

Early History of the Rochester Woodworkers Society

By Wendell Smith

How It All Started

LATE 1984, two events took place in the fall and early winter of 1984 that led to the assembling of a group of woodworkers to see if a woodworking group might succeed.

One was the chance meeting at the September 1984 Clothesline Art Sale between Wendell Smith and Jean Vincent, a weaver and wife of woodturner Al Vincent. Wendell told Jean that he had been thinking about trying to form a woodworking group, and wondered if Al would be interested in participating in such an endeavor. It is a fact that many weavers have woodworkers for husbands (the Smiths and Vincents being cases in point), and that the Rochester Weavers' Guild had been a successful organization for nearly 40 years. (This woodworker/weaver coincidence had not gone unnoticed by the Taunton Press, which, following the success of their Fine Woodworking, started a second magazine called Threads.) Jean indicated that Al would probably be interested in helping to form such a group, and this was later confirmed by a telephone call.

The second event, which reinforced the first, was a noon-hour meeting between John McCabe and Wendell Smith at the Kodak Research Laboratories to discuss the feasibility of starting a woodworking group. John felt that it was likely that such a group would survive, considering the fact that the Rochester area has an exceptionally rich craft heritage. John was also enthusiastic about trying to get a woodworking group started. It was agreed that the first step would be to get as many woodworkers together as possible to further discuss the feasibility of such an organization.

Earlier Groups

A seed for the structure of such a group had actually been planted considerably earlier than 1984. During the 1970's there was a very active craft movement in the Rochester area. One consequence of this was the formation of a craft organization, Lake Country Craftsmen, to which Al, John, and Wendell belonged. This group consisted of members who were interested in many crafts, such as woodworking, weaving, pottery, jewelry, batik, and others. A special interest woodworking group existed within this organization, and this group had taken field trips to places such as Bill Brewerton's marquetry studio in Canandaigua, Beavers Woodworking on Railroad Street, and the studio of production woodworker Paul Kopel.

This craft organization was involved not only in social/education functions, but also in various marketing functions such as an annual sale and an annual exhibition. At the monthly membership meetings most of the discussion and virtually all the dissension revolved around marketing activities. Al Vincent had often suggested that the group should consider dividing into two separate organizations, one to serve the social/educational needs and another, the marketing needs. He formalized this idea in a letter to the president of the organization in April 1985.

Of the six members constituting the first RWS Board of Directors, four (Al, John, Wendell, and LeRoy Hogue) came from a background of participation in this crafts organization. The previous experience of these four members had a significant impact upon the formation of RWS as an organization whose primary purpose would be educational and social.

Feasibility Meeting - January 29, 1985

Can It Be Done?

On a wintry evening, a group of woodworkers gathered at Wendell Smith's home to entertain the feasibility of forming a woodworking group. Among those present were: Al Vincent, John McCabe, Wendell Smith, John Dodd, Hunter Kariher, LeRoy Hogue, Howard Joffe, Seth Gaugh, and Charlie Bishop. An attempt had been made to include some professional woodworkers in this group, as it was felt that their opinion was important. John Dodd, Hunter Kariher, and Howard Joffe were in this category.

Hunter expressed serious reservations about the value of a woodworking group. He felt that because he worked 12 hours a day at woodworking, a program would have to be exceptionally good for him to come out in the evening to hear a lecture on woodworking. Al's reply to this was that it would be a challenge for a woodworking group to obtain well-known craftsmen as speakers, and as a result attract professional woodworkers. John Dodd was interested in the idea of forming a woodworking group. He was encouraging but admitted that because of demands on his time he did not think that he could personally devote much time to the group. He also remarked that even if such a group were organized for the purpose of making a profit, it would be of benefit to the students at the School for American Craftsmen.

The Group of Six & Their Goals

The general sense after this first meeting was one of discouragement; there definitely was not a feeling of elation. However, John Dodd's quiet encouragement definitely helped a small nucleus of six individuals to further pursue this idea. This group consisted of Charlie Bishop, Seth Gaugh, LeRoy Hogue, John McCabe, Wendell Smith, and Al Vincent.

Those who continued to pursue the goal of a woodworking group agreed we should pursue the following goals:

1. The highest quality speakers that we could afford.
2. Maximum involvement across professionals and amateurs.
3. There should be a social aspect to the group.

Meeting at Seth Gaugh's Home - February 12, 1985

Two Weeks Later

After the initial meeting at Wendell's home, the above group of six met at Seth's home about two weeks later. It was agreed at this meeting that Wendell would take the responsibility of leader for the first year. Unfortunately many of the details of what transpired at this meeting are lost, since Wendell did not begin to keep meeting notes until the following meeting. One thing that is known, however, is that out of this meeting came our first choices for speakers.

