



The Mendocino coast. Photo: Staff.

Woodworking in Mendocino

A close look at the new generation of artist-craftsmen

by John Kelsey

Part of today's woodworking renaissance is a new generation of artisans who've found in our craft not just a way to make a living, but a way of life. They're usually self-taught rather than schooled or apprenticed. They often approach wood not as mere material to be worked, but with the respectful passion of a poet. Given the choice between a tedious but profitable production job and an interesting but less profitable woodworking challenge, they'd probably choose the challenge. Or else, they'd build kitchen cabinets to buy the time and materials for what they really want to build. They're likely to find more useful truth in James Krenov's impractical books than in Tage Frid's how-to texts.

Many of these craftsmen were hippies during the 1960s, weirdly bearded longhairs now straightened up and settled down with wife and kids. Others have abandoned lavish educations and high-technology careers, preferring to plane wood instead of program computers. These craftsmen have decided they'd rather work wood than do anything else.

These ideas of woodworking as an art, or as a Druidic dialog with the living tree, or as a vocation to which one has been called, are very much of our own time. Krenov (see Books, p. 26) has done much to encourage those he calls "the outsider craftsmen," to justify putting aesthetic or spiritual

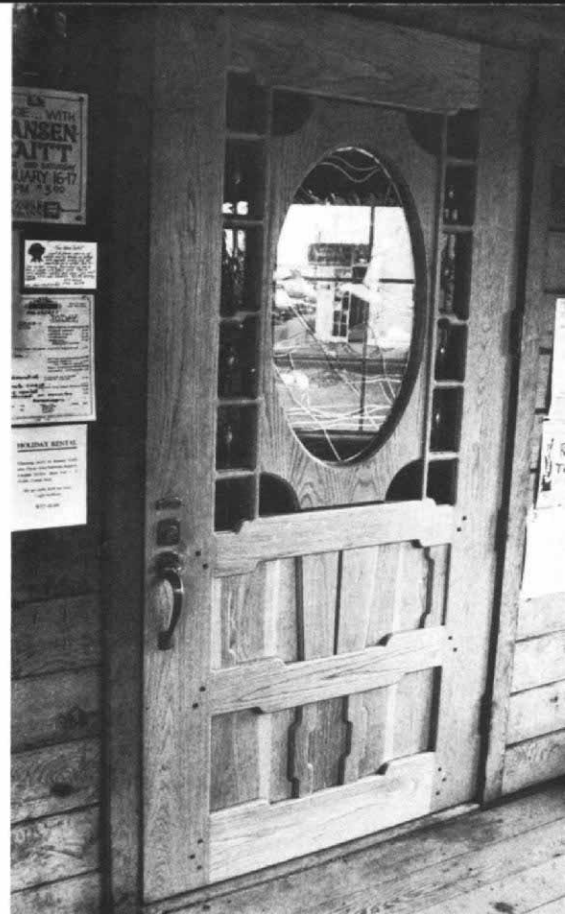
concerns ahead of the mundane practicalities of making a living. I doubt that anybody thought about woodworking in such ways during the 18th and 19th centuries—indeed, these attitudes seem incomprehensible to many senior craftsmen today. Still, these young craftsmen share with the older generation a seriousness of purpose, love for the craft and respect for hard and skillful work. Above all, they insist upon finding a harmonious life in some beautiful place, rather than a raucous hustle for fame or affluence in some asphalt city.

Thus all over North America you can find woodworking enclaves that don't seem able to support populations of professional craftsmen, yet nonetheless do. There's Eugene, Ore., Bucks County, Pa., or Santa Fe, N.Mex., or the mountains of Colorado and of Vermont—and there's Mendocino County on the northern coast of California.

Although Mendocino is typical of a dozen woodworking enclaves, several things make it an appropriate focus for this report. There's a thriving, mutual self-help organization, the Mendocino Woodworkers Association, that's done much to make its members better craftsmen who are better able to survive. Krenov himself has just moved here from Sweden, to work and to teach, because of the warm support he's found for his lyrical approach to the craft. He'll be directing a new



Wall cabinet by Creighton Hoke, 16 in. by 24 in. by 6 in., maple and ramin, won recognition of excellence at the Mendocino Woodworkers Association show. Hoke came to Mendocino from Richmond, Va., for James Krenov's class—an influence that's apparent here. He's now the coordinator for Krenov's program at College of the Redwoods.



