



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

[www.sonomawoodworkers.com](http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com)

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March 2011

## February Meeting: An evening with Merryll Saylan



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## March Meeting - Michael Wallace

**Who: Ron Hock**

**Where: Rancho Cotate High School  
5450 Snyder Lane  
Rohnert Park**

**When: March 1st, 7:00PM**

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, March 1st, in Bill Hartman's woodshop at Rancho Cotate High School, and will feature expert blade-maker Ron Hock. Ron be talking about tool steel metallurgy and heat treatment, including a propane-torch-powered hardening demonstration. If time and attention spans permit, he will do a presentation about abrasives. He will bring books and some blades to sell. BRING CASH OR CHECKS, PLEASE!

Ron Hock is the owner of Hock Tools, a 25-year-old cottage industry that makes superior blades for planes and other woodworking tools. Hock, once a struggling knifemaker, started the business when students from the College of the Redwoods came to him for irons for the wooden planes they were making at the school. He tooled up for plane irons, learned about plane-making and found a niche market of fussy woodworkers who appreciate a superior tool. Ron earned a BA and MFA in studio art from the University of California at Irvine. In the ensuing quarter-century, he's learned about tool steel metallurgy, cutting edge geometry, hand woodworking tools, and sharpening.

Rancho Cotate High School is on Snyder Lane, south of Rohnert Park Expressway and north of East Cotati Avenue. The address is 5450 Snyder Lane. The main parking lot is on the north side of the campus. After leaving your car, walk east towards the hills, past several buildings and fences until you see the woodshop cyclone. We'll try to put out a sign or two.

## Calendar

Here is the calendar for the next few months:

April 5th - Ejler Hjorth-Westh, chairs, design and construction

May 14th - Bruce Johnson, sculptor extraordinaire

June 7th - TBD

## February Meeting Report

On Tuesday, February 8th at David Marks' shop, guest artist Merryll Saylan regaled us with a carousel of choice images of her works. Using these as a framework, she invited us to hear her journey, chronicling the evolution of her often mold-breaking work in furniture and turning.

Born in New York City, Merryll moved to southern California just before WWII, where she was raised and educated. After high school, where she excelled in music, she went to UCLA where she earned an undergraduate degree in design in the mid-'50's.

It was here that she met and married her first husband and gave birth to three children – after which she gave herself a sabbatical before continuing her education.

Merryll seriously considered pursuing architecture, but, when distance to potential schools became an issue, she chose to stay close to home and took an M.A. in woodworking at Cal State Northridge. It was here that she learned general woodworking techniques, and there were a number of slides of her Northridge class work – “projects with stipulations” – including a folding table, a magazine rack, and various boxes with wooden hinges. She admitted in passing that furniture was not her forté, but that she developed a bit of a “thing” about boxes. This was evidenced repeatedly in the slide show in the form of small turned objects, usually with surface decorations of paint or other treatments, presented in boxes of various sizes and shapes. Her explanation of this work was simple: “I went to art school, so...”



That experience went a long way toward explaining Merryll's many and lasting contributions, particularly to woodturning. She often set herself specific design problems which she solved by turning carefully crafted forms to which she then added various surface treatments, from bleaches, stains, and paints to abrasions and carvings. She described many of these treatments and passed around a number of examples and some of the tools she used to create interesting surface effects. Many of those attending later signed up to meet Merryll at her studio in Berkeley for a weekend workshop where they will get to learn

how to do them.

To continue the historical line: Merryll moved north to the Santa Cruz area [Aptos] in the seventies, and, after several years there, and after attending a class from the SCWA's Michael Cooper, she moved to San Francisco and later to Berkeley, where she had contact with Bob Stockdale, and other noted turners. Along with Bob and his wife, she was an early member of the Baulines Craft Guild. Her current home and studio are in Berkeley, where she moved after living and working for a number of years in San Rafael.

Although her work has encompassed virtually every woodworking genre, Merryll concentrates on turned objects to which she applies fascinating and unusual surface treatments. She related how, when she was laid up from back surgery and couldn't work wood, she took some painting classes and learned a lot about the application of color. Much of her work today is colored using concoctions ranging from dyes to milk paints. She also textures the surface of many of her pieces, especially plates and shallow bowls. Everyone attending the meeting was interested in the tools she uses for surface texturing. Essentially, she uses a die grinder with various plates and grinding pads and carbide-tipped rotary chisels held by Foredom or Dremel tools.



*Maple Bowl, dyed*

She passed around a catalog for these chisels, made by a company called Creative Technologies in Wyoming. The tools can be ordered from the website [www.rotarychisel.com](http://www.rotarychisel.com). (Interesting aside: though the catalog was printed in 2000, the prices listed on the website are exactly the same as those in the catalog!)

The February issue of the Wood Forum lists many of the awards Merryll has won, the galleries and museums where her works have been shown, and the numerous national organizations on whose boards she has served.

All in all, we had a very stimulating and enjoyable evening getting to know this remarkable artist and woodworker. We suspect that we will be seeing the effects of her infectious presentation in upcoming SCWA shows.

—Chuck Quibell, Mike Burwen

## Artistry in Wood 2011

The dates for the show are as follows:

July 8 - Acceptance of pieces

July 13 - Judging event

July 15 - Opening

August (TBD) - Artist night at the museum

September 25 - Closing

The drumbeat for the 2011 Artistry in Wood show continues.

We have distributed a press release to the local media as well as to several woodworking publications informing them of the event. Planning has started on a brochure that will be mailed out to prospective exhibitors. Finally, the advisory committee has been formed.

