



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 38, Issue 1

January 2018

## *Time for a Tuneup*

A native of Oxfordshire, England, **Andrew Carruthers** worked at the Lawrence Berkeley Research Labs before deciding to follow his passion for building stringed instruments. He studied at the Welsh School of Violin Making and Repair, near Cardiff, and after graduating joined the restoration workshops of Bein and Fushi in Chicago to apprentice under the guidance of master cello restorer, Russell Wagner. In 1996 he opened his own workshop in Santa Rosa, California, providing restoration services to the violin trade. Regular clients have included some of the world's leading violin dealers. These days he spends most of his time building new instruments. Carruthers violins, violas and cellos are played by professional and amateur musicians across the US and in Europe.



This month's meeting brings us back to **180 Studios**, 150 Todd Road, Santa Rosa.

The January 9 meeting begins at 7pm. 180 Studios is located just off Highway 101 at the southwest corner of the Todd Road exit off 101.

Go west on Todd Road for a very short distance. Turn left at the open gate **JUST BEFORE THE RAILROAD TRACKS**. If you go over the tracks, you have gone too far.

From the west, make your way to Todd Road by going south on Stony Point Road from Hwy 12. Turn left on Todd Road. Continue for a few miles. **JUST AFTER THE RAILROAD TRACKS**, turn right at the open gate. If you get to Highway 101, you have gone too far. See you there!

## SCWA Annual Meeting and Election

The 2017 Annual Meeting of the SCWA was called to order by Chairman Tom Vogel at 7pm on Tuesday, December 12. This meeting is normally held in November, for the purpose of electing a new governing board, as well as other business such as voting on changes to our Bylaws. This year the November date conflicted with the *Artistry in Wood* meeting with the judges, and so was put off a month.

With one exception, the existing Board members all agreed to stand for reelection. Rod Fraser volunteered to run for the position of Webmaster, which is being vacated by the dedicated and hard working Steve Greenberg.

Although well attended, the meeting was just shy of a quorum (20% of 140 members=28) and so the usual election course could not be followed. However, as Bill Taft pointed out, since all the candidates were unopposed, they could be voted into office by acclamation, and so this was proposed and seconded, and the whole thing was over in a flash.

Judy Garland gave the annual Treasurer's Report, as follows:

- We started the year with a balance of \$8525.
- We received \$4970 in membership dues.
- The *Artistry in Wood* show income was about \$1400.
- An additional \$190 was received from Museum Gift Shop.
- Show expenses have been about \$1500.
- The Association purchased a new \$780 projector
- Expenses for the Annual Holiday Party are not yet in.
- Ignoring the party expenses, the ending balance is \$9640.



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## The Maker's Meeting

by Joe Scannell

At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting and Election, the floor was turned over to Show Chair Don Jereb, who began with a discussion of the conduct of the Judges' Meeting last month. He acknowledged some dissatisfaction among members with the fact that only the Best of category and Achievement Award winners had been mentioned and critiqued. The reason initially given for this was insufficient time, but some recalled that in past years the judges managed to bring every piece under the lens, if only for a minute or so. Don promised that this would be corrected in the future.

In this same vein, he wanted to have each maker present at this meeting, particularly those who had not been award winners, step forward and speak about his/her piece, without feeling rushed for time. And so the floor was given over to the Makers themselves, beginning with **Dugan Essick**.

Dugan began with his maple arm chair, a design he uses in classes he teaches in his shop in Grass Valley. Some of his students want to build a Maloof-style rocker, but that is a big chunk to bite off in a one week class. So he eliminated the rockers and simplified the joinery by using a large Domino machine, making his own dominoes out of wenge for a nice accent. His glue of choice is epoxy for just about everything. The splat is a three layer bent lamination done in a vacuum press. The joints are accented with pieces of wenge, which has the added advantage of masking minor inaccuracies in the fit - if the joints were maple-to-maple, any gaps would be much more evident.

Asked how he shaped the seat, he says he just carves it. He starts by making a horseshoe shaped groove

about 3/4" deep into the seat blank. This is the final depth. Then he just carves and grinds everything around it until he has the shape he wants.

The finish? Old Masters gel. He uses it on most everything. The trick is in the sanding; he goes to 600.



Curly Maple Chair by Dugan Essick Photo by Debbie Wilson

Dugan also entered another chair, this one a rocker made of marine mahogany plywood. The main structure is two layers of 3/4" ply and one 1/4" ply, with a 1/4" thick plate of carbon fiber and epoxy buried inside. He showed us a piece of the carbon fiber, and this writer can attest to its rigidity (for more on this subject, check out the *Wood Forum*, June 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/Jun16WF> page 9). It's like steel, but at a small fraction of the weight.



