

BAY AREA WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

April 1987 - Vol. 6, Issue 4

Box 421195 San Francisco CA 94142

THIRD THURSDAY PREVIEW

The April general meeting will be held at 7:30pm on April 16th at Bob Newhall's shop, 801 - 54th Ave., Oakland. From San Francisco, cross the bridge and take the Nimitz Freeway (880) south to High St. Exit at High St. and go east (toward the hills). Turn right on San Leandro St., then right again on 54th Ave. Go one block and park. Phone number is 532-0999. The main event will be Philo Bemis who will show and tell us everything he knows about jigs (which is a lot!). We will also have a presentation by Gary Savelli of Basic West Insurance Agency who will tell us what people in woodworking need to know about insurance. Also, we'll have a show-and-tell event in which all of you reading this are asked to bring something you've made for children, such as toys, and share them with the group. Finally, Peter Good, who recently visited a number of woodworkers in the New York and Boston areas, will report on the state of woodworking in the East.

PREVIEW OF MAY MEETING

BAWA is very pleased to be able to present Sam Maloof as the featured speaker at our May Meeting. This special event will be held on the evening of May 21st. Location will be announced in the May newsletter. The event will be free to BAWA members, however, we will ask for a \$10. per person donation from non-members to help us offset the costs involved in bringing Mr. Maloof to the Bay Area and speaking to us. On the other hand, for only \$30., if you act soon, you can become a member of Bay Area Woodworkers Association for an entire year, which entitles you to attend all meetings and events and receive the newsletter by mail each month. Plus, you can attend the Sam Maloof event free. A membership application can be found elsewhere in this issue.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LAST MEETING

The March general meeting of BAWA went very well. I liked putting on a meeting at my shop and having people in to see a new instrument just before taking it away to its new owner. For me, it was a treat to see both a number of old friends and to meet a number of new people, many of whom have become new members of BAWA from the recent shows for woodworkers. Welcome to them. Chairman Larry Borsian led off, taking us through old and new business with dispatch. Rick Parkinson of U.S. Cellulose, San Jose, made an excellent presentation of their range of products for woodworkers with valuable specific mention of the dangers inherent in data sheets about toxic substances. These sheets are too difficult to serve useful ends; they do not warn us, but instead can lead to risky shop practices. Rick is making up simplified sheets for commonly used finishing products that we hope to get copies of for all of us. I showed off a new instrument, a Mother and Child Virginals, kind of an elaborate joke, but also pretty to look at. [Editor's note: Bob is being modest. The instrument, which he made, was not only beautiful to look at; it was also a fascinating design, exquisitely crafted and had a marvelous sound. Bob is an extremely fine harpsichord maker but he's not about to say it, so I will.] The rarest thing in the shop, I'm sure, was the antique French harpsichord, unfortunately anonymous (or "maker not known"). It is perhaps one of three such instruments in the world. I hope I don't mess it up. [There he goes again; this is actually the master craftsman calking -Ed.] A real contrast came when Kurt Overholt took us excellently through his slides of his work; log houses and heavy timber framing followed by skins that leave the intricate joinery exposed on the interior of his Montana houses. Rugged, precise, very secure in a world of doubts and vagueness. Also, there was time to talk among ourselves. Again, welcome to all joining BAWA.

Bob Greenberg

NOTES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Nine interested members met March 26th at Larry Borsian's house, which is renewing itself also, from the ground up. One may be slightly surprised at seeing the plumbing for the top floor working its way out of the ceiling of the front room. Much was accomplished, centering around a strong desire to renew BAWA, starting from the idea that the organization must grow and change to stay alive. One concrete step was a vote to invest \$75. as a consulting fee to learn if there would be a gain for BAWA to become a non-profit organization, that is, to file such papers as to make it official. An expert will be approached for an informed opinion. Discussion of officers included a plan to increase their number and the length of their terms to one year. Comment was made that BAWA has by-laws that render it much more than a social group and much more like an actual guild. Agreement centered on defining goals for the organization, then finding people willing to work out the necessary means to achieve the goals. There was both a sense of needing to act quickly, rather than "letting things happen" (like elections), and also a sense of needing to discuss things fully, without suddenly presenting them for a vote. Everyone felt that it was possible to plan many activities while preserving the format of presentation/socializing that is clearly central to BAWA. At the same time, the plans for fresh directions are underway, such as further outreach for membership, seminars such as the May meeting that will present Sam Maloof and an ongoing series about the dangers of toxic substances.