Entry door at the Seagull Cafe in Mendocino, made by Brian Lee. The Seagull is completely woodworked from the bar upstairs to the restaurant below. Photo: Staff.

woodworking program at the College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg, starting this fall. Finally, it's a place of remarkable beauty, where the very sunlight seems alive.

The habitable land on this coast is a narrow shoreline cut by river valleys and mountain ridges, rising eastward into the Coast Range and its tractless redwood forests. By official statistics Mendocino is not a prosperous county, subsisting mainly on tourism, fishing and logging. Most towns were built around sawmills; the county's commercial center, Fort Bragg, surrounds an enormous Georgia Pacific lumber mill. Although it may rain, and foggy mist rolls off the Pacific most mornings, it never gets really cold here—life on a low budget is neither uncommon nor unduly harsh.

With San Francisco a three-hour drive to the south, and Portland 500 miles north, Mendocino remains in many ways a rural backwater. Yet it's close enough to the Bay Area to attract moneyed tourists—stands selling chainsawn redwood burls for clocks and tabletops line the roadside—and to be a summer center for the arts, crafts and theater. Furthermore, it's somewhat more prosperous than official statistics would suggest, for any forest glade can grow an illicit crop of *sinsemilla*, a highly prized kind of marijuana.

The town of Mendocino, sitting atop a bluff that juts into the foaming Pacific, is a century old (ancient for California), but its Victorian ambience has been carefully preserved and enhanced. Wandering around the town last January, I was struck by its variety of public woodworking. Bars, food stores, hotels, ice-cream parlors and even banks sport well-crafted wooden fixtures, sometimes as just a lone flower amidst the Formica, other times a whole vision in solid wood and stained glass. Clearly, there are woodworkers around here—although

few live right inside town. Also, among the more conventional arts and craft galleries that abound, there are several featuring contemporary wooden furniture, sculpture and accessories. Although they're a valuable outlet for work built on speculation, five years ago the galleries' high markup was the prod that led to forming the woodworkers' association. The makers wanted their show-work to remain affordable, and they needed a way to market without middlemen.

Brian Lee is the energetic zealot who called that first meeting of the Mendocino Woodworkers Association, and until recently he's been the force behind it. He recalls, "We were all blown away by the number of woodworkers who came out of the forest. We all knew there were others around here, but we had no idea there were so many." The upshot was a show and sale held at a local church hall. The work on display was better than anybody had expected, and the public did indeed come out to see it and to buy it. Since then, the association has held two shows a year. I used the list of award winners from last Thanksgiving's show to select craftsmen to interview for this article.

It costs \$10 a year to join the association, and anybody seriously interested in fine wood craftsmanship can join. Today the association has 125 members, 90 of them living inside Mendocino County. Almost two-thirds of those, Lee estimates, are professional craftsmen—no small feat in a county whose population is only 60,000, spread thinly along 50 miles of coastline. Lee says all the serious woodworkers belong, then he quickly adds that none of the redwood-burl dealers do, nor do many of the local carpenters or building tradesmen. On the other hand, membership does include several sculptors of national reputation. This confirms for me that the as-

sociation mainly comprises the new generation of craftsmen.

The association quickly found plenty of things to do besides shows and sales. It's been a clearing house to connect customers to craftsmen and to divide large jobs among several shops. It's helped newcomers get started by locating shop space and by sharing information about tools, suppliers and markets. There's a sporadic newsletter, sometimes a collective lumber purchase at the lowest wholesale price, and several members own shares in chainsaw milling gear. As a result, all the shops I visited had enviable piles of choice hardwoods. The group has even lobbied the state legislature and forest industry to increase appreciation for (and access to) the 20-odd hardwood species that grow on the redwood's fringes.