*Lady Gaga Rocker*  
by Dugan Essick

The splat on this chair is made of Kevlar cloth and epoxy. He chose the Kevlar for its red color. The finish on the chair is sprayed automotive paint.

Greg Zall asked about shaping the carbon fiber. The carbon fiber cloth is very difficult to cut, and the Kevlar is even worse. So Dugan has a \$70 pair of scissors that he uses, and that does the job. The exemplar he brought with him was 1/4" thick, and consisted of 16 layers. The strength is developed by cross-lapping the layers at the joint area as you build it. It must be accurately shaped before glue-up; once the epoxy has hardened completely, it will nearly destroy a saw blade.

Next in the batter's box was **Larry Stroud**, the maker of an English brown oak *Shoe Storage Bench*. Larry began by saying that the interesting thing about it is the wood, which is not necessarily from England. It is white oak, and may also be from France or Germany. The wood is from a tree that has been infected with a fungus called *Fistulina hepatica*, also sometimes known as the Beefsteak Fungus, due to its resemblance to a piece of prime beef. The fungus attacks dead wood as well as living trees, but does not do much damage. It turns white oak to a rich brown color. It does not cause spalting and the resulting loss of structural integrity. Instead, it just produces the color change,

and also "softens" the wood a bit, making it easier to plane and work with hand tools. James Krenov was fond of the wood, and that is how Larry came to possess this timber. Krenov wanted to buy some for himself from Gilmer Wood Company in Oregon, and needed someone else to build up the order for a better price.

Larry has used the English brown oak on some small boxes, but does not feel it works well on large projects. In this case, he felt the use of the spalted maple panels in front would tone down the brown oak. He really enjoyed working with it on this project. His finish is shellac.



*Shoe Storage Bench* by Larry Stroud

*Photos this page by Debbie Wilson*



*Comfortable Interpretation of Gerrit Rietveld's Red/Blue Chair 1923 by Don Jereb*

**Don Jereb's** chair is his interpretation of Danish designer Gerrit Rietveld's Red/Blue Chair which dates from the early twentieth century. Don has always been enamored by the simplicity and design innovation of that chair. It was initially designed and mass produced without coloration in 1918. Rietveld later painted it with bold primary colors in 1923. Examples of the chair are found in numerous museums throughout the world. It was ahead-of-its-time IKEA. The original chair is lacking in comfort, and Don's goal was to make a comfortable chair influenced by the basic design concept yet left open to his own design and wood implementation efforts. The chair frame is solid American white ash dyed with black leather dye (!), and the seat and back are ash veneer and bending plywood, formed in a vacuum press. The edge inlay of American holly and Gabon ebony provides a nice detail. Lacquer finish. Very attractive and very comfortable.

Asked how he did the joinery, Don replied, "With a great deal of hair loss." The joints in the frame are essentially saddle joints. The pieces started out square, the joints were cut, then the pieces were rounded and shaped as required.



*Jack's Beanstalk by Joe Scannell*

Attention turned next to the three children's footstools by **Joe Scannell**. He has been making these for more than 30 years. The original design was simply three pieces of wood, joined with through mortise-and-tenon, with a simple carving on the top. This evolved over the years into the present design, which features legs which are bandsawn sections of a cone. It's a lot simpler than it sounds, and offers a profile that he likes a lot. The tops are attached with twelve hickory dowels, which eliminates the through tenons and leaves a clean, unobstructed top for carving.

The top of one of the stools in the show, *Emma's Footstool*, is made from privet, which seldom achieves tree stature. In this case it was an old tree from his daughter's backyard. The wood is lovely to carve.

The carving on these stools are his original designs, featuring the child's name and incorporating some of the child's favorite animals. Drawing the design, the part he likes the best, is probably 30% of the work, and the design often undergoes further refinement during the carving.



*Double Dribble by Joe Scannell*



*Emma's Footstool by Joe Scannell*

*Photos this page by Debbie Wilson*



Michael pointed out that the original table design did not include the distinctive wishbone underpinning. The table had an unsettling habit of racking left and right when it was touched, because there was nothing to prevent it doing so. He designed the wishbone brace to correct this flaw, and in doing so gave the piece an elegant, uplifting profile.