Our First Speaker Selection

It was decided that we would ask Bruce Hoadley to be our kickoff speaker. Hoadley was a well-known authority on wood, and it was thought that he would have a broad appeal across the woodworking spectrum and (hopefully) would attract people to our first lecture.

The other speakers that were to be asked were Donald Lloyd McKinley (a Canadian woodworker), Mark Lindquist (a woodturner from Florida), and Richard Scott Newman (a Rochester woodworker). A factor in the choice of Mark Lindquist was his presumed proximity to Rochester. It was known that he lived in New Hampshire, but it was not known that his winter home was in Florida. Since he would be visiting Rochester in the winter, it was somewhat unnerving to later discover this in our then-current financial situation (a bank balance of zero). It was agreed that Al would contact Don McKinley, Seth would contact Bruce Hoadley, and Wendell would contact Mark Lindquist and Richard Newman.

Money Issues

Discussion ensued over how much we were going to pay the potential speakers. Much of this was colored by the fact that we had no idea how much money we would have to dole out. After considering various scenarios, it was decided to offer all speakers \$150 + expenses whether they came from Rochester or (for example) California. It was recognized that there was an inequity here, since speakers from far away inevitably would lose more shop time than a local speaker. It was agreed at this meeting that we must contact the potential speakers at the earliest possible time, since if we had any rejections we would have to draw up an alternative plan.

Because Bruce Hoadley has the unique position of being our first speaker, more detail will follow on his visit than on the others. Seth contacted Hoadley and told him the conditions under which we were operating, i.e., that at that point in time we had no idea whether we had a viable group, and that we must face the possibility that we might not have enough members to follow through with our plan. Hoadley was very pleased to be asked, and agreed immediately to be the first speaker. He indicated that it would work out very well for him, as he had no classes on the Monday that we wanted him to speak, and he felt he could get back in time on Tuesday to make his classes. Later Charlie Bishop made travel arrangements for Hoadley on Mapp Airlines (the only airline servicing the Springfield-Hartford to Rochester route), an airline which none of the committee members had ever heard of and whose planes we envisioned being flown by bush pilots. We kept our fingers crossed for several months, as disaster would surely follow if our kick-off speaker did not arrive at the scheduled hour. Seth distinctly remembers how expensive Hoadley's ticket was. Expense is of course a relative thing, but considering that at that point we had a zero bank account, his ticket was indeed "expensive".

Genesis of the Toy Project

Charlie Bishop had recently returned from a business trip to Kingsport, Tennessee. While in Kingsport, he had met some woodworkers who belonged to a local woodworkers' organization that was similar in many respects to what we envisaged for the Rochester area. According to Charlie one of the most popular projects of this group was a holiday toy project in which members volunteered their time to construct wooden toys for disadvantaged children. He suggested that our group might like to consider something like this in the future. This was probably the genesis of the future toy project, which is discussed below.

A Routine Gets Established

Between the meeting at Seth's home and Hoadley 's presentation in the fall of 1985, Board meetings were held on an approximately monthly basis. The location of each meeting was rotated between the homes of the initial six Board members. The specific location and dates are included in a table appended to this report. We shall not discuss the details of each of these meetings, but rather try to point out some of the highlights during this period of time.

Highlights of Events in the First Half of 1985

Membership Drive

One of the gravest concerns of the early Board was just where we were going to find the members to support such a group. At that point in time, our picture of success would be perhaps 100 members. This was a topic of discussion at a Board meeting at Al Vincent's home in March 1985.

During that evening a list of contacts for potential members was drawn up, and each of the six agreed to contact several potential sources. Among the possible sources of names was (individuals in parentheses were to contact that particular source): Pittsford Lumber (John McCabe), Hamlin Sawmill and the RIT Alumni (Charlie Bishop), the industrial arts teachers (LeRoy Hogue), RAMCO and the Woodcarvers' Society (Seth Gaugh), George Gordon and Bill Keyser (Al Vincent), the Wendell Castle School and Fine Woodworking (Wendell Smith). As it turned out, the last contact proved to be a very significant event in RWS' history.