The members have also helped each other by organizing weekend workshops where technical and business expertise can be shared, by arranging field trips to mills, shops and such Arts and Crafts shrines as the Gamble House in Pasadena (*FWW* #12, p. 40). More important than any of this, however, is not fierce competition but camaraderie. Its benefits can be such simple ego-food as having one's work admired by a respected peer, or the kind of searching criticism that propels a craftsman in a whole new direction. Miniaturist Crispin Hollinshead put it this way: "My work has grown just from hanging out with others, I learn by watching them evolve." Sculptor Trent Williams was plainer: "It kept me alive. I didn't know anything about tools and wood when I came here; I've learned all that from the other woodworkers."

Although he's no longer the pivot about which the association turns, Brian Lee remains its most vigorous advocate. You find Lee near the town of Caspar, at the end of a bumpy road through the redwood forest, in a crazy-quilt house and shop he built in the spaces between the giant trees. He's 34, came here with the hippies, and got into woodworking via tree surgery. Later he worked as a carpenter and maker of built-in cabinetry, and today he bustles around the middle of a pleasant maelstrom sometimes known as Jughandle Woodworks.

Lee's shop is not much bigger than a double garage, with low ceilings, walls solid with cans of finish, shelves of tools new and old, and rafters festooned with jigs and sawblades. Here Lee the businessman will make almost anything, so long as he's allowed to make it well—from kitchens, doors and windows to furniture for a Catholic church. But in his own soul, in an alcove off the main shop, he's a woodturner, transforming choice lumps of wood into delicate bowls and plates. He usually avoids the simple contemporary silhouette for a compound-curved outline that (when it works) reminds me of antique porcelain. His techniques combine cutting and shear-scraping, and his product is flawless. I couldn't find a sanding scratch or swirl on one of several dozen turnings. Each bowl goes out with a hand-lettered card telling where and how Lee got the wood and how he felt while turning it. The turnings do sell, but neither quickly nor profitably. Nevertheless, Lee makes increasing amounts of time for turning, for this is what he would rather do—his art. He can be reverential toward his wood when showing his turnings—"impractical" attitudes nurtured by his friend Krenov.

Although his shop is busy and productive, Lee admits he lives by the skin of his teeth. "There's no woodworkers on welfare here," he told me, "but there's no savings accounts or new cars either." It was in talking with Lee that I first heard the slogans that for me have come to represent Mendocino:

"This is a magic place, and if you're *meant* to be here, you *will* be here."

Trent Williams lives in a tiny cabin a few hundred feet from Lee's shop. He won the association's sculpture award at last November's show, and he represents an extreme. He's always wanted to be a sculptor and he seems to live only to work in his own painstaking way. Williams has electricity but no power tools. The evening I visited, he showed me how he'd spent the entire day just positioning his current sculpture on its base. Move it a hair, take a long look and pare a shaving off the base, look again, pare off some more. He said he sometimes spends several days looking at the work in progress, waiting to know what to do next.

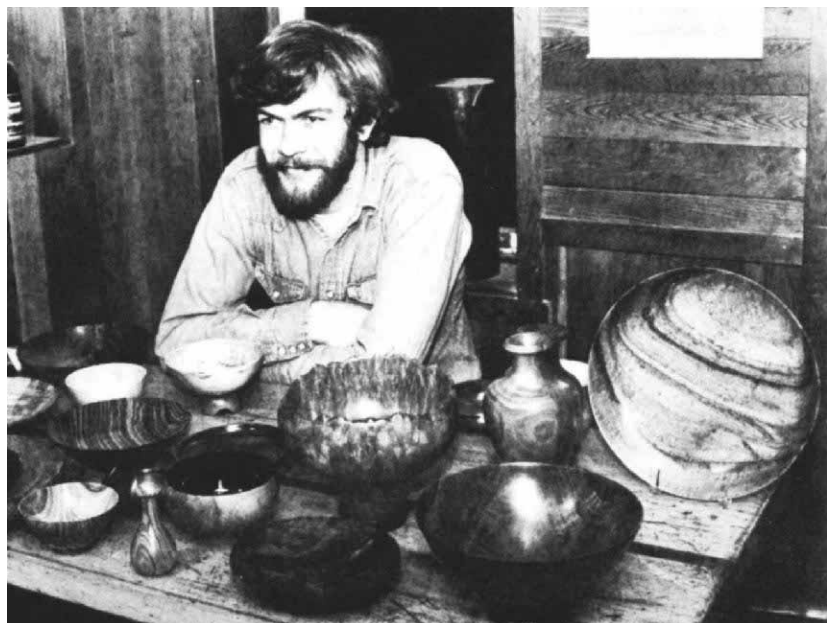
"My manufacturing process just takes a long time," he said. "I used to think, 'If only I could get fast at it,' but I can't. I need to do it with hand tools. Machines aren't sensitive, the shapes they make are limited, and they're noisy. You have to be calm to work like this. In the city, life was too frantic. There are other priorities there, like paying the bills. Here there are no bills. Being a sculptor can be my priority."

