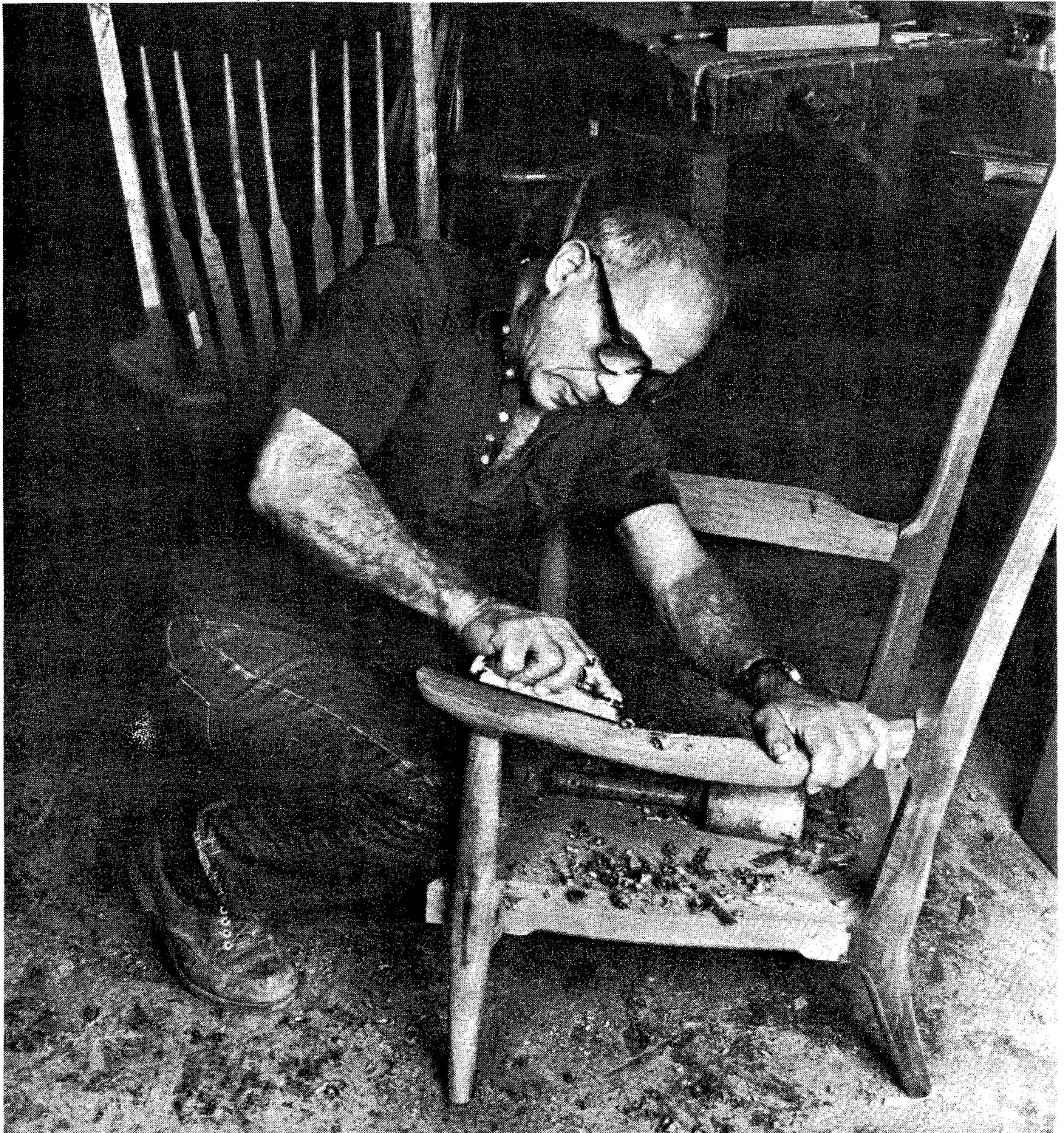


BAY AREA WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

May 1987 - Vol. 6, Issue 5

Box 421195 San Francisco CA 94142



SAM MALOOF

photo by Jonathan Pollock

courtesy of Fine Woodworking/The Taunton Press

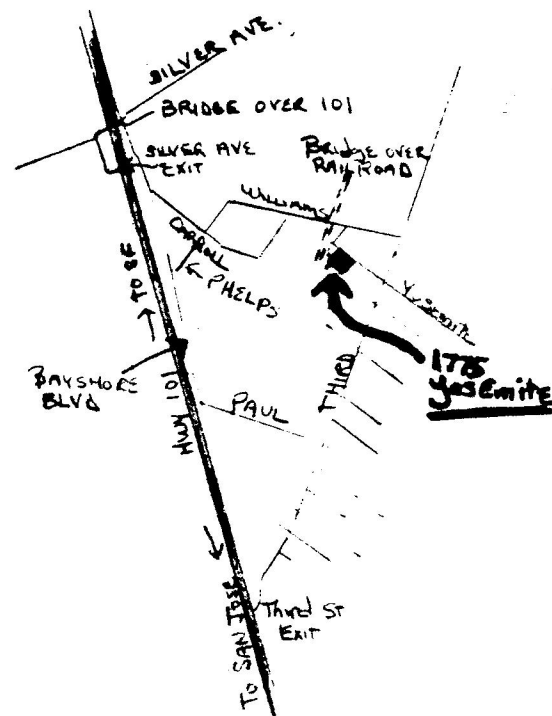
THIRD THURSDAY PREVIEW

We are pleased to be able to present Sam Maloof as our speaker at the general meeting on May 21st at Larry Borsian's shop, 1775 Yosemite St., San Francisco. For many years the name Sam Maloof has been synonymous with the finest in wood furniture design and craftsmanship. His furniture has attained international recognition, yet he continues to work much like the home craftsman he was when he started out. Please join us for this special evening.