Wendell contacted Dale Brown of Fine Woodworking and explained the position in which our group found itself. He asked if it would be possible to purchase the Fine Woodworking mailing list for ZIP codes beginning with 144, 145, and 146. Dale Brown took the matter up with the appropriate personnel at Fine Woodworking, and in his return call indicated that they would indeed be willing to sell us such a mailing list for \$50. Upon inquiring into the number of names that we might get for \$50, the response was 1700! This willingness on the part of Fine Woodworking to help a fledgling group was truly one of the most significant events leading to the future viability of RWS. We estimated that our expenses for the first year would total between \$1900 and \$2000, a figure which would require a membership enrollment of about 130 at \$15/member. If we did not achieve the requisite number of members to cover our projected costs, then we estimated that we would be in the hole about \$450. Consequently each of the six agreed to chip in \$75 with the full realization that we might never see our money again.

Finding a Meeting Place

Another topic that came up at the March meeting at Al's house was: Where are we going to meet? Cost being an important factor here, the list consisted of several candidates which we hoped might be available at minimal cost: the Pine Grove School, the First Baptist Church of Rochester (where the Rochester Weavers' Guild held its meetings), the Farm and Home Center on Highland Avenue, St. John Fisher, Nazareth, and others. Al Vincent and Wendell spent several lunch hours scouting out the various possibilities -including even the recently completed Convention Center! - and in the end decided that the First Baptist Church of Rochester (located on Allens Creek Road) offered the best compromise between facilities and cost. Consequently arrangements were made to hold our first year's lecture series in this facility.

Our First Mailing

By the time of the May meeting at Charlie Bishop's home, Al Vincent (who had agreed to act as treasurer and membership chairman) had obtained a post office box and bulk-mailing permit. On the basis of this it is likely that the name "Rochester Woodworkers Society" was arrived at during the previous (April) meeting at LeRoy Hogue's home. On Wendell's agenda for that meeting there is the entry "Name of group (revisited)". At the previous meeting at Al's home, Al had come forth with a long list of suggestions, but the group had been unable to resolve the issue at that time. Consequently the name RWS has an April, 1985 birth date.

Our solicitation for membership went out on June 10, 1985. A copy of the letter is appended to this report, as is also the description of the first lecture series. Because of our good fortune in obtaining the Fine Woodworking mailing list, our mailing consisted of 1820 pieces. Envelope stuffing took place at Charlie Bishop's home at the May meeting.

Highlights of Events in the Last Half of 1985

Membership Swells

Following the June mailing of the membership solicitation, there was a respite of about five weeks before the next Board meeting. This was held at John McCabe's home on July 17. During this period Al Vincent made daily trips to the post office to see how we were doing on our membership campaign and issued reports to Board members to keep us posted on the results.

From an initial trickle of 2 or 3 membership forms per day, the pace slowly increased until there was a steady flow of 10 to 15 membership forms arriving each day. By the time of the July Board meeting our membership had swelled to 240 and our cash balance to over \$3000. It was clear that RWS was going to be a viable organization at least for one year!

Wendell remembered that earlier in the year Seth had remarked, "You know, we could be surprised and get as many as 300 members in this organization." Wendell wondered if Seth had gone crackers, since he thought this was clearly not realistic. By the time the lion's share of our first year's membership drive ended, RWS had over 350 members.

Logistics & New Meeting Place

Because of the overwhelming response to the mailing, it was necessary to change our planned meeting place for the lecture series. The First Baptist Church would be the host not only for RWS on the planned meeting nights, but also for another group. The combination of the two groups would exceed the parking capacity of the church. Consequently Al and Wendell hit the road again, and began searching for another meeting place. As the first year's members remember, we ended up using the Monroe Community College Theater. Al made arrangements with MCC for the use of the Theater and for provision of projection equipment for each speaker.

A serious logistics problem had now arisen. A mailing to 1820 individuals had gone out advising them of the wrong meeting place. Because of the cost of mailing, it was decided that rather than send out another 1820 pieces of mail, we would simply send a letter to all those who had sent in their dues advising them of the new meeting place. This of course meant that individuals who might like to come to the first meeting and join RWS at the door would not know of this move. It was decided to counter this by having posters made and posted at the First Baptist Church. A letter describing the revised meeting place, along with further details, went out on August 20 and a copy is appended. To the best of our knowledge there was very little inconveniencing of people as a result of this last minute switch in meeting places.

First RWS Lecture

Our last Board meeting before Hoadley's kick-off talk was held at Wendell's on September 3. Here the conversation revolved pretty much around details of the upcoming first lecture. Al and LeRoy agreed to serve as cashiers and ticket checkers (a ticket consisting of an RWS membership card). Charlie Bishop offered to act as a greeter. We had made arrangements with MCC for catering of coffee and tea, and Al took the responsibility of overseeing this. Wendell would take the responsibility of making announcements and introducing the speaker.

