



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 36, Issue 4

April 2016

Spring Field Trip

by Art Hofmann

SCWA's April meeting will be at the shop of Garry Knox Bennett in Oakland. GKB is in his early eighties and is legendary among studio furniture makers for his chair series, lamps, small tables. As an artist, he is known for his whimsical, inventive and unconventional uses of materials and designs. We will visit his shop as well as his home, which occupies two stories and is filled with his personal collection of studio furniture by Judy McKee, Art Carpenter, Sam Maloof and many others known to woodworkers. If you missed this event when Grif Okie arranged it in '07, here's your chance. Please invite your friends and relatives.



Directions: Take the freeway south and cross the San Rafael-Richmond Bridge. Proceed to Berkeley, and at the maze take Route 880, the Nimitz, to Oakland. Exit at 5th Street, turn right and go one block south. Take a left and proceed to 130 - 4th Street. Allow time for parking.

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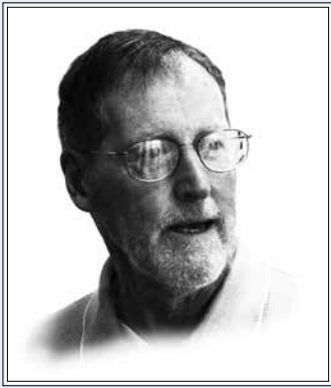
Lunch: Bennett's shop is near Oakland's Chinatown, but Le Cheval is recommended. The address is 1007 Clay Street, Oakland, CA 94607.

To get there, go to 8th Street and take a left; at Clay Street, go right and proceed to the address.



Time/Date: Saturday, April 9, 2016, 11am

Address: 130 - 4th Street, Oakland, CA 94607



A Note from the Chairman

Bill Taft

I hardly ever use a hand plane. Partly because I have never developed the skills necessary, partly because I don't have any good hand planes, but mostly because I use a power tool instead. I learned a lot about hand planes from Scott Wynn's presentation, enough so that I will not be so hesitant to use one now. Thank you Scott and thank you Scott Borski for hosting the March meeting. I'm looking forward to our visit to Garry Knox Bennett's shop and home. It is said to be a real treat for those that appreciate fine studio furniture.

I am somewhat surprised by the number of contacts that I receive through our website. As Chairman, I am one of the contacts listed on the Contact Us page. Most of these are requests for help or information from an experienced woodworker. One of these requests came from the Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation, asking for a woodworker to look at some oak slabs from a Valley Oak that fell on the campus a couple of years ago. SRJC will be celebrating 100 years in 2018, and the Foundation wishes to use this oak lumber to make commemorative gifts for some of their donors. Three of us looked at the wood this week and are preparing a report to send to the Foundation. Depending on what the Foundation decides to do, this may lead to a project that would interest some of our members.

Once again, my goal is to bring more members into sharing the duties of running the Association. One reason for this is that we have board members wishing to retire at the end of this year. The main concern is our inability to attract members to take officer positions. If you are interested in finding out what is involved please contact me.



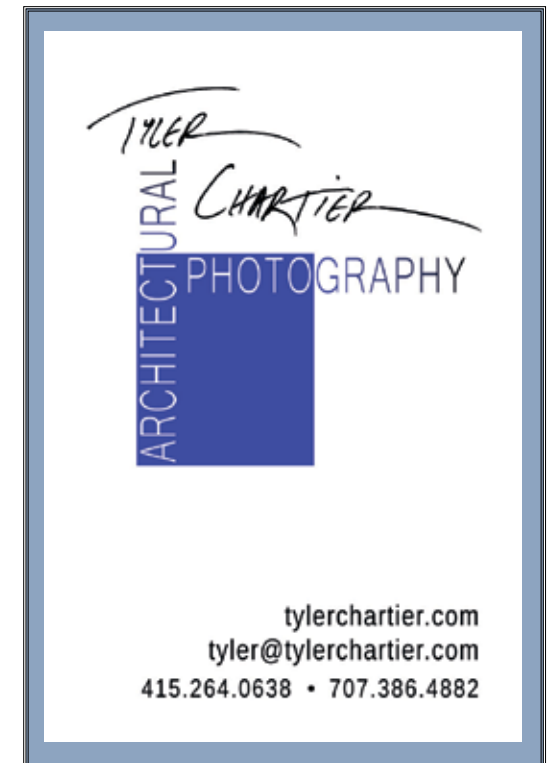
Untitled by Dennis Lashar



Turbo Bowl by Alan Brickman



Padauk bowl by Scott Chilcott





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*Artistry in Wood photos
by Tyler Chartier*