We will also have nominations for new officers at this meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: The business portion of the meeting, which will include nominations, will start promptly at 7pm and will conclude at 7:30. The business portion of the meeting is for MEMBERS ONLY. The presentation portion of the meeting begins at 7:30pm.

DIRECTIONS: From San Francisco, take 101 south and exit at Paul Ave. Turn right, go 1 block and turn right again, going under the freeway. Continue to 3rd St. and turn left. Go several blocks and turn left on Yosemite. 1775 is the big building on the left at the end of the block. If you're coming north on 101, take the 3rd St. exit and continue along 3rd to Yosemite.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM LAST MEETING

Report on General Meeting at Bob Newhall's shop, April 16

We've got new members and a healthy treasury; the newsletter is about to grow. These good things are due in part to the organizing work done at recent woodworkers' shows by Norma Brooks, Don Segale, and others. We've also got a wonderful speaker coming to us in May, Sam Maloof. There was discussion about the need for and nicety of charging non-members to attend our meeting where Sam has graciously volunteered to make a presentation. A motion to collect donations and give all such donations to Sam passed, along with a wish that non-members would seriously consider supporting the organization. We are getting a new screen. Anyone interested in an office (elections at June meeting) please present themselves to Larry Borsian, chairman, and to every one else at the May meeting. Note: there will be some business for BAWA to attend to, before the presentation at the May meeting. Members are asked to arrive by 7:00 p.m. at Larry Borsian's shop for a brief time spent on business, and to arrange ourselves as hosts and hostesses. Although our treasury is doing well, Don Dupont, in charge of enforcement, warns those of us who are late to pay our dues. There was an informal presentation of TOYS made by BAWA members. Delightful. Simplicity reigned, with wit alongside: Bob Newhall's name-train on its wavy inclined plane; Don Dupont's castle; and Peter Vronsky's clever propellor were some of the charming objects shown. Thanks to all for bringing them. Gary Savelli, insurance agent, gave a quick review of this painful topic for small shops. His prices and personality were on the ball. After the social break, Philo Bemis, once-chair and still fine fellow, gave an impressive review of his approach to woodworking, along with a humorous slide-presentation of a killer job far up an elevator shaft. The result was beautiful; the work, something else again. He presented his wisdom as an acronym: SAFE (1. SAFETY; 2. ACCURACY; 3. FAST; and 4. ENJOYMENT). Good words and thanks, Philo.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, April 23

Piles of food walked into Larry Borsian's house for a potluck. Mouths proved equal to the task. The specifics of the May meeting were resolved (I get to bring chairs) and some matters of schedule decided: the May meeting should begin with a business period at 7:00 p.m. The June meeting will be at Steve Madden's shop (address above). The June meeting will NOT be on the third Thursday of the month, there being on that date a machinery show in LA that many plan to attend. Instead it will be at Steve Madden's shop on June 25th. Likely topics for future meetings include a presentation of antique woodworking tools.

Bob Greenberg

If furniture too perfect, he puts in the blemish

By Barbara Mayer
Associated Press

Garry Knox Bennett, a self-taught furniture maker in Oakland, bears little resemblance to the old-fashioned idea of a furniture craftsman.

After expending a great deal of time, effort and money to produce an original piece, he's apt to decide it's too perfect and put in the first blemish himself.

One of his more famous exploits was to hammer a large bent nail into a meticulously-crafted cabinet he had just completed. The nail substitutes for a door pull and could hardly be missed since it's right in the center of the piece.

When the cabinet was on display at a furniture store in New York, one customer recorded his opinion when nobody was looking.

"I think this nail business is a

stupid idea," he scribbled on the drawer bottom. Then he signed the message and dated it. Except for the fact that somebody stole the nail, the message might never have been found," says Bennett.

Bennett actually started the joke himself when he hammered the nail. He had several friends witness the desecration and sign their names on the bottom of another drawer.

If this sounds suspiciously like the action of an artist, don't count on Bennett to go along with the description. "Everyone wants to be called an artist. I'm satisfied with the title of furniture maker," he says.

However, Bennett, who is 52, has been a painter and sculptor. He is one of a growing number of individuals making what is being called art furniture.

The expensive, usually one-of-a-

kind pieces they produce are usually shown in galleries, not furniture stores, and customers tend to ask themselves, "Is it art?" not "Is it comfortable?" Bennett makes about 50 pieces a year, working alone or with the help of one assistant.

Although artist-made furniture is not new — Pablo Picasso made a few pieces of furniture — it does appear to be enjoying a new popularity.

One indication of this is the recent formation of the Society of Furniture Artists (SOFA).

According to Rosanne Somerson, a member of the steering committee for the group and editor of its first newsletter, one of the goals is to get art critics and publications to treat the furniture as art, while at the same time providing a forum so that other artists, collectors and the

public will be able to learn more about art furniture.

"A number of significant national exhibitions have gone by without any reviews or documentation. We would like to correct this and also expand people's ideas about furniture."

Somerson says that the establish-

ment of a national group is only one indication of the development of the field of art furniture. She said that galleries and museums have begun taking an interest in this work, which is leading to a greater visibility. For example, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts now purchases art furniture that is placed within the

museum so that visitors can sit down on it.

The motivation of those who buy handmade art furniture for their own home remains the same as it has been over hundreds of years, according to Kristina Madsen, a furniture maker in the Boston area.