Al Vincent offered to act as host for Hoadley. Al met Hoadley at the plane (which to everyone's relief arrived on time), took him to Friday's for dinner, and then to the MCC Theater for his presentation. It was estimated that well over 100 people attended this first RWS lecture, which was very well received. Al acted as projectionist not only for this presentation, but also for all the programs at the MCC Theater. Following his talk we took him to El Torito's for refreshment, and then to the airport in the morning.

The Board Expands

The "start-up" Board of six had felt all along that the Board must be expanded, as there was really too much work for six, and also a provision must be made for rolling-over Board membership. At this early stage it would have been difficult to carry out an election, and so three additional individuals were asked to join the Board. These were Gordon Jarvis (a retired Kodak scientist), Rick Sherin (conservator at the Strong Museum), and Don Olney (a production wooden toy maker and owner of The Toyrafter). The augmented Board held its first meeting at Al's home on October 28. Among the topics for discussion was how the Board would be structured in the future. A suggestion was made that the Board consist of nine members, with a rollover of three each year, i.e., three would retire and be replaced by three new members to be elected by the membership. This was the plan that was eventually adopted. Half of the "start-up" Board was retired by June 1986 (Bishop, Gaugh, and Hogue), and the remainder by June 1987 (McCabe, Smith, Vincent).

Adding an RWS Newsletter

At the Board meeting at Al's home in October, there was a feeling of elation over the success of the Hoadley presentation. It now appeared likely that RWS would survive its first year. This was the first meeting at which the Board was truly a "Board", since prior to this point in time there was a feeling of uncertainty about the future. Committee assignments were made for the following year.

One of the decisions reached at this meeting was that RWS should have a newsletter. Gordon Jarvis offered to act as a newsletter editor, as he had had experience editing newsletters for other organizations and also had a computer and word processor at his home. RWS' first newsletter issued on November 10, 1985, and was numbered "No. 3". The explanation for this was that Gordon considered the previous two letters of information that had gone to prospective members on June 10 and August 20 as Newsletters 1 and 2.

Speaker Selection

A large proportion of this meeting was devoted to selecting speakers for the 1986-1987 year. We had invited Bill Keyser, a professor at the School for American Craftsmen, to join us at this meeting as an adviser. Bill's advice was very valuable, as he knew several of the candidate speakers personally and could advise us on their speaking abilities. After much discussion the following slate was arrived at: Sam Maloof (a nationally known woodworker from Alta Loma, CA), Jonathan Thornton (an expert on abrasives and restoration from Cooperstown, NY), Bill Keyser (also a nationally known woodworker and an expert on steam-bending), and Toshio Odate (author of a book on Japanese woodworking tools). Bill was reluctant to be on the program because he was acting as our adviser. However the Board coerced him into giving a presentation as several of us had heard him previously and knew that he would give an excellent presentation. Our confidence was later borne out.

A Second Lecture

Our second lecture presentation took place at the MCC Theater on November 18. This was given by Donald Lloyd McKinley of Port Sheridan, Ontario (and RWS' most distant member). Don took us on a slide tour of the estate of the late Wharton Esherick. Esherick 's home was located in Paoli, PA and it is now a museum. Sprinkled throughout the talk were several interesting, often humorous, anecdotes about Esherick that made one feel as though he or she knew Esherick by the end of the evening.

Workshops & Supplemental Activities

Earlier in the year, during the formative stages of RWS, the Board had discussed the possibility of augmenting the lecture series with supplemental activities such as workshops, demonstrations, and tours. A concern was raised that because we did not have any insurance, it would be risky to run workshops. Consequently in the early history of RWS these extra activities revolved around demonstrations and tours. John McCabe offered to take up the insurance problem, and later in the year he managed to purchase us a suitable insurance policy. With that we were able to consider offering workshops and hands-on courses.

The first supplemental activity offered was a tool-forging demonstration on Saturday, October 5 in Perinton Park. The idea for this demonstration came from Charlie Bishop. The demonstration was conducted by Charles Penoyer, a member of the Artist Blacksmith Association of North America. Charlie set up his portable forge in the Park and proceeded to demonstrate how to make simple hand tools such as chisels. It was a very cold day, which unfortunately made it somewhat uncomfortable for the participants to stand still for long periods of time.

