



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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Name That Wood

by Art Hofmann

The upcoming meeting of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association will be a field trip to the Richmond Field Station, across the Bay in Richmond, CA.

The Forest Products Laboratory at the Richmond Field Station deals with a wide variety of wood issues. As part of U.C. Berkeley, the FPL studies forest resources and their environment. We will meet at the lab and hear a talk with Rick Satomi, a lab representative, on Saturday, April 11 at 10 am. After the talk, we will have time to peruse their extensive collection of

wood samples from trees around the world, all 12,700 of them. The collection is fabled, the largest west of the Mississippi, and makes this an event not to be missed. As usual, you are welcome to bring friends and family.

It would be a good idea to buddy up for this one.

Either make arrangements beforehand or go to the Petaluma Park & Ride at Exit 472B (this is the Lakeville



interchange in southern Petaluma) between 8:45 and 9:00am and pick up some other members who want a ride or get a ride for yourself.

The Forest Products Lab is in Richmond, CA, south of Sonoma County. Cross the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (I-580) and exit at Regatta Boulevard; go straight, pass through the stop light, follow the

freeway frontage road past the grove of eucalyptus trees, look for U.C. Berkeley signs, and turn right at your first opportunity (hairpin turn). Forest Products Lab is in the first building on your left.

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After the meeting, it will be lunch time. There is a restaurant nearby, called Assemblage, which is reputed to be pretty good. The name is based on the fact that Ford had an assembly spot here, and it is also near

the monument to Rosie the Riveter. Directions are as follows: Go back to the stoplight from Forest Product Lab, and take Regatta Boulevard (a left turn); take a left on Marina Way South to Hall Ave, take a right onto Hall Avenue, and go to Harbour Way South. Take a left onto Harbour Way South and go to the Crane Pavilion. Assemblage is in the Crane Pavilion, which fronts on the water.



Vintage Tools Continue To Do the Job

by Art Hofmann

Our March meeting began around twenty minutes late. It was held at the shop of Whit McLeod in Healdsburg, and members were milling around and socializing thanks to some hospitality ala Wine Country, which featured a table heavy with wine and beer, fruit, cheese, cookies and such. The wine received compliments from several members who know their vintages.

We still have no chairman, so Larry Stroud, our Guild Chair and long-time Board Member, substituted once more. Larry began the evening by alluding to the very fact of vacancies on our board, and asked for volunteers. The positions, he promised, would not be too onerous or demanding, a few hours per month. Joe Scannell echoed this, saying that he had only been a member a few months or so when he volunteered for one of the positions, and that the experience has been a pleasant one.

Larry moved on to the subject of DVD's pertaining to woodworking, saying that with the present collection from Bill Anderson, some DVDs of David Marks' *Woodworks* show, and some other materials, SCWA would be instituting a system where a member could order a given title from a listing on our website, receive it by mail, and send it back, a la Netflix. More will be forthcoming about this.

Larry next called for visitors to step forth and identify themselves, which a series of about five or six did.

Some were guests and friends of Whit McLeod's and others were potential members.

Larry asked for the treasurer's report, and Bill Taft responded that current membership, as listed on the website members roster, is 170 members. We have about 100 members who have paid their dues for 2015. With new members and the renewals that are expected at show time we should have about 120 members, which is our normal membership. We currently have just over \$8000 in the bank. This amount is this large because we receive our dues revenue at the beginning of the year and have few early year expenses. We have a balanced budget. We expect our revenue to be slightly less than \$6000 and our expenses to be the same amount.



It was time for announcements. Mike Wallace told us of about the Shaker exhibit at the Sonoma Museum of Art, and said he would try to organize a docent-led trip to the show for the organization.

Art Hofmann told us that our next meeting would be held at the Richmond Field Station where wood samples, thousands of them stashed in drawers, are available for viewing; and that a representative of the Field Station would be available to explain to us the function and work of the field station. Art referred to Don Naples, who was present and had actually, many years

before, visited the Field Station. Don said that his visit had been worthwhile. Don also mentioned that he had some items for sale from the estate of Carl Johnson, and a deal on some Baltic birch plywood panels that had been hanging around his shop.

Walt Doll introduced Whit McLeod. Whit's business is an extension of the wine industry. The industry discards wood and Whit makes things, furniture mostly, of the discarded wood, then sells it back to the wine industry or anyone else who will buy it.