Scott Wynn: a discourse after long experience with handplanes

by Bill Taft and Art Hofmann

The March SCWA meeting was hosted by Scott Borski at his shop in Petaluma. Chairman Bill Taft thanked Scott and opened the meeting at 7:05 pm. About 35 members were in attendance. Board members Art Hofmann, Joe Scannell, Larry Stroud, Judi Garland, Bill Taft and Michael Wallace were present. Two new members and one guest introduced themselves.

Bill mentioned that our membership renewal system seems to be working very well and that most of the members due for renewal in February have renewed. He said that any members wishing to pay their dues at the meeting should give their payment to Judi Garland.

We now have 165 members on the website membership list, a significant increase in the past two years. Bill thanked Don Naples and Alan Bertozzi for holding the recent sharpening class.

Greg Zall announced that there was one opening left for his March 18-19th Marquetry Class. Because of demand for this class he has added a second class, to be held two weeks later.

Michael Wallace has formed our Education Policy Committee. He introduced the members. They have held their first meeting, and Michael will be sending their recommendations from that meeting to the Board.

Bill gave a brief pitch about volunteering, stating that we need more members to step up and help with Association activities. Several board members will be retiring at the end of this year, and we need members to replace them. The duties are not extensive, and any of the officers would be happy to help a volunteer learn.

Bill asked, "How many members regularly read the Wood Forum?" He was pleased that almost all of members raised their hands. He mentioned that his reason for the question was due to his concern with the difficulty of reading it on a smart phone.

Programs Chairman Art Hofmann announced that our next meeting will be a field trip to the shop/home of Garry Knox Bennett on Saturday, April 9th. Then Art introduced Scott Wynn, who was presenting the evening's program on handplanes and their uses.



Photos this page and page 5 are courtesy of Scott Wynn

Scott began his talk with a series of slides, a review of some of his projects of the recent past. We saw examples in the form of a transom, where he employed

a finger plane to smooth the background, shoji screens, a jewelry case, cabinets, and an intricate Japanese style interior, all together rather eclectic and all featuring handplaned wood. Most pieces were remarkably



detailed. Scott was establishing the point that he uses his planes (he brought along a portion of his collection) throughout his work, and that these tools are remarkably versatile if used correctly and given the necessary attention.

Bench planes do three typical tasks: shape and dimension wood, smooth it and flatten it out. The jack plane is usually associated with initial steps in addressing a piece of wood. Scott showed some planes, an English pattern jack plane, and a German one, as examples. Then he turned to jointer planes of varying lengths, followed by a few smoothing planes. But all planes work the same, though they may vary greatly

in appearance. All planes incorporate six common anatomical factors that determine efficient and effective performance: the angle of blade, the opening of the mouth, the use of a chip breaker, the angle of blade bevel, the shape of the blade edge, and the length and width of the plane body.

Only recently have planes become available whose blades are bedded at other than 45 degrees. Comparing blade angles of various planes, Scott found that the higher angled ones are used for hard woods. The



Scott Wynn

Photos by Jose Cuervo

converse holds true as well, namely, that lower angles cut soft woods well. Traditional planes were thus associated with various cultures that often worked in a limited range of woods; the Japanese worked mainly with soft woods like cedar, the English and northern

Europeans with a range of hardwood species, the Thai and Chinese with dense tropical woods, all of which determined the blade angle of their respective planes.

Scott went into a digression at this point: if you want to work a hard wood with a normal plane it is possible to put a back bevel on your blade, a very small one, and you will get good results. Making a plane is an alternative, too, as is finding an antique plane. Scott uses a Chinese plane for planing oak with good results. The lesson here is that the investment in the appropriate plane is worth the money.