The second supplemental activity offered by RWS was a tour of Don Olney's shop, The Toy crafter, at 1237 East Main St. This took place on October 21. We found out about Don through John Dodd, whose studio was in the same building as Don's. Don gave an evening presentation of production techniques for small items. Although Don's focus was on toy making, many of the methods and jigs that he described were applicable to other small items. Don's presentation was superb, and he graciously ended the evening by offering the visitors cider.

The last planned activity of the year was a demonstration by Rick Sherin on the conservation of old finishes, held on December 12 in Rick's workshop at the Strong Museum. The idea for this workshop arose at the October Board meeting when the Board was brainstorming ideas for supplemental programs. Rick was conservator at the Strong Museum, and was an expert on this topic. It was fortuitous indeed that Rick had joined the RWS Board because through his efforts RWS was later to be able to move its lecture series to the auditorium of the Strong Museum.

Highlights of Events in the First Half of 1986

Activities of the 1985-86 Season

Once the Board was augmented to nine, serious discussion arose concerning supplemental activities for the remainder of the 1985-1986 year. John McCabe agreed to chair a subcommittee to look into possible programs for the remainder of the year. Among those which came to fruition were: a demonstration on cutting dovetails by John Dodd (January), a demonstration by a Delta representative at Rochester Welding Supply (February), a presentation on exotic woods by Timothy Smith, a representative from Monteath's (Fairport High School, April), and a demonstration on green bowl turning by Wendell Smith (June).

In addition to these, three tours took place: Hardwood House (February), Axelrod Custom Millwork (February), and Kittinger Furniture Factory (May). Bob Marcotte handled the planning of the first two tours, and Hal Lowry, the Kittinger Factory Tour.

The Birth of SIGs

Another very important supplemental activity, which RWS began in the first half of 1986, was the formation of "SIG's" - special interest groups. An earlier survey of members' interests had clearly indicated that the two most popular interests of the members were furniture and woodturning (in that order). Consequently Tom Maier offered to chair a furniture SIG and Al Vincent, a woodturning SIG. Arrangements were made by Mal Altman for these groups to meet at the Pittsford Recreation Center. The initial meetings took place a week apart in May.

Those attending the first turning SIG were: Mal Altman, John Bailey, Mark Coons, Kendra Dayger, Ted Ellstrom, Tom Gompf, Gordon Jarvis, Steve Loar, Tom Maier, Bill McCoglin, Jim Orgar, Wendell Smith, and Al Vincent. Al moderated two stimulating hours during which the participants reviewed their triumphs and tragedies. Discussion topics included chisel-making (three different exhibits), using double-sided sticky tape to mount bowls, finishing, a wobbly spindle, a jeweler's lathe for miniatures, turning green wood, end-grain tear out, sand-blasting and scraping. The meeting was successful, and it was agreed that following the summer, the turners SIG should resume meeting.

The furniture SIG met a week after the woodturning SIG. According to Tom Maier's recollection, the following were present at this meeting: Tom Maier, Kendra Dayger, Ed Feathers, Gordon Jarvis, Bob Marcotte, and Tanya Yudelson. The group discussed what people had made and tricks and jigs which they had used. Like the woodturners, they agreed to convene again in the fall.

Speakers 1985-86 Season

Our February speaker at MCC was Richard Newman, a well-known Rochester woodworker. His talk had the interesting title, "Court Furniture in the Condo Age". Newman draws upon 18th and 19th century furniture for inspiration, combining lavish materials and rich detailing in a fresh and original approach. His presentation was marked by an informal rapport between himself and the audience. Newman invited the audience to ask questions, and the members responded.

Continued...

**Speakers
1985-86
Season
(Continued)**

Our last talk of the 1985-1986 season was presented by Mark Lindquist. In collaboration with his father, Melvin, he is responsible for the spalted bowl form. In Lindquist's early work he focused on simple forms so that the spalted wood could display itself, but more recently he has shifted emphasis towards form, texture and scale. Rough surfaces, cracks, and chain saw gouges are now incorporated into Lindquist's work. To the surprise of the membership, Lindquist's talk dwelt very little on turned forms. Unknown to most of us, Lindquist had recently moved away from lathe forms towards more sculptural forms.

**Birth of
Pre-meeting
Displays**

It had been observed during the year that despite the social period preceding the lectures, many members were not at ease meeting others. People naturally tended to gather together with those they already knew. The Board had given some thought to what might be done to bring RWS members together so that new acquaintances might be made. Out of this discussion came the idea of trying pre-meeting mini-exhibits. The idea would be to ask a few members to display whatever they would like to display during the 45 minutes preceding each lecture.