Whit took over at the slide projector and continued. There was a period of time in the wine industry when redwood tanks were being discarded, along with

barrels made of French oak, or oak from the former Yugoslavia or Hungary. Whit, an inveterate scrounger in the good sense, began in the 'eighties to relieve the scrap piles of the wine industry of this wood waste. Thus began an exploration of Whit's furniture and wood product operation. Along the way, we learned other interesting things,

such as the history of the wine making business in California. Whit began what was to turn into a full time enterprise in the mid-eighties in Arcata, where he was employed as a forester for the U.S. The slide show began with an image of two trucks at an old winery in Martinez. The trucks were there to haul out the remnant pieces of an aging tank, the source of the wood that in Whit's hands was to become furniture: chairs, stools and useful pieces of all description. The wine industry has gone through a transformation since those days from family owned operations to corporate dominated agri-business. Wooden tanks and barrels

were discarded along the way in favor of stainless steel tanks in which the final taste of the product is manipulated by the introduction of oak “flavor sticks.”

Whit took us through a number of his pieces, one of them a dramatic Morris chair in the Arts and Crafts style made from barrel staves, another a bar stool from recycled barrel tops, their legs made of staves and the rings that hold them together at the bottom of laminated short pieces of oak. Whit told showed a series of pictures of the tools and process used to make the laminated wood rings used at the bottom of these stools.



He cuts the oak sticks into very thin strips, joins them together using scarf joints and then winds the rings on a rotating fixture applying glue to one surface. He uses Tight-Bond II because it is FDA approved as non-toxic.

Round café tables are another popular item that he makes, the table tops out of barrel ends, the bent, laminated legs from staves. Several years ago, he designed a folding chair made of barrel stave parts for which he received a patent. Now Whit uses the endless supply of three foot ‘flavor’ sticks that are discarded every nine months or so from the wineries. He has developed a process of laminating them together to obtain longer boards that he then turns into bars for tasting rooms, or tops for kitchen islands, and even flooring. The three foot flavor sticks essentially become boards up to 18’

or 20’ which have the thickness of a counter top, plus some. He uses Titebond II here again because it is food safe according to the FDA. Sometimes, for instance, he uses it for cutting boards. Metal in the form of barrel hoops is by-product of this operation, so Whit has a found uses for these as well, such as legs of tables, garden sculptures, etc.

As for finishing, Whit has employed ammonia fuming in the past, which works wonders in terms of hiding the pink coloration from wine contact in oak. It turns oak a pleasing brown shade. He has also used shellac on some of the items he has made, numerous coats and rather time consuming. Currently he is a fan of Rubio Monocoat, because, as the name implies, it is a one-coat finish. He uses a variety of techniques to obtain finishes that are pleasing. One that is interesting is “convection” toasting, where the oak is heated to produce tones that range from light to deep brown to a point where the oak looks like walnut. He doesn’t worry about gaps or voids: these he fills with a combination of tartaric acid from the wine barrels mixed with Titebond II, which makes for a very good filler.

Whit talked about marketing too *in passim*. He finds it difficult and admits it is not his forte. Still, he has not been without his successes. He sold many things to Silver Oak Winery, such as his folding chairs and a bar arrangement, and has marketed through online outfits such as Napa Style and Arts and Crafts Forever as well as his own website.

In response to a question, Whit acknowledged that he works mostly alone, pulling in an extra person when a simpler repetitive task presents itself.

Throughout Whit’s talk he alluded to his machinery, which after the slide show members examined. Whit gave a guided tour through his shop for about ten members who were interested, moving among the behemoth machines. This machinery is essentially vintage, too; they are enormous and evoke the days when the United States was a manufacturing nation.



Their mass and bulk bespeak that former age. These machines, including a chain mortiser, several old shapers, a straight line shaper, and an old bandsaw, carry names such as Onsrud, and were made in the eastern U.S., many specifically for the furniture industry. One is a clamping press that is enormous. (More photos are found on the next page). Whit obtained these for a song and rehabilitated them. Now they function just fine and need very little maintenance. Finally, Whit’s hospitality and presentation were rewarded with the usual well-deserved round of applause. Members left at around 9:15 pm.

All photos in this article are by José Cuervo.



**WOODSHOP
MERCANTILE LLC**

A Mobile Store bringing Tools and
Supplies to North Bay Woodworkers

for store location visit
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Stroke sander



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Can you say "Clamps"?

WOOD FOR SALE

1200 bf - 4/4 Bocote

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300 bf Mexican Rosewood

This wood is air-dried to 10% MC, has a bandsawn finish, and has been in the U.S. since 1996.

Lengths vary from 5 to 8 feet, widths are in the 6" range

\$7 per board foot, \$50 minimum

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Charlie's Stool by Joe Scannell

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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 SCWAEditor@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