



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 40, Issue 3

March 2020

## SEGMENTED TURNING

This month's featured speaker is the amazing woodturner Malcolm Tibbetts. He lives in South Lake Tahoe, California where he had a long career in the ski industry before becoming a full-time segmented woodturning artist. Prior to becoming a "segmenter," Malcolm spent many years as a serious woodworking hobbyist designing and making custom furniture – a background that ideally prepared him for his new-found passion for segmented woodturning. His work resides in numerous art museums and in many prestigious private collections around the globe. Locally, his work can be viewed at the Marcus Ashley Gallery in South Lake Tahoe. As a teacher of "segmenting," he travels extensively, conducting workshops and club demos.



Malcolm has authored "The Art of Segmented Woodturning" and has self-produced eight instructional DVDs. His work can be viewed at [www.tahoeturner.com](http://www.tahoeturner.com) and he welcomes questions and inquiries at [malcolm@tahoeturner.com](mailto:malcolm@tahoeturner.com)

We will again be meeting at the

**180 Studios**

150 Todd Rd

Santa Rosa

The meeting begins at 7pm, and guests are welcome.





# SCWA Monthly Meeting

February 11, 2020

by Joe Scannell

Acting Chair Don Jereb opened the meeting with the reminder that the organization is still looking for a Chairman, and appealed for someone to step up to the task. Receiving no response, he moved on to welcome guests and new members to the meeting. One man, Tom Monaghan, is a guest from Santa Rosa. New members Charlie Saul, Alex Hunt, and Mike Sooley introduced themselves. All are woodturners and had pieces in the recent *Artistry in Wood* Show. Whit McLeod, a past member who did a meeting presentation in 2015 on making furniture from wine barrels, was also present.

Don said that more than 2000 guests attended the *AiW* show this year. Because the Museum was so pleased with this interest, they have further extended next year's show, running it from November 20, 2020 to January 23, 2021. Within this same time frame they are planning a Michael Cooper retrospective in the Art Museum next door, to open December 4, 2020. Don said they predicted about ten of his pieces would be on display, which together with *Artistry in Wood* should bring record attendance levels.

The **People's Choice Award** this year goes once again to Paul Marini, whose entry "A Mouse's Life" was the hit of the party among the voting public. Congratulations, Paul.

Don mentioned that one of our members has fallen on hard times and has had to clear out his shop. He wants to sell his offcuts. See Don for details and photos.

The final piece of business for the evening was the announcement that we had a volunteer, Michael Finizio, to fill the position of Program Chair. Recognizing that we had a quorum (more than 20

members present), and before Michael had a chance to change his mind, Don quickly called for a vote. The results were instantaneous and unanimous. Michael Finizio is our new Program Chair. Welcome aboard.

With that, Don turned the floor over to Guild Chair Mark Tindley, who discussed our upcoming calendar of events. Our March speaker is Malcolm Tibbets from Lake Tahoe. The April meeting will feature James Gray, a bespoke furniture maker, sculptor, wood and stone carver. His business is called Studio Gray. Our May meeting will entail a Saturday visit to Michael Cooper's studio in Sebastopol. Later in the year (date yet to be determined) we are planning on hearing from Chris Gochneaur, a frequent contributor to *Fine Woodworking* magazine. And in 2021 we have tentative plans to have a presentation on Finnish Design by Joe Amaral.

Don then introduced our featured speaker for the evening, Program Chair Michael Finizio. Michael hails originally from Boston, trained as a civil engineer, worked for the city of New York, met a West Coast lady and moved out here to become an inventor, woodworker, and businessman.



He entered a furniture piece in *Artistry in Wood 2019*, the oak bassinet, which was admired by many.

Michael began by showing us his invention, a ravioli rolling pin which he patented in 2014. At the time there were other such rolling pins on the market, but these were poorly made, most imported from China. Inspired by his love for Italian cooking, he set out to

improve this. For starters, the available rolling pins all produced small ravioli, with thin borders (photo on page 4). The result of this was that when you put the ravioli in boiling water, they burst and disgorged much of the filling. By making them larger, with wider borders, this problem was resolved.

Mike got his business off the ground through a kickstarter campaign, helped by a knowledgeable professor in grad school. Basically, the way it works is that an inventor or would-be maker produces a video showing the product — what it does, how it's made, etc. He/she then starts a campaign, which lasts 30 days, and solicits an investment of the selling price for the proposed product, promising that if full funding is achieved in that time, the business will begin manufacturing and you will receive one of the products.