The Lindquist lecture on April 21 was the first time that this was tried. Previous to this lecture a brainstorming meeting was held at Rick Sherin's home at which several members tried to come up with ideas for candidates for the first mini-exhibit. Exhibiting at this meeting were Frank Carman (bird carving and reproductions of antique doll carriages), Steve Loar (creative woodturning), Chuck McCain (furniture making), and Rich Towsley (jigs to permit handicapped children to use woodworking tools safely). The mini-exhibit was very successful, and the tradition has been carried on. Exhibitors at other meetings are listed in a table appended to this report. Rick Sherin took charge of arranging these mini-exhibits. It turned out that RWS members would much rather look at a mini-exhibit than participate in one, and consequently Rick had his work cut out for him ferreting out participants.

**Winding Up
the Season**

It was decided that additions to the 1986-1987 Board of Directors would be made by membership vote at the last lecture of the 1985-1986 season (the Lindquist lecture). In preparation for this a nominating committee was formed consisting of Wendell Smith, Chuck Rinehart, Tom Hughes, Ron Whitlock, and Don Olney. RWS members were encouraged to submit additional nominations beyond those suggested by the nominating committee (none were submitted). All nominations were placed on a paper ballot for voting at the April 21 lecture. The newly elected Board members were Mal Altman, Bob Marcotte, and Tanya Yudelson.

One of the last jobs of the 1985-1986 season was to prepare and send out the solicitation for membership for the upcoming year. Again a feeling of uncertainty pervaded the Board members, as we were not sure how well the organization had been received. This mailing went out on June 10, 1986 and copies of the letters are appended (a different letter was sent to existing members and non-members). Our mailing was comprised of about 2500 names, and consisted of the previous year's Fine Woodworking list plus about 700 additional names from the Pittsford Lumber mailing list.

The Second Year of Operation - Fall 1986 to Summer 1987

Board, 1986-87 Season

During the 1986-1987 season the RWS Board of Directors consisted of Mal Altman, Gordon Jarvis, Bob Marcotte, John McCabe, Don Olney, Rick Sherin, Wendell Smith, Al Vincent, and Tanya Yudelson. Retiring from the previous year's Board were: Charlie Bishop, Seth Gaugh, and LeRoy Hogue. Don Olney and John McCabe co-chaired the Board during the 1986-1987 season.

Other responsibilities were: Treasurer and Membership Chairman (Al Vincent), Secretary (Wendell Smith), Newsletter editor (Gordon Jarvis), mini-exhibits and Strong Museum liaison (Rick Sherin), Demonstrations and Workshops (Mal Altman and Tanya Yudelson), and Publicity Chairman (Bob Marcotte). Thanks to the efforts of Rick Sherin, Board meetings moved out of Board members' homes and into a very nice conference room on the 2nd floor of the Strong Museum. The conference room had a very large table around which the Board could sit, and this environment was conducive to efficient Board meetings.

This was the first year in which secretary's notes were taken at Board meetings. Consequently from the time of the first Board meeting of this year (September 8, 1986) to the present, records of the Board meetings are available. A synopsis of topics discussed at the Board meetings during the 1986-1987 season is included in a table appended to this report. Selected topics will be highlighted below.

Membership

As in the previous year, a subject of concern to the Board was whether or not we would have a sufficient number of members as well as sufficient funds to support the planned program for the year. Al reported to the Board each month on the status of our membership and on our bank balance. At the September meeting RWS had about 277 members, and this continued to grow until about March 1987, peaking at about 410. There was serious concern, however, that a large proportion of the members were new members, and that many of the old members had not rejoined the group. Thus it was felt important to offer as varied a program as possible to the membership in order to sustain their interest.

New Facility for Lectures

Beginning with the 1986-1987 season, the RWS lecture series moved to the Strong Museum auditorium. This beautiful facility was made available to RWS through the efforts of Rick Sherin, conservator at the Museum and RWS' liaison with the Museum. RWS expressed its appreciation to the Museum through a donation of money as well as a pair of binoculars and a tripod for the projection room to aid in focusing slides. The idea of a gift of binoculars and tripod was spearheaded by Al Vincent. In addition, it may not be generally known that Rick Sherin has been taping the audio portion of every lecture held at the Strong Museum for the RWS archives.

Lecture Series for the Season

The lecture series for the year consisted of Sam Maloof (September), Jonathan Thornton (November), Bill Keyser (February), and Toshio Odate (April). The first three lectures were held at the Strong Museum, but because of a scheduling conflict the lecture by Odate had to be moved to the Jefferson Avenue School in Pittsford.