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Creations From Three Master Craftsmen

BY DEAN JENSEN

OVER AND OVER, in rhythmic motion, Ed Wohl passed his steel rasp over a length of wood clamped in a vice. Sawdust rained onto his shoes. Slowly, magically almost, the long walnut stick lost its foursquareness and was gradually transformed into a softly rounded, almost riblike form. When he was satisfied with its shape, Wohl removed the piece from the vice and placed it with the similarly shaped forms that had been finished as spindles for the back of a rocking chair.

He took a break from his workbench then, strolling to a window in his large workshop that looked out on a spectacular vista of gently rolling fields stopped only by the distant woodland. "I revel in life here," Wohl said. "Whether it's bright and sunny, or there's a fierce blizzard raging, there are no bad days here."

He is a shortish, slightly built man of forty-four. A thick pepper-and-salt beard conceals his chin and cheeks, but it doesn't hide the distinctive expression of a man who has discovered the good life. Wohl lives with his wife, Ann, and their two young children in a modern, shake-shingled home nestled in the hills of a small farm near the tiny Iowa County town of Ridgeway (population 503). Just twenty or so steps outside their house is the shop where he works each day.

A master woodworker and designer, Wohl is one of several Wisconsinites who is helping to put the state on the map as a source of some of the most original and beautifully finished hand-crafted furniture to be found anywhere.

The question of just how many there are was put to C.R. (Skip) Johnson, himself a widely-admired woodworker and a member of the University of Wisconsin art faculty for twenty-one years. Johnson

ticked off the names of a dozen or more furniture makers living in the state, but then conceded that there were probably many more who hadn't yet come to his attention. "They seem to be in just about every part of the state," he observed. "And what's quite remarkable is the rich variety of styles they practice."

Just as varied are these furniture makers' reasons for basing themselves in Wisconsin. Dick Wickman, a Madison-based designer with a national reputation, says one of the things he likes most about the state is its abundance of Old World craftsmen. For Wickman, who often conceives of furniture with such touches as special inlays, gold-leafing and lathe-turned brass handles, it's important to know where to find artisans with unusual skills. "No furniture designer can be master of everything," he notes. "But a designer can greatly extend the range of his creations if he knows where to search for workmen with highly specialized talents."

Robert Schroeder, another designer with a far-flung reputation, says he has never given serious thought to leaving his Milwaukee base, even though most of his clients tend to live in Chicago and New York. "I'm happy where I am," he says. "I feel enough pressure having to come up with new designs all the time. I don't want the added pressures that could come from trying to live in a big and crowded city like Chicago or New York."

For Wohl, there's a direct link between his craft and his surroundings. "If people see beauty in my furniture," he observes, "it may be because I find so much beauty in living where I do with my family. I'm in love with these hills and valleys."

He speaks modestly about his creations—everything from cradles to breadboards to Hindu shrines—but his works have regu-

larly won important awards. In 1986, for example, he won top prizes in both the Cleveland Art Museum's May Show and the Milwaukee Art Museum's Festival of Arts.

Wohl's furniture is distinguished both for its seamless joinery and its fine finish. Because of their organic forms and modern spirit, his chairs, tables, desks and other works have been sometimes likened to the creations of Sam Maloof, a California designer with one of the most revered names in woodworking. Wohl is not offended by the comparison. A native of Cleveland, he began making furniture after having first studied architecture at Ohio State University; and in 1975, worked at Maloof's side for several months.

"It was a chance of a lifetime," Wohl recalled. "One of his assistants broke an arm in a skateboard accident and I was invited to work and live with Sam in San Bernardino for a time. He's amazing—tremendously resourceful, hardworking and incredibly fast. He can make a hundred pieces in less time than some woodworkers take to turn out ten works."

In comparison with mass-produced, store-bought furniture, hand-crafted pieces, Wohl agrees, can seem expensive. His rocking chairs, for example, have price tags of \$1,900. While he would prefer to put prices on his furniture that would be within the reach of more people, he explains that his 140 hours per chair, shop overhead and employee wages make it impossible.

But there are plenty of takers for Wohl's rockers even with their relatively steep price: he recently had back orders for ten of the chairs. Nearly all of his income, he says, comes from the four or five art fairs, including Madison's Art Fair on the Square and Milwaukee's Lakefront Festival, that he participates in each year.

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People who can't afford one of his rockers might still be able to acquire an original Wohl. His hottest selling creations are birdseye maple cutting boards, which range in price from \$25 to \$150. While he makes the boards to be serviceable, apparently many buyers believe that carving a turkey on a Wohl board would be about as desecratory as cutting up a gobbler on a Matisse canvas and, instead, hang them on walls as artwork.

Milwaukee's Robert Schroeder is seen by many custom furniture makers as a "boy wonder." At just twenty-six he already has ten years' experience as a businessman. While still in high school, Schroeder ran his own antiques refinishing operation and later, as an art and architecture student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he launched a lucrative mural painting and graphics design company. That led to the creation of his current business in Downtown Milwaukee, RGTS Robert Schroeder Design.

A one-man venture and operated out of the basement of his parents' home a few years ago, his firm is now based in spacious rented quarters in Milwaukee's warehouse district. Today the demand for original Schroeder creations is so great that he employs four assistants.

There is a dramatic, high-tech look to Schroeder's creations. His choice of materials—plastic laminates and Plexiglas—declare their contemporaneity. Several of his creations have incorporated neon lights. Says Schroeder, "I guess my furniture could be called bold, but I also hope it has elegance. I want it to grab your attention in the same way a strange, but strikingly beautiful woman might if you walked into a room and saw her sitting there."

Schroeder designs cabinets, desks and even beds, but if he has one creation that is more popular than the others, it's his "cube" tables. The pieces feature movable plastic blocks which allow people to play with the tables as though they were Rubik's cubes. Reasoning that "there is no reason why furniture has to be fixed in its look," Schroeder has designed some of the tables with as many as eighty-one blocks. But even the tables with as few as six blocks allow for an almost infinite number of patterns since the cubes have different colors on each of their sides.