Williams is 37, five years removed from dropping out of his city job. For a small income he spins records at a local disco, and for relief he plays flamenco guitar. Even so, Williams has to sell his work, for when he's finally done with a piece on which he might have spent three months, he says, "I want to see it *gone*." Unlike many of the Mendocino craftsmen, Williams doesn't sell locally, but ships to an art gallery in San Francisco. This year he hopes to add a Los Angeles outlet, for, he says, "The market is there—connecting with the market is the problem." His sculpture is abstract, but small and irresistibly touchable. You can't keep your hands off a finished piece. Said Williams, "I know that somewhere there is a guy who wants this piece, who needs it. I have to get it to him. You don't see sculpture in houses here, because here you already have all the wood you'll ever want. It's people in the city who need this, and I do a service by making it for them." The several pieces now out in galleries are priced in the \$500 to \$800 range, a range he's inching upward. "Something always seems to sell just when I'm desperate, and I go on. I'm lots happier now than in the city," Williams said.

Crispin Hollinshead, producer of exquisite miniature furniture for the collector's market, represents a different approach to the problem of staying alive. His goal is to generate the \$1,000-a-month income he needs by working 100 hours or less each month. He almost did it last year, and this year he's certain he'll succeed. The rest of the time, Hollinshead doesn't care to think about economics. He makes what he wants to make, finding special pleasure in delicately faceted wood-and-glass showcase cabinets for his miniatures, and he pursues his myriad other interests. Hollinshead has found his niche, although it wasn't always thus and it hasn't been easy.

Hollinshead, 34, is a tall man, wispy-bearded and articulate. Before coming to Mendocino seven years ago, he was an aerospace engineer in San Diego, work he simply did not enjoy. "So I quit, and the question was, go where to do what? I wanted to find a way to balance the rational and the emotional sides of me, the spiritual and the intuitional. It was tourist season and everyone told me there just wasn't any housing. Within three days I'd found a place to rent, a house where I'd once been an overnight guest. I took that as a sign and moved in."

He found work as a carpenter's helper, later going on his



Dory, above left, by Robin Thompson of Branscomb, Calif., told visitors they'd found the woodworker's show last November. It's 14 ft. long and 54 in. wide—fir hull, mahogany seats and trim, oak deck and dagger board, ash oars. Above right, association members set up the show at This Is Not Art gallery in Mendocino. In the foreground is an adjustable bed by Stephen Heckeroth of Albion.



Above, Brian Lee, founder of the Mendocino Woodworkers Association, with his turnings. The bowl-on-stand at his right elbow won recognition of excellence at the Thanksgiving show. Photo: Staff.

Right, 'Marduk,' by Trent Williams, mardrone, 7½ in. by 5¾ in. by 14¼ in., won best sculpture award. Left, Williams rubs oil into a sculpture. Photo: Staff.