The drawer box is a trapezoid, with the sides flaring out in consonance with the upward sweep of the legs.



It seems to float between the leg structure and the top. The maple and Port Orford cedar drawers are dovetailed. The drawer box itself is joined with splined miters, but with an interesting twist.

**Michael Selser** brought some of the router templates he had planned to use to shape the legs of his mahogany *Hall Table*. They correspond to the shape of the legs, but with the addition of tabs opposite the glue joints. These legs were made in this shape, and thus had built in cauls for the glue-up, after which they were carved away. But he didn't actually use the templates; he realized that the time spent perfecting the templates could just as well be spent on spokeshaving the legs themselves to perfection, so he roughed them out on the bandsaw.



*Michael Selser with his new Lie-Nielsen smoother*

*Photos this page by José Cuervo*

The spline is actually two pieces of wood joined in a finger joint and then glued up on a form to achieve the needed angle. The assembly is then trimmed to the required size and inserted into grooves in the miter joint. A clever bit of joinery, like a hidden dovetail miter but without the agony.

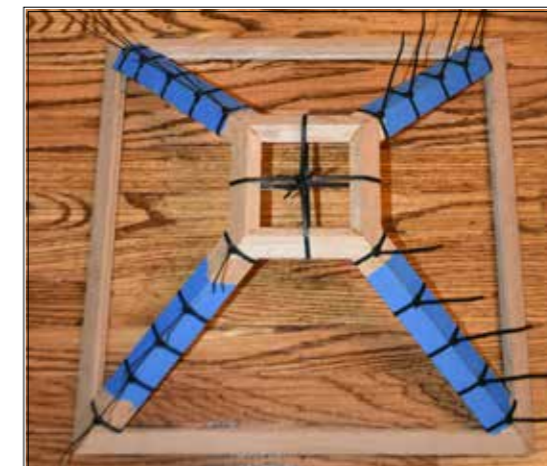
The top is a four-way match veneer; the shelf is a two-way veneer match. He used a very thin strip of ebony inside the edge banding frames of each for accent. Both the top

and the shelf, at 1" plus, are actually thicker than they appear. That thickness seemed okay in the mockup, but in the final piece he decided to bevel the underside of both components to give a lighter appearance.



**Bob Roudman's** Arts and Crafts style table lamps came up for discussion next. The white oak timber is paired with two similar Matowi tiles to form the bases, but that was fairly straightforward. Making the frame for the shade was the hard part. After dimensioning the materials, there were nearly 100 angled cuts to be made. Bob used many jigs and fixtures to ensure accuracy, and in the glue up he employed lots of tie wraps as clamps to hold things together.

He had never worked with mica before, and learned a lot in the process. Mica in this application is actually a sheet of mica chips bonded with shellac. It is rather brittle, and chips easily when cut. Some people use



scissors for a shearing cut. Bob tried tin snips, but was unhappy with the results. Finally, he settled on a fine metal cutting bandsaw, and got what he was after.



Tom's cloud shelf is made from a single piece of black walnut, and features the traditional fudegaeshi ("brush return"), a decorative upward curve of the free ends of the top and cloud shelves that is apparently meant to prevent a writing brush from rolling off. This type of shelving is usually found in or associated with a tokonoma in a Japanese home, and is used for the purpose of displaying objects of unusual beauty or function.

In the process of making this piece, he learned a new joint, called rosoku-hozo ("candle flare-tenon"). This is a mortise-and-tenon joint that runs lengthwise up through the corner posts of the piece, turning several pieces of wood into one long leg, with the shelves sandwiched in between.

The base includes a pair of dovetailed drawers. While he did not faithfully copy any particular example of the cloud shelf, he does not think for a moment that this is an original design. But it is a beautiful interpretation.



*Usukasumi-Dana* by Thomas Vogel

**Thomas Vogel** had three entries this year, one of them a display shelf in the Edo Sashimono style. Known as usukasumi-dana ("thin mist shelf" or "cloud shelf") the name refers to the floating feeling of the interior shelves. The asymmetry seen in this shelf is found commonly in Japanese architecture and furniture. It is also known as a chigai-dana, translated as "different shelf," a reference to the staggered arrangement of the shelves.



*Small Bench* by Mark Tindley

**Mark Tindley** described his *Small Bench* in oak as "one plank of wood, cut up and rejoined with dovetails, ridiculously simple, a two day project." But it's one of his favorite projects, mostly because of the wood, a beautiful wide piece of figured oak. He's already had two offers to buy it, so he may wind up making another and keeping everyone happy.