What's the price for an original Schroeder? It's possible to buy a smaller cube table for as little as \$500, but most of the pieces in his showroom are priced in the thousands of dollars.

While more and more people from the Milwaukee area are beginning to commission him for works, most of it still is outside Wisconsin. Recently, for example, he designed virtually all the furniture for a new home in East Hampton, Long Island. Most of his out-of-state jobs come to him through interior designers who are familiar with his work.

Beyond the issue of quality, handmade furniture's attraction, according to Schroeder, is that it allows people to make a statement, to have one-of-a-kind pieces that express something unique about themselves.

For Madison designer Dick Wickman, the excitement of going to his studio each day comes from the hope that he will be able to top what he accomplished the previous day.

"I have a low threshold for boredom," admits Wickman. "I can get really tired of my work unless I have something new to do all the time. The thrills I get come from continually pushing my designs and from trying things in my furniture that I haven't tried before."

Wickman, probably one of the most adventurous furniture designers anywhere in the country, says he's more interested in conceiving new works than in actually executing them. He speaks matter of factly about his abilities as a craftsman, but many of his fellow furniture makers say that not only are Wickman's pieces dazzling to behold, but they also show workmanship of the highest order.

Wickman, a 1969 graduate of Milwaukee's old Layton School of Art, set out to be a sculptor, but started to make furniture fourteen or fifteen years ago. "The first things I did were for friends," he recalled. "I was lucky. One wealthy friend in particular commissioned me for several pieces for a new house. I was forced to pick up a lot of new skills fast."

Wickman said the change in his interest from sculpture to furniture came about quite naturally. "Like much of the art that was being produced in the sixties, my sculpture was technically-oriented, quite

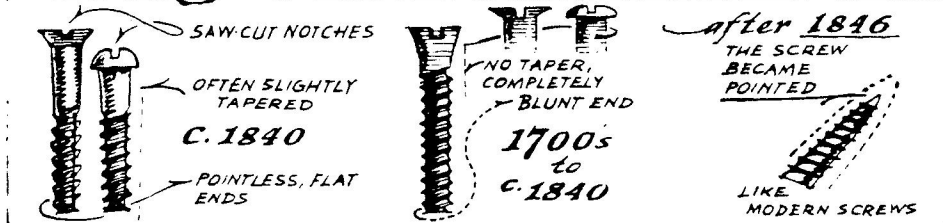
machine-like," he said. "I used a lot of different materials in my sculpture that I hunted down in various stores. And because I didn't have every skill under the sun, I often searched for Old World craftsmen or technicians to help me do this or do that. Today I take the same approaches in making furniture—I often hunt around for unusual materials and I search out those with the skills to help me carry out my ideas."

Like Schroeder, Wickman has many clients in the East and receives most of his commission through interior designers. His work is also carried by two distinguished art galleries, Perimeter Gallery in Chicago, and the Gallery of Applied Arts in New York. Wickman's hand-crafted furniture is shown regularly in major museum exhibitions, including one held late in 1986 at the American Craft Museum in New York.

It is impossible to pigeonhole Wickman's work into any single stylistic category. His work echoes numerous influences, including Shaker, art deco, art moderne and Native American, especially the skin boats of the Northwest coast Indians. While his furniture is often made of richly patterned woods like cherry and birdseye and blistered maple, it sometimes also includes very common materials, such as willow twigs or PCV plastics.

In keeping with the uniqueness that distinguishes each of these three designer/craftsmen, there is a Wickman touch that draws heavy comment. If the legs of many of his tables bear a striking resemblance to the antlers of elk—it is because indeed they are.

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WHEN: THE EXHIBITION WILL OPEN IN SEPTEMBER, 1988.

WHERE: AT THE PORT OF HISTORY MUSEUM, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

WHO: APPLICATION WILL BE OPEN TO MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS OF AAW BOTH IN THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONALLY.

DEADLINE: DUE DATE FOR SLIDES AND APPLICATIONS IS NOVEMBER 11, 1987.

APPLICATION INFORMATION: FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SEND A LEGAL SIZED, SASE
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CATALOG: WE ARE DOING RESEARCH INTO HAVING A CATALOG/BOOK PUBLISHED DEPICTING THE ENTIRE EXHIBITION.

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CURATOR: ALBERT LE COFF



Dear Woodworkers,

The Rainforest Action Network is a citizens' group concerned with the accelerating loss of the world's tropical rainforests. We are currently researching and writing a book about tropical timber imports to the United States. We need your help in gathering information and solving some problems. We are exploring some of these issues:

- How much tropical timber is imported to the United States?
- What are the tropical timbers used in the U.S. and for what are they used ?
- What impact does U.S. consumption of tropical timber have on the rainforests of the world?
- Are there viable substitutes to use in place of tropical timbers?
- Do imports of tropical timbers have an impact on the domestic timber industry?
- What tropical timber is grown in plantations or sustainably managed?
- How do we encourage a sustainable tropical timber industry?

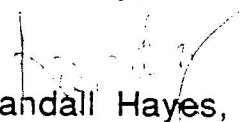
If you have materials or studies relevant to our research, we would appreciate any that you could forward to our office.

We hope this book will be used as a tool for interested woodworkers, store owners, citizen groups and consumers to gain awareness of the tropical rainforest issue and join in the solutions.

Could you please discuss this issue at one of your regular meetings with your members, and ask them to complete the enclosed survey. This can be done either as a group, or individually, which ever is easier. Please feel free to duplicate this letter and survey for distribution in your newsletter or at your next meeting.