Short reviews of some of the lectures can be found in Newsletters #10 (Maloof), #11 (Thornton), and #17 (Odate). In addition, the notice which was sent to prospective members in June, 1986 outlining the talks is included in the Attachments. The talk by Sam Maloof was quite expensive, and there was some apprehension before the presentation that we had perhaps got in over our heads. However the auditorium at the Strong Museum was packed to capacity (about 300) for this lecture, and it is believed that the talk by Maloof may have been a factor in our membership surpassing that of the previous year. Thus, in hindsight, it suggested to the Board that spending money to bring in nationally known experts may more than pay for itself in the long run. Accordingly, the next year Arthur Espenet Carpenter, also nationally known and also a resident of California, was asked to be our kick-off speaker. Again the auditorium was packed to capacity.

Preceding each of the lectures at the Strong Museum, as well as the spring lecture at the Jefferson Road School in Pittsford, our pre-meeting exhibits were continued. Rick Sherin continued to coordinate these, a task which has not been simple because members are reluctant to display their work. A table is appended to this report detailing the pre-meeting exhibitors.

New Committees

The year 1986-1987 saw the formation of three active committees: (1) a Demonstrations and Workshops Committee, (2) a Holiday Toy Project Committee, and (3) an Education Committee.

Demos & Workshops

The Demonstrations and Workshops Committee was chaired by Mal Altman with the assistance of Tanya Yudelson. Meetings were held at Tanya's home on an approximately monthly basis through January 1987 at which time it was decided that program planning was sufficiently well in place that meetings could be discontinued for the remainder of the year.

Continued...

**Demos &
Workshops
(Continued)**

Programs which were planned by this committee for the year were:

1. A demonstration of a portable bandsaw mill by Gary VanNoy (September).
 2. A lecture (on a Friday night) and demonstrations (on Saturday and Sunday) on varied aspects of woodworking by Tage Frid (October). Plans for this presentation were actually initiated in the previous year by John McCabe's committee.
 3. A series of demonstrations, beginning in December and running into January, by John Dodd on planing and scraping.
 4. A Saturday workshop in Spencerport by LeRoy Hogue on carving a tray (March).
 5. A weekend workshop at BOCES on Japanese woodworking techniques by Toshio Odate, a nationally known expert on Japanese woodworking tools and techniques (April).
 6. A demonstration of jigs and fixtures by Don Olney in The Toyrafter shop (April).
 7. A sawmill demonstration by Percy Hightower (May).
-

The Frid and Odate events were viewed as prototypes for what was hoped to be a future tradition, that is, the bringing to Rochester of nationally known experts in various aspects of woodworking and having them run weekend demonstrations and/or workshops. Up until the Odate demonstration, RWS could not consider running workshops because of liability exposure. All events through the Odate event were demonstrations rather than workshops. John McCabe had been working for some time to try to secure liability insurance for RWS. At the May Board meeting John announced that he had succeeded in securing \$1,000,000 of liability insurance for RWS, and so from that point on RWS could consider running workshops.

The Frid demonstration was held at Fairport High School, arrangements being made through RWS member Dave Privatera. Frid presented the same program on a Saturday and a Sunday, so that two separate groups could view the presentation. Frid's demonstration was so popular that sign up had to be limited. The Odate presentation unfortunately was not as popular, and in fact was attended by only about 10 people. It was presented in the faculty room at BOCES, and ran from Saturday morning through Sunday noon. Those who attended the presentation were extremely enthusiastic about Odate's presentation, and it is unfortunate that more members did not experience this unique opportunity to see a master craftsman in action.

Demos & Workshops
(Continued)

The Demonstrations and Workshops Committee under Mal Altman also played a role in coordinating two other types of activities during the year: (1) trips and tours, and (2) SIG meetings. The management of the SIG meetings was left to Tom Maier (furniture) and Al Vincent (woodturning), but the coordination of these activities with BOCES and with other RWS activities was managed by Mal's committee.

Tours

Four trips and tours were run during the 1986-1987 season: (1) A tour of the Wendell Castle School and Wendell Castle's studio in December (Tanya Yudelson, tour leader), (2) A tour of the Stickley Furniture Company in March (Bob Marcotte, tour leader), (3) a tour of the Cotton-Hanlon sawmill in Cayuta, NY in May (Bob Marcotte, tour leader), and (4) a (second) tour of the Kittinger Furniture Factory in May (Hal Lowry, tour leader).