Bob Greenberg

CLASSIFIEDS

GALLERY OPENING: Jim and Sally Bishop are opening a new gallery at 779 Bush St. (at Powell) in San Francisco. They are looking for pieces with excellence in quality and design. Interest centers around furniture, lamps, pottery, wood and other crafts. The gallery is open 11am-8pm. Call 775-1342 for information.

LATHE: Very heavy duty Fay and Egan. 12" swing, 36" between centers, 4 speed, ball bearing. \$800. Brian Burns, 327-5335.

JOINTER, Powermatic 8", 3ph, \$900.

PLANER, Powermatic 20", 10hp, 3ph, \$4000.

TABLE SAW, Wadkin-Bursgreen 10", 3hp, 3ph, \$1100.

BANDSAW, 30", 5hp, single phase, \$1200. Mark, 663-8192.

HUGH FITE, custom finisher for the custom woodworker, has moved from San Francisco to 1237 50th Ave., Oakland. Telephone - 532-8112.

FROM THE EDITOR

In June, it will be a year and a half since I took over the newsletter editor's job. At that time I intend to retire from this position and go on to other things. Oh, don't get me wrong; you'll still hear from me. Now that I've gotten used to throwing my opinions around in print, seasoned with an occasional slightly caustic remark, I'll continue to submit articles for the newsletter. But starting in July, someone else will decide what to print. So I'd like some of the rest of you out there to start thinking about working on the newsletter. Being editor isn't a bad job; you get to spend a lot of time lounging around on the phone or sitting comfortably in front of the BAWA typewriter blissfully wondering what to fill up the blank pages with. But not to worry; a lot of the material gets dropped in your lap so all you have to do is decide if any of it means anything and what's fit to print. Then all you have to do is lay it out, paste it up, get it printed and get it mailed. No big deal. I'll be glad to help out for 2 or 3 months till you get the hang of it. As editor, you also get to read newsletters from lots of other woodworking organizations, some of which are quite interesting, and you receive various pieces of BAWA's mail that nobody else knows what to do with. Actually, it's a rewarding job that will allow you to develop a kinship with BAWA and its members that few others have. It's taken a bit of work but I've enjoyed it and during my 3 terms I hope I've delivered something of what people wanted in a newsletter. This month, I wrote an article for the newsletter on dealing with clients who are mentally off balance, but I seem to have run out of space so it will appear in the May issue.

Peter Good

Woodworker's Skill Takes Years to Hone

By RACHEL CARLEY

THE scent of fresh sawdust in David Lamb's Canterbury, N.H., workshop is intoxicating — almost enough to make a visitor want to become a woodworker. Desire, however, is just the beginning, according to Mr. Lamb, a traditional cabinetmaker who sells furniture he designs and builds by his own hand. Mr. Lamb ought to know: He has devoted half of his 28 years to a craft that demands natural ability, discipline and endless hours of training.

Mr. Lamb credits both his interest and early start to unusual circumstances. As an adolescent, he lived with his family on the grounds of the Canterbury Shaker Village, a living Shaker community and a museum of the religious pacifists who are known for their thrift, inventiveness and canny business ways. At the 1792 village, where his stepfather is a curator, Mr. Lamb lived in close proximity to the graceful Shaker furniture. "It was an unusual chance to really look at pieces and learn," the woodworker said.

More unusual was the opportunity to train formally with a European master. For three years starting when he was 14, Mr. Lamb spent after-school hours and summers under the tutelage of Alejandro de la Cruz, a Madrid-trained master cabinetmaker who lived nearby and demonstrated his craft at the village.

"It was a real old-fashioned apprenticeship," Mr. Lamb said. "I spent the first two or three weeks just learning how to sharpen my tools. Then I learned how to use hand planes and to cut different joints," he recalled. In the tradition of master craftsmanship, his training was based on repetition. "I'd begin with a three-foot board and make dovetails, cut them off and do it again until I ran out of board," Mr. Lamb said: It was two years before he completed his first piece of furniture, a small, simply constructed table that he still owns.

Mr. Lamb later earned an associate degree in applied arts from Boston University's program in artisanry. (The program is no longer at Boston University but is being taught at the Swain School of Design in New Bedford, Mass.) Mr. Lamb opened his first business in a small workshop on the village grounds.