We look forward to your input, and welcome any suggestions and ideas that you may to contribute.

Sincerely,


Randall Hayes, Director

Questionnaire enclosed



SURVEY ON TROPICAL HARDWOODS

1. What types of tropical hardwoods do you use ?

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If none, why? _____

2. How much tropical hardwood do you use per year ?

(rough estimate) _____

3. For what reasons do you and/or your clients choose these tropical hardwoods ?

(strength, beauty, weathering, etc.) _____

4. Can you recommend domestic hardwood substitutes for tropical hardwoods?

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Any other ideas? _____

5. Do you know of sources of tropical woods that are grown on a sustainable basis?

___ No ___ Yes, Source _____

6. Any other comments you would like to add? _____

___ Please send information on the book when completed.

___ Please send information on Rainforest Action Network.

___ I'm interested in helping on a tropical timber campaign
to promote a sustainable supply of wood.

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Address _____

Is there anyone else we should write to?

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Please return this survey to: RAN/Timber Study at the address below.



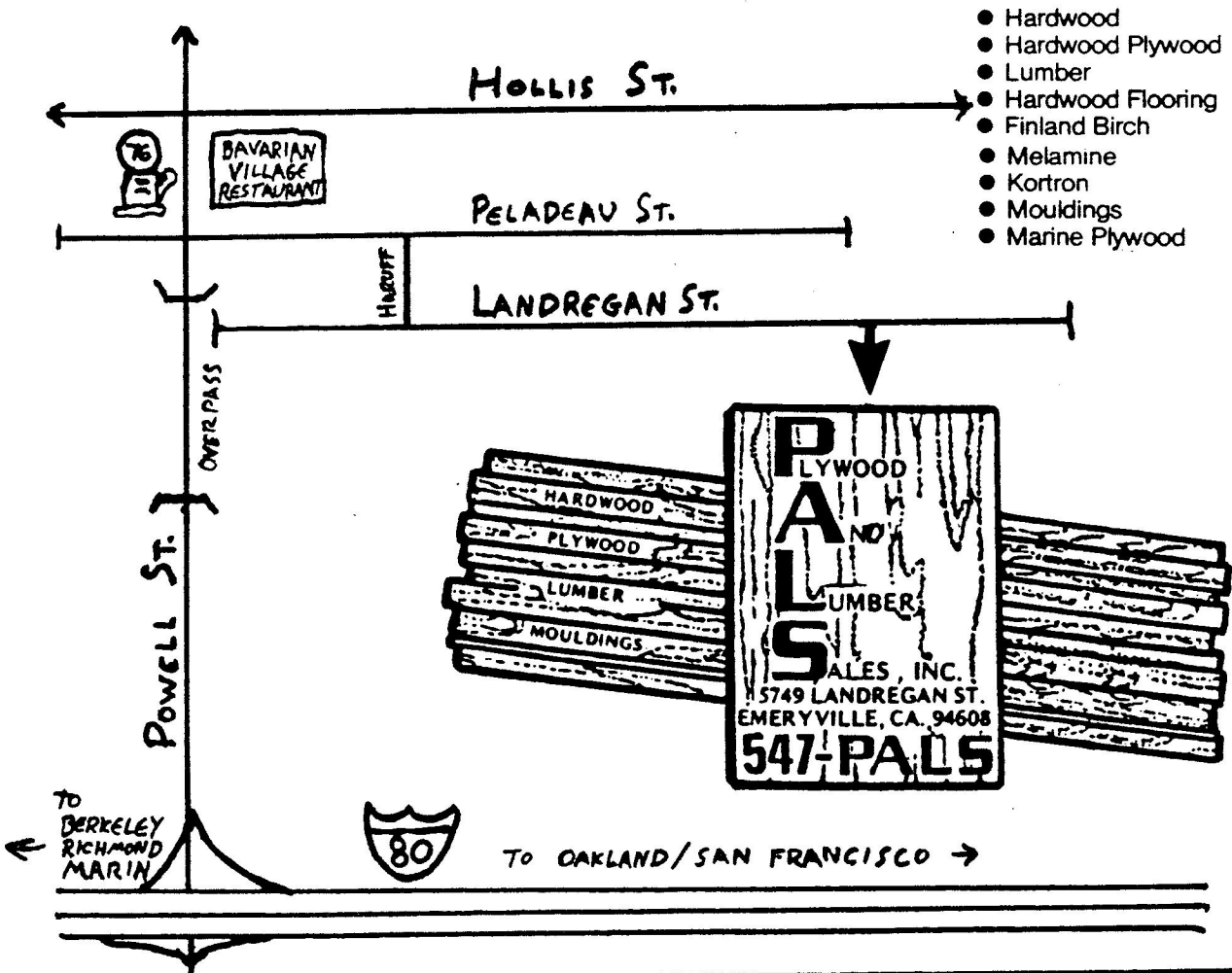
NOTES FROM NORMA

Although I extended a verbal thank you to everyone who helped make our participation in the San Francisco shows a big success, I don't want to miss anyone so again, thank you. For those of you who are new members as a result of meeting you at the shows, I again want to welcome you to our organization.

Our sign-in sheets at the door are helping us to correct errors on the mailing list as well as enabling us to reach visitors with a complimentary newsletter. Please use the sign-in to convey messages about the newsletter (or other matters) and I will pass the information on.

Norma Brooks

Some useful information for those who want





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Date: 14 April 1987

Entry Deadline: May 29, 1987, 5 p.m.

PRESS RELEASE

Fine Crafts Exhibition at the 42nd Annual Marin County Fair and Exposition to be juried by Ted Cohen/Dennis Morinaka/Jay Musler.