*Show photos this page by Debbie Wilson*

*Detail photos this page by José Cuervo*

According to the museum's placard, *Isfahan* by **Joe Van Arx** is a jewelry cabinet. That's the short description. In Joe's own words, "This did not start out as a piece of furniture, and some of you are probably thinking

it didn't end up that way either." It started out as a mirror, and Joe realized as he developed the design that there was really no room for a mirror. So it became a door, and he let that door drive the design of the rest of the piece.

When he ventures to design a piece, he sets up some parameters. First, to advance his skills he always wants to do something, a technique, that he hasn't done successfully before. Second, it must be technically challenging. And third, he wants to end up with the illusion that there is only one of these in the world.

As he sees it, there are two ways of looking at a piece such as this. A customer will perceive it at a visceral level. It is designed to evoke an emotional response, not a cerebral one. He tries to forestall any cerebral analysis of the piece for as long as possible. A woodworker, on the other hand, will immediately try to categorize the piece into one of the standard idioms, such as Arts and Crafts, Mid-Century Modern, etc. The woodworker is cerebralizing the experience. "He will quickly note the apparent lack of wood. In fact,



the only wood on the front is this," holding up a small piece of molding. "It is used to hold the iridized glass in place, and there are between 50 and 60 feet of the stuff on the front."

"There was no borrowing of the current West Coast vocabulary: clean lines, Asian-inspired, lack of ornamentation, prominent grain and wood choices.



No obeisance to the Church of Krenov. It is not orthogonal, no tyranny of straight lines. There is no visible joinery, for two reasons. First, it would be inconsistent with the design.

Second, I think it's inconsistent with *most* designs." He rhetorically asked, "Would Christian Dior design a gown, then feature the zipper and stitching?"

The woods used are all humble local woods, claro walnut, redwood, curly maple, all subservient to the design of the door, and they are on the inside. He made an attempt to hide the hardware, believing that hardware is "a necessary evil imposed on us by the need to be functional."

Joe is no fan of piston-fit drawers ("If you took it to Tucson, it would rattle. In Tallahassee, it would lock up.") and avoided them here. He uses the Scandinavian NK drawer system. "It's brain-dead simple, and immune to the vagaries of humidity." It is also easy to implement in orthogonal, polygonal, even nonstandard

cabinet shapes like one that he once built shaped like an amoeba.

Joe stresses that he is an engineer, so he approaches woodworking from that direction. He acknowledges that 200 years ago he probably would

have been burned at the stake for these opinions. Thankfully the audience on this evening was more tolerant.

Turning attention to the Baltic plywood base, Joe said it may seem like a frivolous design, but if you were of Arabic heritage you would recognize the shape as the most beautiful calligraphy in the world, and the base is a three dimensional representation of the letter



(meem). The door represents a twelve-point star that also appears in many places, including the Great Mosque in Isfahan, Iran.

**Steve Forrest** took a class on hollow turning from Charles Farrar (<http://www.charlesfarrar.com>) at the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina, and they cut up a couple of nice logs into turning blanks. Steve learned some great hollow-turning techniques there, and brought his piece home to complete. He had never turned a collar before, so that ebony collar was a new accomplishment. When he brought it home he didn't have any more of the maple, so he used a piece of liquidambar for the top. The finish is a David Marks recipe with lots of sanding in between.



*Maple Vessel* by Steve Forrest

Someone in the audience asked about the hole in the side of the vessel. Steve said it just showed up. He had a piece of wood with a hole in it, and this is what it turned into. What a pleasant surprise.

*Photos this page by Debbie Wilson*

**Bill Taft** had two entries in the Show this year. One, *Crabby*, was Bill's first venture into mosaic marquetry. His other entry, simply called *Four*, was so named because it comprises four panels, four different leaves, and four different woods (purpleheart, yellowheart, green poplar, and padauk). As Bill pointed out, for the Show the four panels were arranged in a square, but they could just as easily be arranged in a horizontal row, a column, a diamond, or whatever a person wanted. He made the four panels as separate elements for the very practical reason that each was the maximum size that could be worked in his 16" scroll saw. Bill uses a piece of throw-away plywood as a "construct" to cut out and assemble the bits of veneer that will become the picture; as he cuts out each element he simultaneously is cutting the same shape out of the plywood, so that when the last piece is glued in, the plywood is gone. Using a well-tuned tablesaw, Bill saws his own 1/8" veneer from lumber, a technique he settled on 10~12 years ago when he began doing marquetry.