Today, he hangs his sign down the hill at the workshop where he originally trained with Mr. de la Cruz. Mr. Lamb purchased the workshop and the house next door from his teacher, who returned to Spain last year. The house, built by Shakers in the early 19th century and renovated by Mr. de la Cruz, is home to Mr. Lamb, his wife, Janet, and stepdaughter Christine. To be furnished with his own work, the house will eventually double as Mr. Lamb's showroom.

A recent visit found Mr. Lamb dividing his attention between a half-finished mailbox finial and a 10-piece ecclesiastical commission — pulpit, altar table, font, communion rail, two bishop's benches and frontals, credence table and cross — for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in nearby Concord. To symbolize new growth and vigor for the Victorian Gothic church, recently rebuilt after a fire, Mr. Lamb devised an intricately carved pattern of oak leaves and acorns for the oak pieces.

Mr. Lamb's business, generated through word of mouth, also includes residential designs. "I started out with a lot of little tables, but now I'm getting into dining room tables, secretaries and highboys — big things that take a lot of time," said the craftsman, who works by commission only and has a three-year backlog of work.

Mr. Lamb's designs range from formal Chippendale to contemporary. He might reproduce an antique or modify an existing design. "I have no problem with taking a Shaker form and altering it," he said. "Shaker craftsmen were uneven in their ability and while the pieces have a wonderful basic design, one might have clunky feet or another oversized knobs," he explained. "I'll change things like that because they have a big impact on the overall effect." Mr. Lamb works primarily with hardwoods such as cherry, mahogany, walnut and maple. "I love pine, but I keep away from it because it's soft and dents easily," the woodworker said. "People pay a lot and they want a perfect finish, not something that looks worn."

Work is priced by the project, according to complexity, time and labor involved. A set of four Chippendale dining chairs, for example, might cost \$4,000 to \$6,000, but elaborate carving could bring the price up to \$2,500 a chair. A high-style cherry highboy recently delivered to a buyer in Pennsylvania was priced at more than \$9,000.

The Chippendale-style piece, based on an 18th-century original made by the Windsor, Conn., cabinetmaker Eliphalet Chapin, required about 350 hours to complete. Work on the basket-weave tracery, appliquéd vines and the finial, each hand carved from a single piece of wood, took three weeks alone.

The essence of traditional cabinetmaking and joinery, Mr. Lamb said, is the hand work. A woodworker uses machine tools — lathe, band saw, planer — for rough work like cutting out framing pieces. "But the thrust of my training was on the fine hand work," he emphasized. "All the exposed joinery, all the details, all the finishing are done by hand, and that's why the field is so specialized."