Mike set the price for his rolling pin at \$100, and set the funding level at \$1,000, so if he achieved full funding he would have an order for 10 of the pins right from the start. One trick Mike learned from his professor was to set the funding threshold as low

as possible. In this way, potential investors coming to the website would see that the business was already fully funded, and they could be confident of receiving their product. So, he actually reached full funding in three hours, and in 30 days he had 800 orders from 623 backers in 34 countries, and he was off and running.

At this point he was still working his day job, and had a full-time woodworker making the pins for him in Minneapolis. He would come home from work and spend his evenings printing shipping labels and packaging the products and moving them out the door. Then, in August 2014, he got a call from Williams-Sonoma, which was planning a pasta event in their



stores the following year, and wanted to buy 5,000 units.

This was now serious business. He quit his engineering job and headed with his wife to California, where they set up shop. But along the way he stopped in Minneapolis, where he found out that his “full-time woodworker” also had a day job, which he had to return to, leaving Mike with having to make about 2,000 pins in a few weeks. He spent 21 straight days working on it, and got the job done.



When he finally got to California, he had to do a “roadshow” for Williams-Sonoma, hitting 21 stores from L.A. to San Francisco to promote the product. It soon became apparent that sales weren’t taking off as expected, because most customers didn’t understand how the rolling pin was intended to be used, and impulse purchases were non-existent. Williams-Sonoma pulled them from the stores and stopped selling them altogether, which turned out to be a blessing. At this point Mike realized that his invention was an internet-only product, and his customers are people who are actively seeking a ravioli rolling pin. He does not pay for advertising, and a Google search

will find his product right at the top of the list. He sells from his own website, and from Amazon.

As the business settled into the rhythm of production and shipping, Mike outsourced the actual manufacturing to a company in Chico that had a \$150k CNC lathe used to make baseball bats. Eventually

even this wasn’t keeping up with demand, so Mike decided to do the manufacturing himself.

Not having \$150,000 to buy a CNC machine, he bought a \$2,000 Jet machine lathe and modified it with pulleys and jackshafts to turn the spindle at the

low RPMs needed for his process and avoid tearout. A plunge router sitting on the lathe carriage does the cutting, flushing the walnut strips.

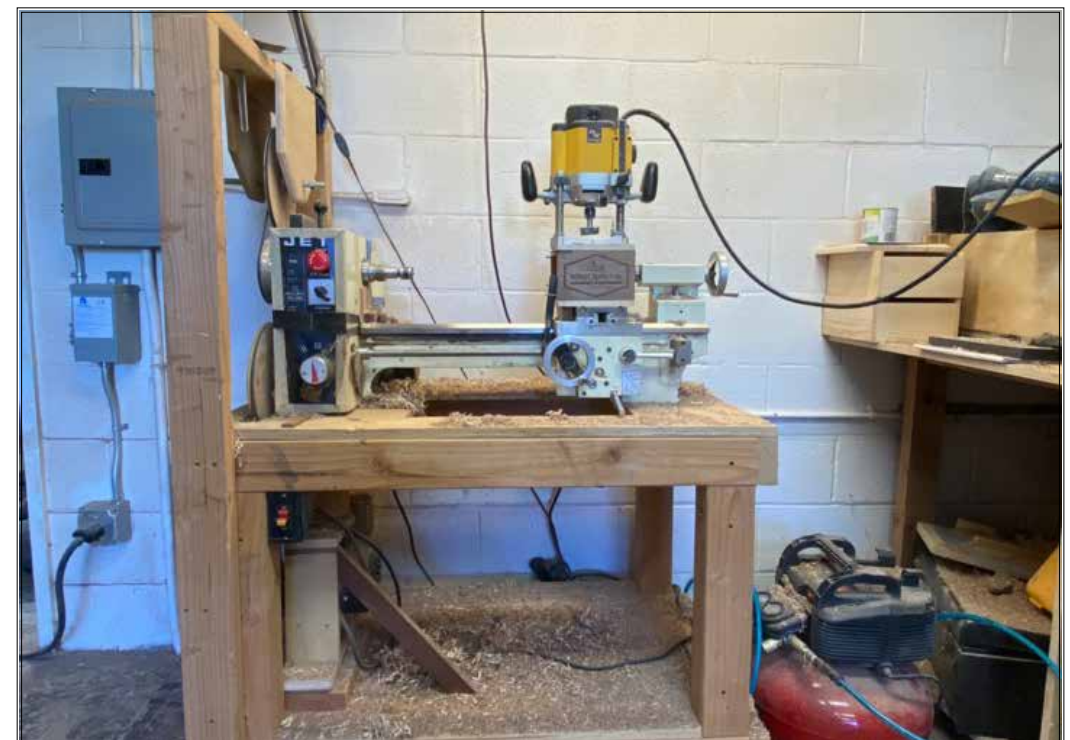
He still outsources the maple portion of the rolling pin, from an Amish company in Pennsylvania. He buys them in units of 500 at a time, cutting his production time in half. Then he adds the walnut

ribs, glued with Titebond III; trims them on his poor-man’s CNC; dips the finished product in mineral oil; and packages them and prints the shipping labels.