The 42nd Annual Marin County Fair & Exposition will take place at the Fairgrounds in San Rafael, California, July 1-5, 1987. About the Fair, Ester Armstrong, Assistant Director, State Division of Fairs and Expositions, says, "Given the fact that the world is fascinated with all things California, it is not an exaggeration to emphasize that the fair system does particular justice to the State's color, uniqueness and sense of wonder . . . The fair is the place where the world - as well as the local community - can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste California."

The "Fine Crafts Exhibition" at the Marin County Fair is open to all California artists. Jurors for the exhibit are: Ted Cohen, Art Consultant/Collector/Designer living in Oakland; Dennis Morinaka, Oakland artist working in wood sculpture; Jay Musler, San Francisco artist working in sculptural glass. The jury will award \$1370 in prizes. All Fine Craft entries are due at the Veteran's Auditorium, Marin County Fairgrounds, San Rafael, California 94903, on Wednesday, June 17, 1987. (Entry forms and fees must be filed at the Fair office by 5 p.m., May 29, 1987.)

For further information and entry forms, contact:

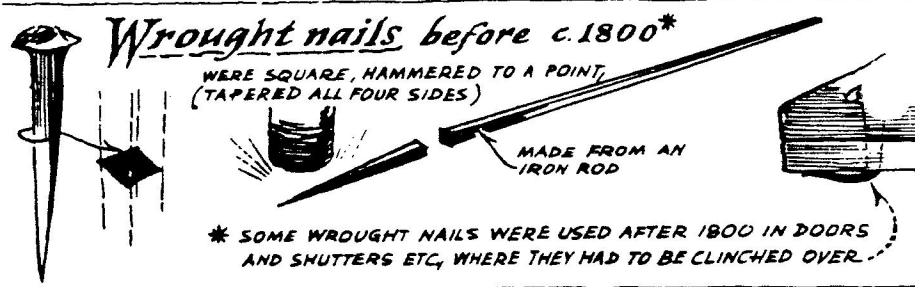
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In association with our upcoming Contemporary Furniture Masterpieces show, we at Gallery Fair are pleased to announce an artist's seminar with Garry Knox Bennett, Sam Maloof, Alphonse Mattia, and Rosanne Somerson in Mendocino, this upcoming July 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The seminar will include slide presentations by Sam Maloof and Alphonse Mattia (both of whom acted on the selection committee for this show) that will address their perceptions of contemporary furniture and furniture makers nationwide. This will be followed by each of the participants addressing a particular topic of their own choosing. I, as moderator, will address questions to the participants from the audience--both via correspondences beforehand and from the floor. We expect to have ample time to address ourselves to inquiries in full. And, what with our reception following almost immediately, most certainly there will be more time available for ongoing discussion.

We invite you to participate; we invite your questions. The cost is \$35.00 per person and seating is limited. Address inquiries and fees to:

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June 18 through July 5, 1987

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

PURPOSE

The Del Mar Fair and the San Diego Fine Woodworker's Association will present to the public an exhibition of fine woodworking, consisting of contemporary and traditional designs in wood. All works selected will be the best of those submitted, in the estimation of the judges. The decision of the judges will be final.

SHOWING

The works selected will be exhibited at the Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar, California, June 18 through July 5, 1987, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. (11 p.m. Friday and Saturday).

ELIGIBILITY AND LIMITS

The exhibition is open to all woodworkers who reside in the State of California. Works produced under the supervision of an instructor are not eligible. All entries must have been created by the artist whose name appears on the entry form. Works constructed from kits are not eligible. Entries are limited to three (3) per exhibitor. Works previously shown at the Del Mar Fair are not eligible.

SPECIFICATIONS

All works must be of a size and weight to be easily handled and installed without assistance. State dimensions on entry form. Primary media must be wood and serve a functional purpose.

ENTRY FEE

Limit of three (3) entries per exhibitor. The fee is \$5.00 for EACH entry. Entries without the fee will not be juried. ENTRIES CLOSE FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1987. ENTRY FORMS AND FEES MUST BE IN THE ENTRY OFFICE BY 5 p.m. Make checks payable to, Del Mar Fair.

CALENDAR

ENTRY FORMS, SLIDES AND FEES DUE: Friday, May 22, 1987 by 6 p.m.
DELIVERY OF ACCEPTED ITEMS: Saturday, June 13, 1987 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
FINAL JURYING: Saturday, June 13, 1987 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
PICKUP OF ELIMINATED WORKS: Saturday, June 13, 1987 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
PICKUP OF ACCEPTED WORKS: Monday, July 5, 1987, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

SPECIAL AWARDS

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MAILINGS AND REQUESTS

Mail entries, inquiries and requests for entry forms to:

6th Annual "DESIGN IN WOOD"

Entry Office, Del Mar Fair

2260 Jimmy Durante Boulevard

Del Mar, CA 92014-2216 U.S.A.

or phone 297-0338, Ex. 14 or 296-1441, Ex. 14

BEAUTIFUL WOODS FOR CREATIVE WOODWORKING

Re-printed from IWCS.

Olive Wood, especially from the stump is frequently full of voids and checks, but is outstanding for color and figure. An acrid odor is noted when worked, but it is not too disagreeable. California olive is beautiful, but the finest comes from the Middle East from very old trees.

Mescal Bean, a little known wood from the Southwest is exceptionally varied in color from yellowish-orange to dark brown or black. It's fine working properties will facilitate the development of very attractive appearing jewelry.

Desert Ironwood, The heartwood is a deep chocolate brown mottled with yellowish red. it is very hard and heavy and cannot be readily worked with hand tools. When machined into jewelry the polish is fine and the luster is high.

Redwood Burl, this is a rather soft wood with easy working qualities, but when finished, it has the usual attractive burl appearance which shows prominently in the larger pieces of jewelry.