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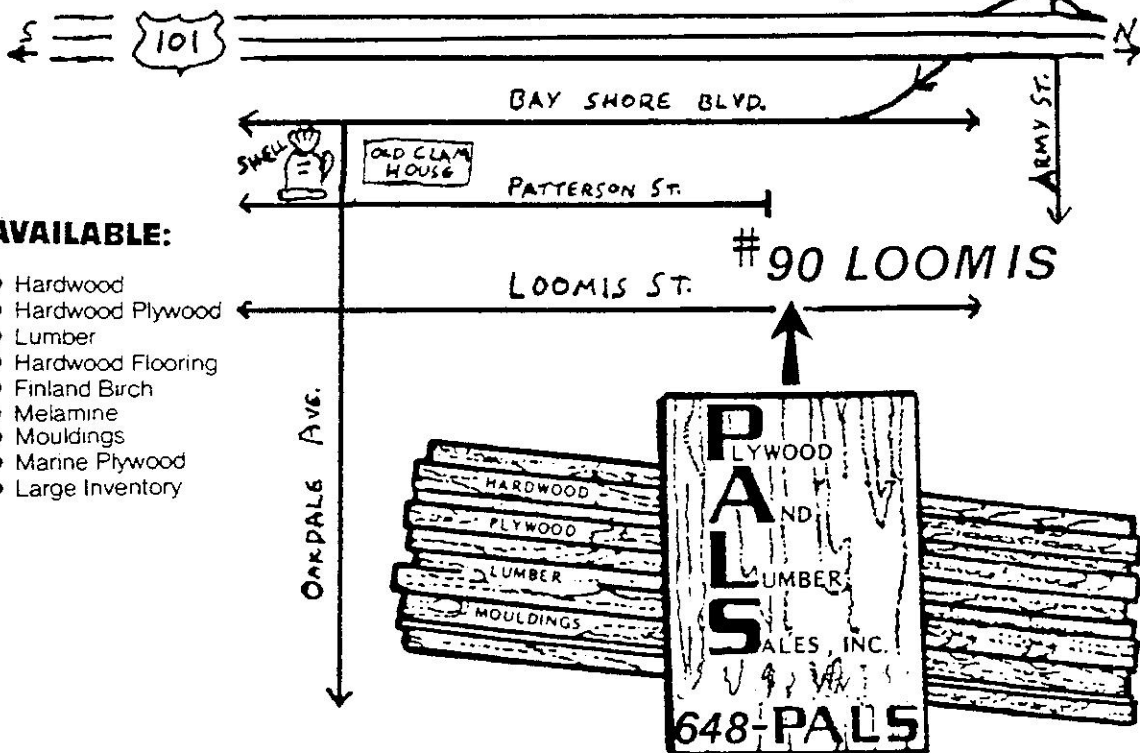
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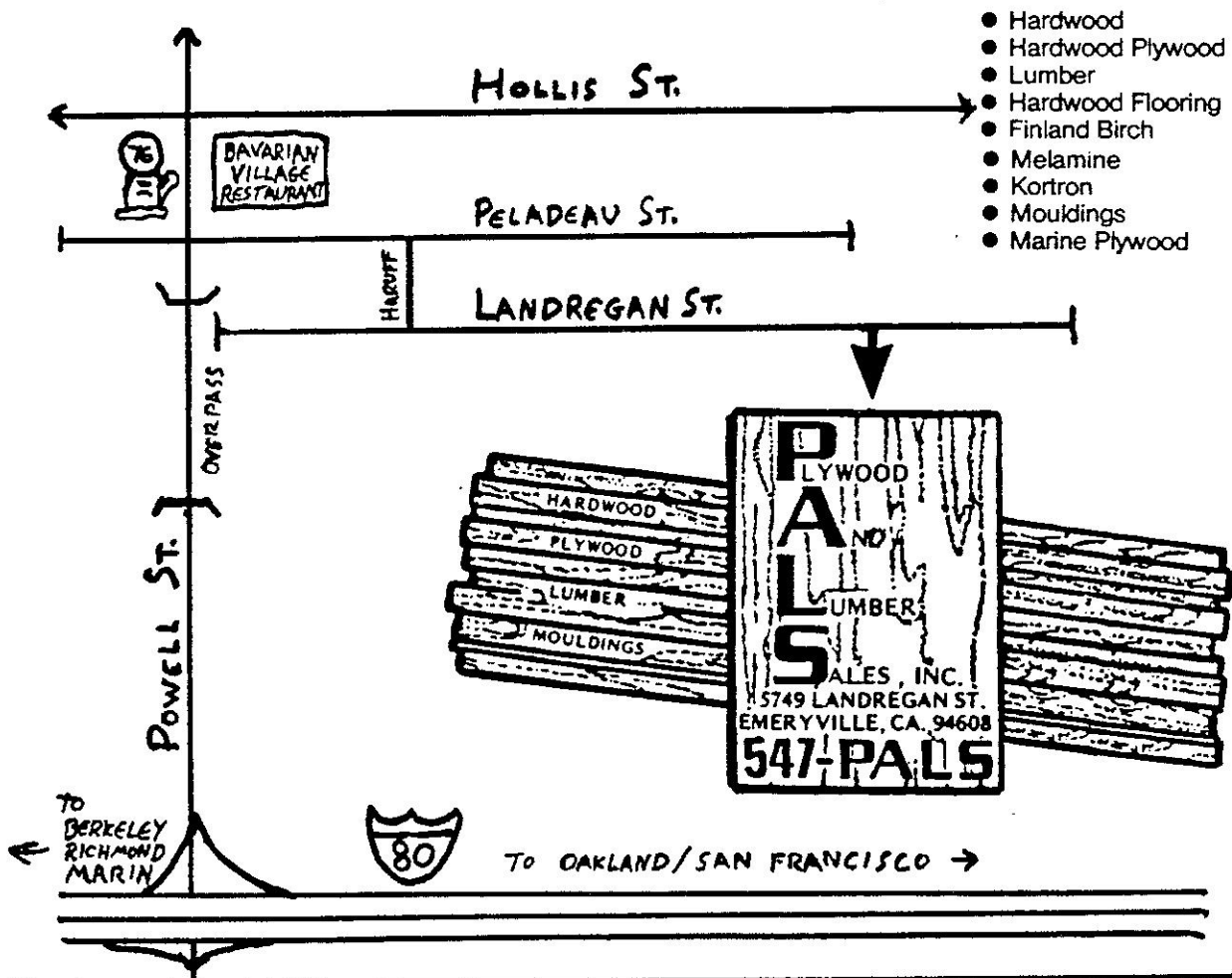
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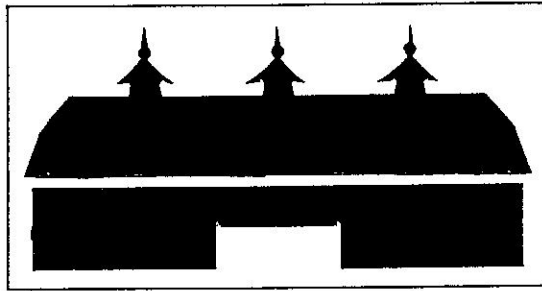
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Enclosed is \$30. Please enroll me as a member of Bay Area Woodworkers Association and put me on the newsletter mailing list.