The original prototype had hemispherical ends, which turned out to be difficult to hold and turn without toolmarks. Plus, this prototype was heavy. By cutting the ends square, it brought the weight down to below the two pound limit, saving substantially on shipping costs. It also afforded him a place to laser engrave his company logo. A third benefit is that the pin can now be stood on end for display on the kitchen counter, which some owners like to do.

After the machine work is completed, there is still some sanding to be done. He uses a palm sander, while the piece is still slowly rotating in the lathe, taking





it down to 220 grit before it heads to the mineral oil. He was asked about the patent process. The first thing you have to understand is that it's pointless unless someone wants to buy your product. With that question answered, most of the money spent on a patent application is to have an attorney search for prior art, which you want to do to make certain someone doesn't sue you for infringement. The second reason to enter the patent process is to make certain no one infringes on you. A valid patent gives you certain legal rights, but these are only as important as your ability to defend yourself. If a large corporation, for example, starts using your design, you can sue them, but be prepared to spend a lot of time and money in the process.

Mike's patent is what's known as a design patent, covering what an object *looks* like, as opposed to how it functions. He was initially given a provisional patent; the final patent came 18 months later.

The question was asked about selling on Amazon. There are two ways a product can be sold on Amazon. The first is called Seller Fulfilled, where Amazon is basically displaying your product in return for a fee, and the seller is obliged to do all the shipping, etc. With a few orders per day, this becomes tedious. The second way is called Fulfillment by Amazon, which is what Mike now does. For this service, he pays 19%. He sends a bulk order to Amazon, which distributes it among its warehouses. This then falls under the Amazon Prime system, which means free two-day shipping (or even quicker). Who doesn't like free and fast?

Another question was about the length. Many of the older rolling pins Mike saw were 24" long. He decided these were unnecessarily long; his recipe for the dough (2 eggs, 2 cups flour) makes a nice sheet of dough 18" wide. He also liked that this design dictated an odd number of sections (7), which looked right. Taking it further, he started cutting some of these into two short

rolling pins, which work well with sheets of dough from the pasta-rolling machines many people use. So now he sells the full-size rolling pins for \$99, and the half-sized for \$79, with little additional effort.

The evening concluded with a warm round of applause for Mike Finizio, our new Program Chair. Thanks, Mike. Mangia bene!





# *Artistry in Wood*

*2019*

## *The Slide Show*

Now Showing

At <https://vimeo.com/391830498>

Featuring improvisational music performed on three wooden instruments by Rebecca Roudman on cello, Paradiso on didgeridoo, and Jason Eckl on drums.



In the late 80s my wife was volunteering in our daughters' classrooms in Novato, and found out about something called a "bulletin board" being run out of Sonoma State, to which public school teachers were being given access to enhance their academic endeavors. We had recently bought a second-hand IBM PC, and we were just getting into this new phenomenon of computing. My daughter still likes to tell the story of how, the day after I brought home the old PC, she found it dismantled on our dining room table. I had to know how it worked.

Anyway, my wife Margee was equally curious, and could see the possibilities in this thing that would become the Internet. (This was long before Bob Dole). She figured that since she was working in the classroom, she could get into the Sonoma State system, and so she persisted until she did. It was all great fun, and educational, too.

When Secretary Lars Anderson sent me the newspaper article seen to the right, it brought back these fond memories. Although there is no date on the article, it would seem to be somewhat after 1995. Interestingly, there was quite a bit of woodworking discussion going on back then, and the article specifically mentions the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, which began its existence in 1978. For those readers interested in more SCWA history, you need look no further than our own website. Check it out:

<http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com/page-1852610>

Jose Cuérvo



## Going ON LINE, using the NET Going ON LINE, using the NET, Going onLine, using

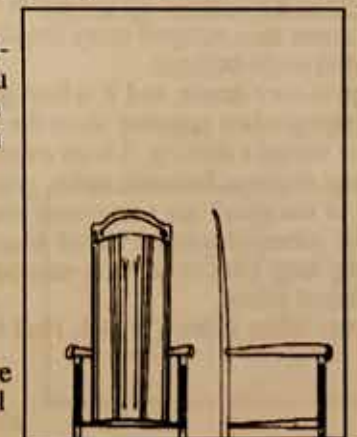
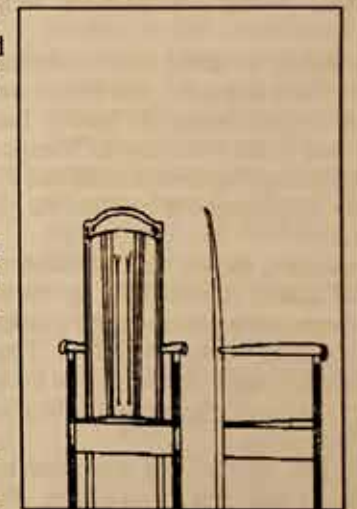
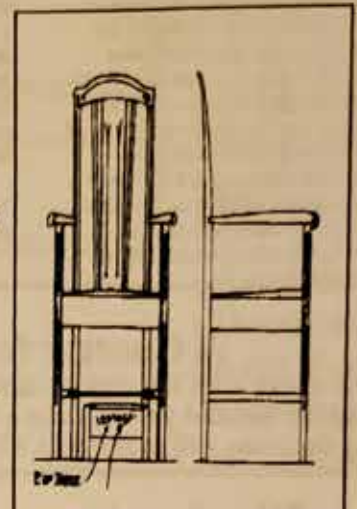
by Sara Schomp

Going On Line, using the Net, getting on the information super highway...is this a place for you? I've had my doubts, but there is a lot of interesting stuff available I've been finding out. As I am not affiliated with a university or college I have no direct access to the internet, but if I were taking a class at the J.C. or Sonoma State I could access the net through those institutions. As a teacher I have some access via various educational paid services, and as just a plain old person I can purchase some online time with one of the various services now available. I rent time with American On Line (AOL) because their interface (or how it looks and works on my Mac computer is very simple and visually good for my right brain. It costs about \$9.00 per month for 5 hours of onLine time (to start you get one month and 10 hours free time). It's about \$3.00 per hour after that first 5 hours. There are local access numbers so our phone bill is unaffected. You need a computer, a modem, and a phone.

James asked me what is there online that might be of interest to him. Here are a few ways he and I have been using it to meet his needs. 1) we use it to communicate with family and friends who have e-mail addresses. We send letter to Sweden, Bali, Maine, San Francisco, Denver and Sebastopol. 2) Business communications are enhanced. James sent a proposal to an architect via e-mail (no visuals can fly, but visuals can be sent to others who are members of AOL). 3) We posted the Sonoma County Wood Workers Guild meeting time and place in a special area set aside for woodworkers. 4) While cruising (scrolling) through the woodworking area, I looked through the postings for tools wanted and available. I noticed someone who wanted a Blume Hinge machine, and as I'd just laid out an ad for Tim and Holly about their hinge machine I posted a reply on line to the person who wanted the hinge machine. Topics currently on the message board are: woodturning, handtools & techniques, furniture forum, finishing, wood & materials, power tools, machines & accessories, shop improvement, the Exchange (buy, sell, trade), the Factory Connection, Guilds, clubs, schools & shows, other woodworking interests. 5) We noticed that tonight (Tues.) there is an onLine "chat" in the Wood /workers "Shop talk" room. David Ellsworth was there recently to "talk" about turning. By the way, a "chat" is all written, not spoken. James and I visited the "chat room" We were the only people there at 11 AM so we had a very short chat. Every week there is an hour "chat" beginning at 6:30 Pacific time. On Sun. Here are the days and subjects of each "chat:" Sun; finishing, Mon. general woodworking, Tues. carving, Wed, furniture making, Thur. woodturning with host Steve Blenk, Fri. furniture repair and restoration and Sat. a general woodworking chat. 6) There is a calendar of exhibits, contests and shows posted and updated regularly. That calendar which we "downloaded" while we were onLine, will be on the bulletin board at the March meeting. 7) There is a message center where you can ask for or give advice on various wood related topics. 8) The entire contents, indexed, from American Woodworker Magazine is there, from 1988-1995. You may copy it off your computer and read at leisure. James is writing an article from info about wenge he got on line this month.

You can also "download (take into your computer) plans and photos posted from other readers or the editors, or you can upload (give to the other readers from your computer) the same.

9) Of course there is more there on Line than wood. You can even meet people in "fem bars" or talk over homework problems your kids are having. Beware however, when you're on line your phone is busy and all those orders can't come in!



## Officers of the Association

Chairman

Secretary

Lars Andersen

Program Chair

Michael Finizio

Guild Chair

Mark Tindley

Treasurer

Judith Garland

Show Chair

Don Jereb

Editor

Joe Scannell

Web Master

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.

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