson Bob Moyer presided over the meeting. Other officers present were Larry Stroud, Art Hofmann, Bill Taft, Joe Scannell, and Steve Thomas; Jim Heimbach was absent.

The minutes from the May 7, 2013 officers' meeting were read and approved.

Bill Taft moved that the Show meeting with the judges be moved back by three weeks to September 18. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Bob Moyer moved that we cancel any August meeting. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Bob Moyer moved that the post-Show meeting be held on October 15. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Bill Taft moved that the December meeting be held at the home of Linda Illsey and Joe Ajello. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Bob Moyer moved that we continue to send all SCWA emails, including the Forum, to all present and past members for whom we have current email addresses.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

2014 Meeting Calendar

All dates and venues are tentative and subject to change.

January 14: Ian Agrell, carver; at Scott Borski's shop in Petaluma. No heat, no chairs; dress warmly and BYOC.

February 4: Ron Ashby, shellac and finishing; at Rancho Cotate High School Woodshop. Ron owns Shellac.net.

March 4: Tom Ribbecke, guitar maker; at the shop in Windsor.

April 5 (a Saturday): Paul Discoe, Japanese based timber joinery; at Joinery Structures in Oakland.

May 6: Russell Baldon, California School of the Arts (S.F.); trends in post-modern furniture, studio furniture; at Cotati Cottages.

June 3: Jefferson Shallenberger, furniture maker, past judge at *Artistry in Wood*; probably at Cotati Cottages.

July 12 (a Saturday): Small Shops meeting followed by BBQ; seven shop owners have volunteered so far.

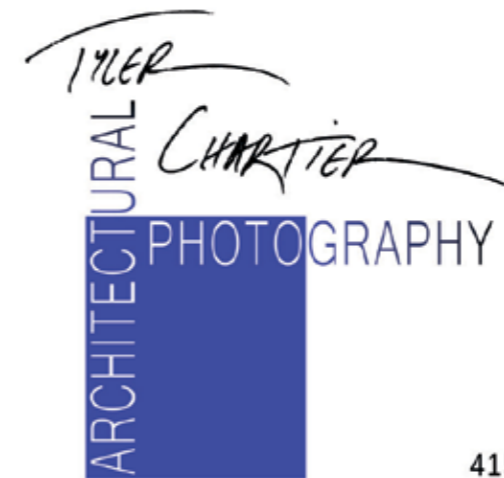
August, *Artistry in Wood* show, no dates as of yet.

September: Show meeting with makers of pieces, date TBD.

October: New Materials; presented by industry reps or their stand-ins: Pure Timbers, Kerei Wood, 3M products. Festool, Blum products; at Andy Jacobsen's shop in Petaluma.

November: Guild meeting/skills; venue TBD

December: Holiday party; venue TBD



tylerchartier.com
tyler@tylerchartier.com
415.264.0638 • 707.386.4882

You Only Go Around Once

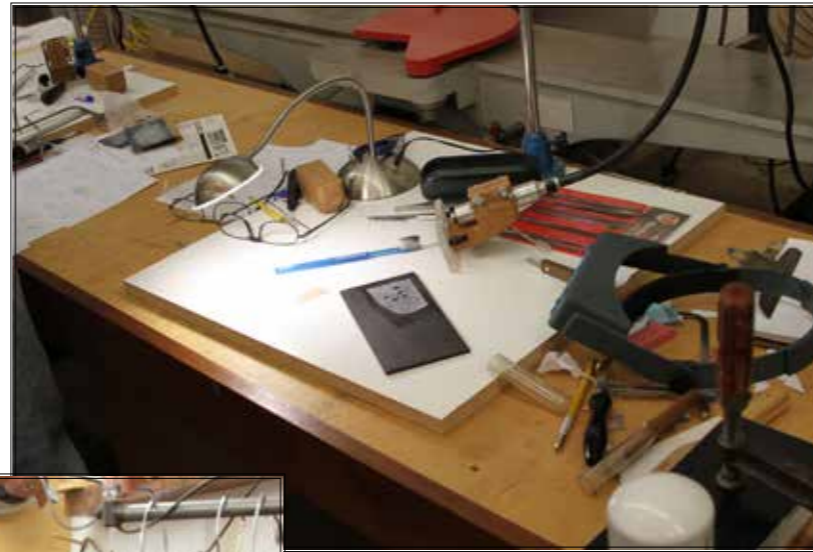
by Jose Cuervo

This year I treated myself to an early Christmas present: Larry Robinson's shell inlay class, conducted in David Marks' fine woodshop. Having reached the point in my life that I realize the fun can't go on forever, I am determined to taste everything on the menu. This two-day class was a gourmet treat, served up by a master chef. I had always heard Larry was a minimalist when it came to conversation; nothing could be further from the truth. While not exactly a chatterbox, he is nonetheless an amiable, self-effacing man who has acquired some amazing skills in his lifetime, and knows how to distill teaching down to the essentials, with no wasted time.



This was a beginner's class, and Larry assumed we knew next to nothing, which in my case was certainly true. He began with a discussion of the various types of shell materials in common use: mother-of-pearl, abalone (several types), paua (a small very colorful

abalone from New Zealand), as well as other materials such as copper, brass, aluminum, gold, silver, platinum, and synthetics such as Corian and Plexiglas. He also discussed the various types of ivory, and a vegetable ivory substitute called tagua nut that is familiar to woodturners. He had samples of all the shells and other



materials available to look at, and he had several of his guitars and other works on display as well.

Each of the ten students had his/her own workstation, equipped with a Foredom flexible-shaft router fitted with a .030" solid-carbide endmill, a work light, a jeweler's saw with blades not much bigger than a horse hair, and a jeweler's vee-block with a vacuum pickup. A few miscellaneous hand tools and an ebony board completed the package.

Larry provided the class with sheets of designs that we could choose from, and after describing and demonstrating his own techniques for inlay, we were turned loose in his remnant pile to pick materials with which to implement

our chosen design. David fired up the dust collector, and we were off and running.

Sunday we continued on our projects, until Larry announced he would do a demonstration of signature cutting. One of the students, Deborah, wrote her name on a piece of paper, which Larry then super glued to a piece of shell. With a video camera hovering over his workspace (so we could watch his progress greatly enlarged on the big screen TV overhead) he proceeded to cut out her signature, cutting just outside the ink lines, up one side and down the other. The result was spectacular, but the real surprise came when he picked up the piece with tweezers and walked it around the classroom. The whole thing was no more than an inch long! As Larry never ceased reminding us, it was a demonstration of what can be done with lots of practice.



(Photos in this story are by Jose Cuervo).



Larry has been doing shell inlay since 1975, and is constantly amazed at his good fortune of being able to make a living doing something he loves. That he is very good at it is readily apparent. What is apparent to me is that he is also a great teacher of the craft. While watching us work, he would make suggestions when he recognized a student might need a special nudge, but otherwise he let us explore the medium and learn by doing. His greatest gift to us is the thought that, yes, I can do that!

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 |
| <u>Editor</u> | Joe Scannell | (415) 892-9104 | | | |

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 _____

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