Some useful information for those who want



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614-592-4981

A CALL FOR ENTRIES

EVENT: AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY WORKS IN WOOD '87

DESCRIPTION: A national juried exhibition, representing some of the finest work being done by today's artists working in wood. Works are contemporary, and of original design (not reproductions), and may be functional and/or sculptural.

DATES: September 19 - October 18, 1987.

HOURS: 11 am - 5 pm daily and weekends, 11 am - 7 pm Thursdays.

LOCATION: The Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center on Dairy Lane in Athens, Ohio. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building houses over 7,000 square feet of exhibition space.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all living artists. Submit slides with entry form and \$15 entry fee.

JURY: Alphonse Mattia, woodworking artist and associate professor of woodworking and furniture design for the Program in Artisanry of the Swain School of Design, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Rick Snyderman, founder/director of the Snyderman Gallery of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

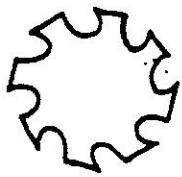
William Keyser, designer/craftsman and Chairman of Crafts for the School for American Craftsmen at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

AWARDS: Over \$3,000 in cash awards will be available.

DEADLINE: The deadline for receiving entries is June 15, 1987.

PROSPECTUS: Entry forms may be obtained by contacting:
AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY WORKS IN WOOD
PO BOX 747, Athens, Ohio 45701 (614) 592-4981

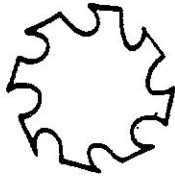
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BAWA DATA

The Bay Area Woodworkers' Association is an organization of woodworkers who have banded together to promote woodworking in both technical and aesthetic directions. This newsletter is a monthly publication intended to serve as a communications vehicle and a source directory for the membership of this Association.

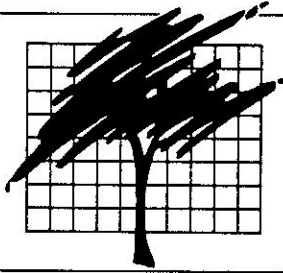
Membership dues are \$30/year, for which any member may participate fully in the Association, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the By-Laws. This includes voting power on any issue brought before the membership for a vote, notification of the monthly shop talks and demonstrations put on by the Association, receipt of this newsletter each month, and privilege of participation in any special discount programs sponsored by local businesses in conjunction with this Association.

Checks for membership dues may be made out to the Bay Area Woodworkers' Association and sent to P.O. Box 421195, San Francisco, CA 94142. Membership cards will be issued to all members in good standing.

Copies of the By-Laws are available at all monthly meetings, or can be requested by mail.

The monthly shop talks and demonstrations are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m., at a location announced both in the newsletter and at the previous meeting.

The monthly executive committee meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month, and are open to any interested members. To arrange attendance, contact any member of the executive committee by telephone or the address given above.



BAY AREA WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

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