SIGs

Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings began in November 1986 and continued on an approximately monthly basis to the summer of 1987. RWS was very fortunate in having Rich Towsley as a member. Rich taught woodworking to disadvantaged children at the Fairport BOCES. Through Rich's efforts RWS was able to secure the use of his shop at BOCES as a regular meeting place for the SIG's. A summary of topics discussed at the various SIG meetings is appended to this report.

Holiday Toy Project

The second active committee during the 1986-1987 year was the Holiday Toy Project committee. Don Olney, owner of The Toy crafter, took the responsibility for chairing this committee. Rich Towsley arranged for the group to meet and use the equipment at BOCES. A total of eight people completed about 75 wooden toys that were donated to various local agencies during the holiday season. The following were members of that committee: Charlie Bishop, Frank Correnti, Don Olney, Skip Rague, Charlie Robinson, Dave Sauerwine, Rich Towsley, and Tanya Yudelson. The group decided that most of the toys should go to day-care facilities where the toys would be used by many children and where quality playthings are often in short supply. Monroe County BOCES Preschool, Oregon Leopold Day Care Center, Baden Street Settlement, and the Spanish Christian Day Care Center were the recipients of the toys. The success of this venture presaged the outcome of the next year's toy project, where more than five times as many toys were to be completed!

Education Committee

The third committee, which was initiated during the 1986-1987 season, was an Education Committee chaired by John McCabe. This committee met in March to consider whether or not RWS should become involved in a more formal way in woodworking education. With the likelihood that RWS would eventually have liability insurance, it was feasible to entertain various possibilities. The outcome of this meeting was that RWS should consider running three courses during the 1987-1988 season, again, using the BOCES facilities. The suggested courses were: (1) A one session course on the elements of design for woodworkers, (2) a five session course on faceplate woodturning techniques for beginners, and (3) an eight session course on the use of hand tools, also for beginners. These courses were instituted in the fall of 1987.

Newsletter

Since November of 1985 members have been informed of lectures, demonstrations, tours and trips, SIG meetings, etc. by our Newsletter. During this period of time, as well as into the 1987-1988 season, Gordon Jarvis had taken the responsibility of Editor. This included the nearly monthly typing, printing, folding, and mailing of 300-400 pieces of mail. This was obviously more than one person can handle, and Gordon has been assisted at various times by the following members: Ted Ellstrom, Ed Feathers, Charlie Robinson, Wayne Weber, Len Wunrow, and Al Vincent.

RWS, Incorporated

During the 1986-1987 there was an ongoing effort to incorporate RWS as a not-for-profit organization. There were two reasons for wanting to incorporate: (1) to insulate members from liability should an accident occur at a workshop, and (2) to secure tax-exempt status.

The most important of these was felt to be the first. Through Arts for Greater Rochester RWS had secured the assistance of Walter Capell, a volunteer lawyer for the arts. Walter took the responsibility of preparing the requisite forms to secure our desired incorporation, and from time to time reported to the Board. By April it had been determined that we could not incorporate as a Type "A" corporation (civic, patriotic, political, social, fraternal, athletic, professional...), but that we must apply for incorporation as a Type "B" corporation (charitable, educational, religious, scientific, literary, or cultural). To secure incorporation it was necessary to obtain the approval of the State Education Department and a Judge of the Supreme Court of Monroe County. Walter attended the June Board meeting and announced at that time that RWS had obtained the necessary approvals and was now Rochester Woodworkers Society, Inc.

Formation of the 1987-88 Board

In preparation for the forthcoming 1987-1988 year a nominating committee was formed for the purpose of nominating three candidates for the Board. The committee consisted of John McCabe (chair), Kendra Dayger, Ted Ellstrom, and Charlie Robinson. The candidates selected were Kendra Dayger, Steve Loar, and Tom Maier. Each of the candidates wrote a statement, which appeared in Newsletter #15 (March 5, 1987). The three candidates were elected to the Board at the April membership meeting. Retiring from the Board were John McCabe, Wendell Smith, and Al Vincent. Thus at this point in time all the individuals who were involved with the formation of RWS (Inc.) had been retired.

As the end of the year approached, Board members Bob Marcotte and Mal Altman both expressed a desire to retire early from the Board because of other commitments. The Board asked Charlie Robinson to fill the remainder of Bob's term and Bert Schlabach, the remainder of Mal's term; both accepted.

Going into the 1987-1988 season the Board now consisted of: Kendra Dayger, Gordon Jarvis, Steve Loar, Tom Maier, Don Olney, Charlie Robinson, Bert Schlabach, Rick Sherin, and Tanya Yudelson.