Mouth opening of the plane is another all important factor. It should be equal to the thickest shaving that you want to take off with your plane. This might look like a hairline in a plane that you are using for final finishing, or it may be as wide as 1/16" or even an 1/8" in jack planes. There are various ways of closing down the opening; many planes these days have an adjustable throat, and then too there is often the possibility of adjusting the frog. This last option can introduce another problem, however, because the blade is cantilevered without support out in front.

The third tactic to control tearout involves the use of a chipbreaker. As expected, these come in many flavors: a flat bevel-style; a rounded type; the bulbous Stanley type; the Japanese chipbreaker, which is made of laminated steel; and other less common types.

Offering several of the planes from his collection as exemplars, Scott went into the subject of chipbreakers. The Stanley chipbreaker, with its bulbous cross section, doesn't work all that well, sometimes interfering with shavings trying to exit the plane. Millers Falls makes a

patented double action cap iron pressure that applies pressure on the blade at three points, firmly bedding the blade, but in Scott's view this one doesn't measure up either.

Adjusting the chipbreaker is important: for a fine shaving adjust it so that there is just the last bit of brightness to the blade itself, a few thousandths perhaps.



The fourth tactic is the use the blade bevel, the thinnest bevel you can get and not have it fail. Scott said the blade bevel should not be less than about 22 degrees; a more acute bevel angle will crumple quickly. There followed a discussion of various technical points about getting the correct clearance angle here, and which blades behaved well or badly. A2 steel blades, Scott found in his experience, do not hold up well at the low range of bevel angles.

Scott went on to describe another important factor in achieving good performance from a plane, the shape of the cutting edge. The edge should in most cases be a small arc, not a straight line. The radius of the arc will vary according to the type of plane (scrub/jack/smoothen). Only a shooting plane should have a

perfectly straight edge. Scott advocates rounding by putting a finger alternately on each of the corners of the blade as you hone it on a waterstone. This will create just the slightest curve in the edge.

The curve on a blade can be useful in approaching a large board with squirrely grain, namely by going at it with a jack plane at an angle. Scott had a tip, too, for getting a glue-ready joint on a long straight board, namely, holding the jointer plane to one side and keeping it there, presumably guiding it by hand, then reversing this on the matching board.

The final factor in plane performance is related to the blade width and length of the body. The two are related and essentially define a plane's use.

The longer the jointer plane, the straighter the edge you can shoot. In dealing with wooden jointer planes especially, the bottoms must be flat, and indeed, Scott has adopted the Japanese approach here, making sure that there are three points

of contact, namely at the front, throat and back, the other areas being relieved to a slight concavity. It is a subject that he addresses in his book. On a long cast iron plane, Scott advocates checking the bottom with a straightedge to see if it is straight or not, then going to sandpaper and working for several minutes, checking again. If it is badly out of line, it is possible to make a scraper by grinding the tip of a stout file at about 80°; this will remove metal quite rapidly.

Scott discussed various fine points on various planes. He is opposed to sanding the sole of wooden planes,

since grit embeds here easily. For northern hardwoods, which many of us might be using, Scott set up a group of planes: an English pattern jack plane with the blade set at 40°, a jointer plane at 43°, a panel plane, a

Spears and Morris, and a smoothing plane. The latter planes are at 50° and 55°.

There was a round of applause here as Scott concluded his presentation, followed by questions. This included a discussion relating to the point in the plane where the blade is set relative to the front and back. Scott uses birch in his planes, since he cannot obtain beech in the needed thickness. He also uses metal or tropical wood inserts to close the throat. He secures the metal ones with epoxy. The Japanese will often screw in their metal inserts.

Scott uses a stationary flat belt sander to grind his flat bevel blades. If you must use a wheel,

he recommends an 8" wheel, used on a slow speed grinder. This will produce less of a hollow grind, which he points out is actually creating a too-thin bevel that will not hold up to serious work.