Mr. Howard Carter in his book "The Tomb of Tutankhamen" relates that the shrines which house the sarcophagus are cedar structures, oblong, with a double door at one end. They were approximately 16 feet long, 11 feet wide, and 9 feet high. The thickness of the Cedar was 2 inches and the woodwork had been carried into the tomb in sections and there assembled together.

The joints were made by means of tenons and dowels. Finally, the whole thing was covered with a coating of plaster and then decorated with funerary inscriptions and scenes. The tomb also contained an Ebony chair, bed, and a gaming table of Ebony and Ivory.

DEALING WITH MENTALLY DISTURBED CLIENTS

A commentary by Peter Good

Mentally deranged people are like the aliens in the movie, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"; they're all around us but we don't know who they are because they often look normal. There are times in many of our lives, however, when something happens in the course of our interactions with others that causes us to come to the sudden realization that we are communicating or transacting in some way with someone who is different, off balance, mentally disturbed, possibly insane. It may not be a problem if the communication or transaction is a casual one, but if we are involved in any kind of contractual arrangement with this individual, the outcome could be disastrous.

Often, disturbed people can function superficially in such a manner that their condition is not readily detected. It may not be until after we have a considerable degree of involvement with these people that our mental alarm bell goes off and we come to the abrupt realization that something is terribly wrong. In business, we often deal with strangers. Other than outward appearances, we may not know anything about these people. Certain forms of mental illness are characterized by the individual's ability to look and act normally for a period of time or until some event triggers their abnormal behavior. The results can be horrifying. You suddenly realize that the person you're talking to is alarmingly different from what you thought they were and now appears to be out of their mind, irrational and beyond reasoning with.

Sometimes we can spot mental irregularities in our clients early enough to not get involved or to at least make some provision to deal with them in an acceptable manner. The trouble comes when we are already involved when we make the discovery. In my seventeen years in construction and woodworking, I've had a few weird customers and there have been at least a half dozen who I consider to be severely disturbed. It is these extreme cases which we need to try to recognize early enough to avoid.

In my experience, there has been a similar pattern in the extreme cases. During approximately the first two thirds of a job there is a series of small but unsettling problems, primarily in the form of communication failures or disagreements between the client and contractor. This series of problems is the indicator of possible trouble ahead. At some point during the last third of the job there occurs what I call the breakdown event, in which the client can no longer maintain a rational facade and does something to cause an irreparable breakdown in the job. This may be triggered by something which has nothing to do with the job but you, as contractor, may become the target of aggression or irrational behavior because you are easily available for that purpose and the client is unable to maintain a separation between an unrelated cause and effect. The breakdown event can take many forms including verbal, written or physical aggression, demands that you vacate the job site or cease work on the job, confiscation of tools, equipment or materials by the client, cessation of payments, cessation of communication or other harmful or even criminal actions. Once the breakdown event has occurred, only extraordinary negotiating measures or intervention by others will control the situation. If not controlled, it can quickly reach explosive proportions, legal or otherwise, or at best, become permanently stalemated.

Your best defence against mentally disturbed clients is to try to recognize them in the beginning and not get involved. Ask for references of other people who they have done business with and check out the references before making any agreement to work with the client. If you do work with a questionable client, write a contract and conduct the job in a manner that will minimize your losses in the event of a breakdown. Whenever possible, don't leave tools, equipment or materials in the client's possession or on the job site. Instead of one large contract, break the job into several smaller jobs, each being complete in itself and with a separate contract. Run these smaller jobs sequentially with no overlap. Do not start or contract for the next phase until the previous phase has been completed and paid for. Make sure the check clears the bank. If you sense impending disaster, terminate the job at the end of the current contractual phase. Break the cost of each contractual phase into several small payments to be made according to a specific schedule. If possible, don't contract as an individual. Use a partner, associate or representative who will also have some contact with the client. This could make you a less likely victim by increasing your apparent size and effectiveness, and could also provide valuable input from the other person or persons on how to conduct the job.

The bottom line is that after careful consideration, if you do enter into a business arrangement with a client who may be disturbed, set up and conduct the job in a cautious and professional manner to minimize your losses in the event of a breakdown. Better yet, if you see serious irregularities, don't get involved in the first place. Don't jump to any conclusions, but remember that the person you're talking to may be insane - and you may not know it.