The members of the advisory committee are:

Bill Taft

Art Hofmann

Mike Burwen

Larry Stroud

Some new questions came in this month about the show. They are:

**The Petaluma Arts Guild space seems nicer than the upstairs gallery of the Sonoma County Museum. Why can't we go there?**

We tried. We contacted the executive director of the Arts Guild and she informed us that their calendar for 2011 was complete. Also, while she knew about our show, she thought that they would not want to do a woodworking show so soon after their current exhibit. We also researched other places. In the end, we will be staying at the museum.

**What's the latest date I can get something to you for exhibiting?**

July 8th is set aside for the usual acceptance process. If you are unable to make that day, please notify Michael Wallace. One possible solution is to have a friend drop off your piece for you. Please note, nothing will be accepted without a signed entrance form.

## Exhibits in the Area

There are these exhibitions in our area that you may be interested in:

The Baulines Craft Guild presents *Forming a Life, Paths in Studio Craft*, through March 18th at the Marin Community Foundation (415-464-2500), 5 Hamilton Landing, Novato. It is open Monday through Friday.

The Petaluma Art Center presents *Family Tree: 65 years of Woodworking in Northern California*, January 21st through March 13th. For information, visit the website: [www.petalumaartcenter.org](http://www.petalumaartcenter.org).

## Lie-Nielsen Tool Event

David Marks will be hosting a Lie-Nielsen Hand Tool Event at his Workshop/Studio on Friday, March 25th, and Saturday, March 26th.

Lie-Nielsen will be holding a special 2-hour presentation for the SCWA on Thursday, March 24th, from 7:00 – 9:00pm. This special event will give SCWA members a preview of what Lie-Nielsen will be demonstrating, including sharpening and hand tool use, during the 2-day event at David's workshop on March 25 and 26th. Demonstrators working for Lie-Nielsen will be on hand to answer your questions. This is a great opportunity to get your hands on every tool Lie-Nielsen makes.

Event Date: March 24th, 7:00 – 9:00pm

Location: David Marks' Woodshop/Studio

2128 Marsh Road

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Take the second driveway that leads directly back to the workshop.



## From the Chairman

I am writing this month's note earlier than normal as we are spending a week in Florida visiting with family, and the text has to be given to the editor before we leave. So, some of the information in it may be outdated.

Those of us at the February meeting were treated to a

wonderful presentation by Merryll Saylan. She presented a slide show of her work with thoughtful descriptions of her intentions in creating each piece. Then she presented some of her work and led a discussion with the audience on color treatments. Thank you, Merryll, we all enjoyed your presentation very much.

On behalf of the SCWA, I want to thank David Marks for hosting our February meeting. David will be hosting a Lie-Nielsen Hand Tool Event on March 25th and 26th. He has arranged for a special two-hour presentation for SCWA members on Thursday, March 24th, starting at 7:00 PM. Look for announcements about this event.

Two of the Exhibitions listed in the February Wood Forum are still open into March. It appears that many of you have attended the 'Family Tree' exhibit at the Petaluma Art Center, and all of the comments that I have heard were very favorable. I enjoyed it and the Baulines Craft Guild 'Masters' exhibit at the Marin Community Foundation very much. I recommend that you see both of these Exhibits.

The article on the 2010 Artistry in Wood Show, announcing the Awards, will be in the March-April 2011 issue of *Woodworker West* magazine. I don't know which pictures will be used in the article, but all of the Award winners will be listed.

We have a full line-up of interesting programs for the year. We are working on getting the meeting schedule put on our web site in a calendar format. We will continue to publish the meeting notices in the Wood Forum.

Entry day for the 2011 Artistry in Wood Show is Friday, July 8th. Just around the corner! Time for everyone to get busy working on your entries.

We have a team of SCWA members for the 2011 Wooden Boat Challenge. Now we need a name; any suggestions? We have just started to put our plan together, but we will be having a practice session, so that we look crisp during the event. We may be having practice events with students from the Rancho Cotate High School woodworking class, either helping them field a team, or using boat building as an interesting instructional opportunity if they do not have a student team in the Challenge. I hope to know more by the time that you are reading this.

By the way, you don't have to be a member of the 'team' to participate in the development of our entry in the Wooden Boat Challenge. We certainly welcome anyone that wants to take part in it, especially in the design and practice sessions. Contact me if you are interested.

—Bill Taft

Credits:

Editing: Michael Burwen Photos: Bob Moyer, Michael Wallace

# WOOD FORUM

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**Join Us!** The Sonoma County Woodworkers Association is a 31-year old association of over one hundred professional and amateur woodworkers who meet monthly at members' shops to share experiences, ideas, techniques, and mutual enjoyment for creating with wood. Membership entitles you to attend monthly meetings, receive Wood Forum, our monthly newsletter, attend our annual show, and apply for seminars and demonstrations. Annual dues, payable at the beginning of each calendar year, are \$25. New members joining after September 30 may, for \$35, have their membership extend through December 31 of the following year. Please consider joining the SCWA and meeting people who, like yourself, are interested in the art and business of fine woodworking. Send dues to:

**PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402 Santa Rosa, CA 95402**

*Wood Forum* is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles, notices, photographs, announcements, and comments for inclusion in the publication. Advertisements are accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch. All submissions for the April issue must be received by March 15, 2011. You may submit your entries to the editor listed below.

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I would like to join the SCWA and meet other people who are interested in the craft, the art, and the business of fine woodworking. Here is my application. I have enclosed a check for the annual dues of \$25 that covers my subscription to Wood Forum and entitles me to attend the monthly meetings.

Send check and completed application to: Sonoma County Woodworkers Association  
PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

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