He prefers antique blades, and has little regard for modern ones, including Hock. He has good things to say about Clifton blades. Building a Krenov-style plane is alright, but you are limited in your options of blades, which is another reason for Scott's preference for antique planes.

Mark Tindley came to the defense of the longer Veritas

low-angle bevel-up planes. He said that the best results come from a set up such as Scott described: a tight mouth, a perfectly sharpened blade, a finely set chipbreaker. The blades are thick, too, unlike the Stanleys. The Veritas also has an innovation that limits the movement of the blade from side-to-side. The adjustable mouth makes it easy to get a good set-up. He argued that the Veritas is by far the most versatile of the modern planes and a good investment, one that comes close to having a set of finely tuned antique planes. The Veritas does a good job of not tearing out wood with figure. Scott agreed with Mark's persuasive argument.

Don Naples chimed in. He had a Norris 85 that he got rid of because the mouth opening was way too large. He asked about shimming the blade with sheet brass, which Scott had not tried. Scott uses paper shims: kraft paper is thick, onion paper thin. A question was asked about setting up a plane blade. Scott said it depended on the back of the blade. A nice shiny surface is in order here. If you don't have one, then go to your waterstones and work one up. Or, alternatively, if the back is way out of shape, use a diamond stone and work the back into a surface that is ready for the stones. If the blade is worse still, the Japanese method of using a pinch of carborundum on a glass or steel plate with a few drops of water is called for. This produces a slurry that will flatten the back in short order.

The evening ended with a final round of applause. Thereafter members pored over Scott's plane collection, and purchased copies of his book, *A Woodworker's Guide to Hand Planes*, which he had brought along. The book is highly detailed, a reference on all matters pertaining to planes.

This meeting was time well spent: intriguing questions arise when we work hard with handplanes. It is rewarding work, but sometimes the questions rise to frustration when we are alone and don't find answers. Scott's talk helped focus thinking on this subject.



Autumn Rain by Scott Wynn





Sharpening Class a Big Success!

by Lars Andersen

At 9 am on Saturday, February 27 about 15 SCWA members met at Alan Bertozzi's house off Fountaingrove Parkway for a free sharpening class provided by Alan and Don Naples. Alan was an excellent host, keeping us stocked with hot coffee and breakfast treats. From 9 am to 12 noon, Don presented a comprehensive overview of all aspects of sharpening: plane irons, chisels, card scrapers, knives,



the pros and cons of various types of abrasives, pros and cons of different stones, an overview of sharpening methods, the sharpening sequence (first you need to get the back flat, after that you focus on primary, secondary and micro bevels), and a wealth of other details. Lots of questions were asked, and Don answered them all.

After a yummy pizza/salad/drinks lunch provided by SCWA, it was time to sharpen tools. Attendees walked around Alan's shop while Don sharpened a number of tools



for attendees on one of his Lap Sharp machines. The machine is impressive, quickly and reliably providing a sharp edge that lets you get back to wood working in minutes. If you are not into "zen sharpening" and can swing the cost for the machine, a Lap Sharp may be right for you. There are cheaper alternatives such as Work Sharp which sharpen in a somewhat similar manner, but as Don said, "You get what you pay for." A big Thank You to both Alan and Don for an excellent class - much appreciated!

Photos by Bob Roudman



Matchstick Fleet

Submitted by Michael Burwen

You may have seen this before. Does it deserve to be called woodworking? I think so. You be the judge.



Phil Warren, from the UK, spent 62 years to build this incredible fleet of 432 ships. All vessels are built entirely of matchsticks and boxes of wooden matches. The collection includes nearly 370 American and 60 British ships.



Although now 84 years of age, Mr. Warren began creating his first boat in 1948, when he was only 17. He uses a razor blade, tweezers and sandpaper to carve the pieces and boxes, then sticks them together with balsa wood glue. In total, more than 650,000 matchsticks were used to create an amazing collection of 1:300 scale models. His 1,200 aircraft make an even more realistic appearance to dress the decks of aircraft carriers.



Photos by DANIEL RUSHALL/BNPS via Daily Mail

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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 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.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____ Home Phone _____

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