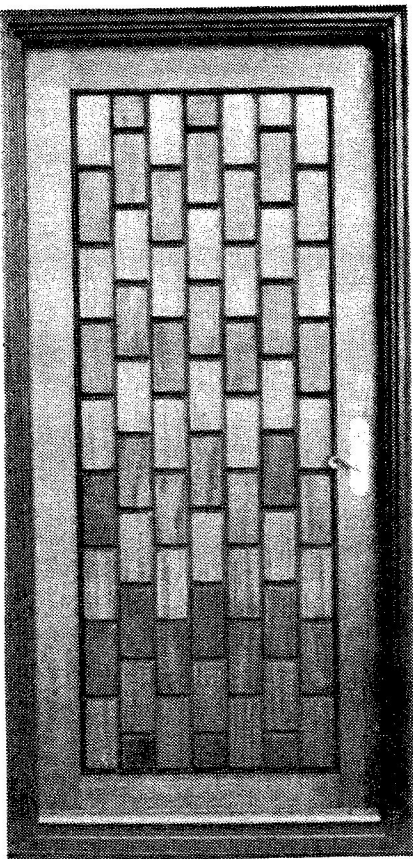
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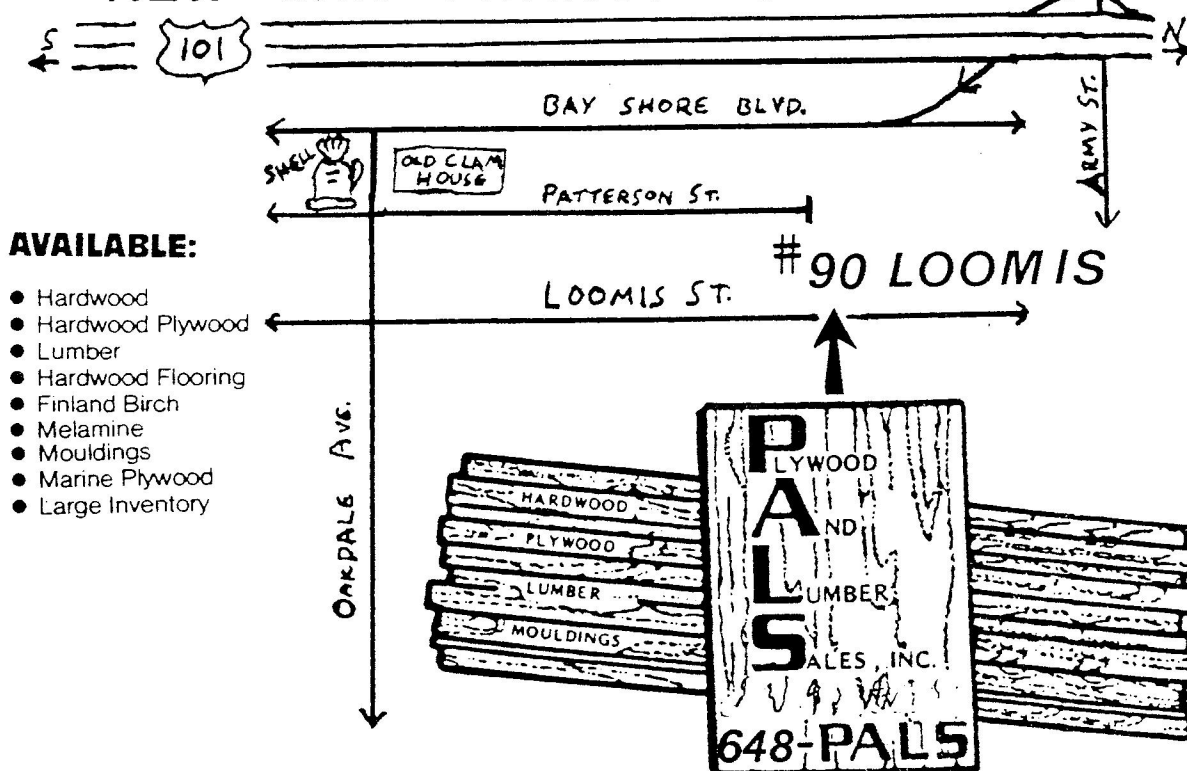
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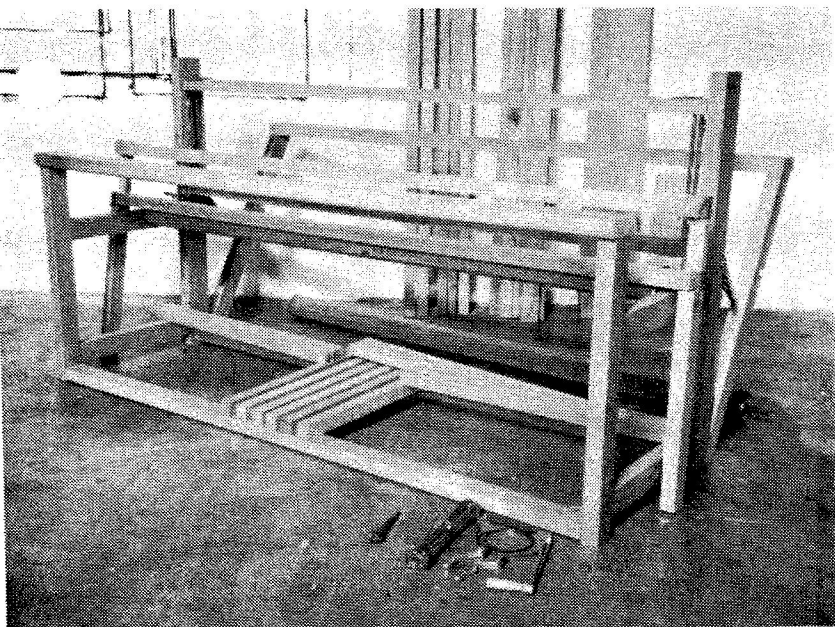
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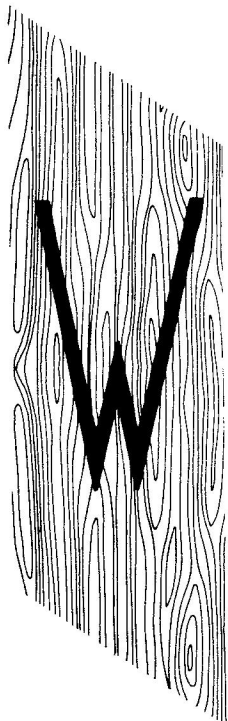
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BAWA DATA

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.

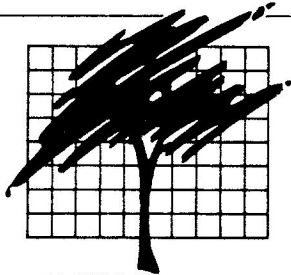
Membership dues are \$30/year, for which any member may participate fully in the Association, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the By-Laws. This includes voting power on any issue brought before the membership for a vote, notification of the monthly shop talks and demonstrations put on 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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