*Four* by Bill Taft



*Crabby* by Bill Taft

**Don Jereb** also entered a small side table in the Show. Describing it as "a quick build with no fancy joints," it is made from vertical grain Douglas fir and has a light feeling that fulfills its purpose perfectly.



*Shaker End Table* by Don Jereb



When **Paul Marini** was twenty he was out hunting and shot a squirrel. The experience ended his hunting career, and now he feels compelled to protect the animals of the world. His challenge was to create something so that people would not have to go out and shoot these animals. Could he create a life-sized realistic jaguar using only pictures?

Paul Marini's *Roar* is a life-sized carving in basswood of a South American jaguar. Paul went to great pains to make it accurately sized and anatomically correct, to the extent of eliciting photographic help and other assistance from the Sacramento and San Diego zoos. He printed out these photos to life size and used them to determine accurate dimensions of all the details.

The basswood is carved to shape and embellished by pyrography with a hair-like texture that follows the animal's own hair patterns, which direct rainwater to run off. He painted the entire piece with acrylic paint. In addition, he used human, dog, and horse hair, several weights of monofilament line, and white brush bristles to add to the realism. A zookeeper in San Diego even counted the number of whiskers a jaguar had on its face for Paul, and reported the range was between 33 and 38, depending on the animal, so Paul used 36 on one side and 38 on the other.

The teeth and claws are carved from plastic. To increase the drama, he made the claws and teeth slightly oversized, his only departure from meticulous accuracy. The chin hair is human, from a friend. Cotati artist Elise Durenberger,

was hired to do the painting, and her dog and horse also contributed hair. Working together, Paul and Elise spent many hours painting the jaguar until it was just right. In particular, they repainted the spots many times while referring to their collection of photos, until they were satisfied with the accuracy.

Elise Durenberger is a local artist (<http://mamacowcreations.blogspot.com>) who has worked on many projects, including, for the last five years, the annual American Graffiti event in Petaluma. When she first got involved in Paul's project, she thought she would just teach Paul to paint, and let him



do it. Paul quickly quashed that notion and put her in the driver's seat, with him following her instructions. So she started by mixing the primary colors and turned Paul loose with a brush. Some days she would come in to find he had started all over again. Some of the jaguar's spots were repainted four times before he felt they were just right. It was definitely a collaboration by two artists.

Paul's other motive in creating this piece was to sell it and donate the proceeds to the Petaluma Fire Department's Bystander CPR Program. Four years ago they saved Paul's life when he had a heart attack. He is looking for a buyer.

**Hugh Buttrum's** bowl was made from a limb of walnut that he cored. The bowl is from the core; he has yet to use the larger, outside piece. Hugh wasn't very chatty about his prizewinner. "Nice piece of wood. It's carved. Turned. Carved. That's all. It's a nice bowl." He carved the bowl on his new sit-upon carving bench. He also got two other bowls out of this blank by coring, so that one chunk of limb gave up four bowls in Hugh's skillful hands. Nice work!



*Turned/Carved Claro Walnut Bowl by Hugh Buttrum*

*Photo by Debbie Wilson*

Thanks to all who participated in the *Artistry in Wood* Show this year, either as volunteers or as entrants. It was another great year. A special thanks is due to Show Chair Don Jereb for his expert supervision of everything.

A reminder, the Show closes on January 7, 2018. Entries must be picked up the following day, January 8, between 9am and 4pm.



*And the winner is...*



In case you missed the clue on page 5, the Maker's Choice Award this year went to Michael Selser. The winner was determined by a vote of the membership, and the vote count was made at the conclusion of the December 12 Maker's Meeting. The coveted Lie-Nielsen #4 Smoothing Plane will be in good hands. Thank you, Lie-Nielsen Toolworks, and congratulations, Mike!

## Officers of the Association

<u>Chairman</u>	Tom Vogel	<u>Secretary</u>	Lars Andersen
<u>Program Chair</u>	Chuck Root	<u>Guild Chair</u>	Mark Tindley
<u>Treasurer</u>	Judith Garland	<u>Show Chair</u>	Don Jereb
<u>Editor</u>	Joe Scannell	<u>Web Master</u>	Rod Fraser

*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 [SCWAEditor@gmail.com](mailto:SCWAEditor@gmail.com). Advertisements are also accepted with a nominal cost for paid members.

## 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.

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Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to help further the organizational goals of our volunteer-run association? Please tell us how you would like to help:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and completed application to:

Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402