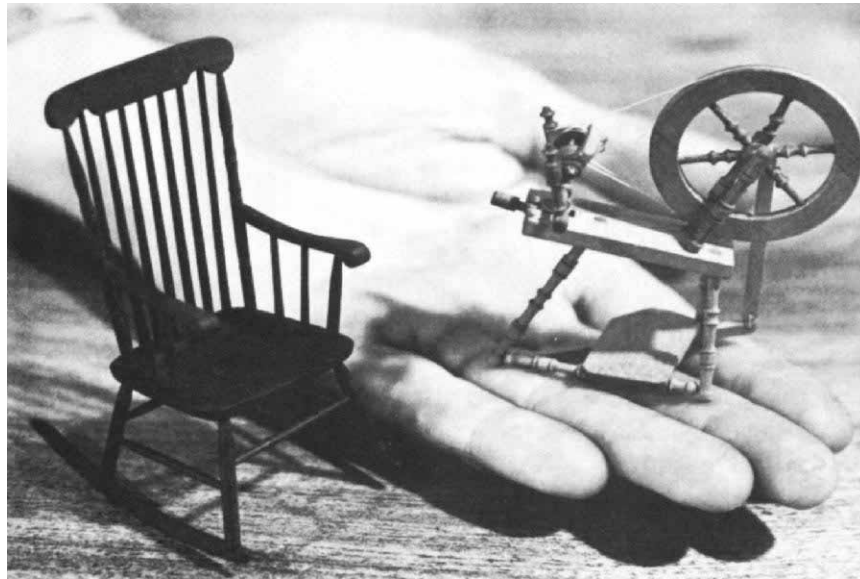




Crispin Hollinshead displays his miniature furniture in intricately faceted wall cabinets (left). He works to one-twelfth scale, in editions of 12 or 16, signed and dated for the collector's market. Below, miniatures by Hollinshead, which won the prize for best minor piece (under \$150) at last November's woodworking show: rocking chair, 2 in. by 2 3/4 in. by 4 in., ebony; spinning wheel, 3 3/4 in. by 1 3/4 in. by 3 1/8 in., madrone.



At right, David Matlin demonstrates his acoustic guitar, winner of the prize for best joinery, 41 in. by 16 in. by 4 1/4 in., mahogany, Sitka spruce and ebony.



Chest of drawers by Nelson Lindley (left and above), 32 in. by 17 in. by 46 in., black acacia, big-leaf maple, black oak and Port Orford cedar with routed-dovetail drawers. Lindley (right) locates bumps and valleys in his planer bed. Photo: Staff.



own to produce full-size spinning wheels, plus wooden jig-saw puzzles. They didn't do well, and he lost momentum when he took time off to build his shop. He recalls, "The association had a show coming and I'd always seen shows as permission to do crazy things, so I built a miniature house. It was priced at \$1,200, and of course it didn't sell, but a local lady gave me a list of shops that sold miniatures. I went to them and found a whole other world. So I made an edition of 12 little spinning wheels, $\frac{1}{12}$ scale. A local miniatures shop sold three of them the first week. Finally, I had connected."

Since then, Hollinshead has made rocking chairs of ebony, folding screens, blanket chests, gate-leg tables and tiny vases, all to one-twelfth scale in editions of 12 or 16, signed and dated. He sells them to a dozen shops as far afield as Utah, where they fetch \$100 to \$150 each at retail. The miniatures market is already established, and it embraces two distinct classes of work. "There's stuff selling for \$40 or less at retail, saturated with imports from Taiwan. I can't compete there. Then there's the upper market, over \$100 retail with no visible ceiling. I decided early to do that trade, nothing else. Several collectors have made a point of acquiring one of everything I've made." At Thanksgiving his miniatures won the prize for best minor piece, for work priced under \$150.

Hollinshead's shop contains the usual range of full-size tools, a table saw with a thin-rim veneer blade and an assortment of jigs for handling tiny pieces. His favorite tool, though, is a 6-in. metalworker's lathe, and his basic finish is the sheen left by a sharp hand plane. "I dislike sanding," he explained. "I like to design and make, then I lose interest. So the hand-planed surface appealed to me, and in Krenov's summer class I realized that at my scale, the hand-planed finish is practical and competitive." The day I visited, Hollinshead was turning hickory flooring scrap into 16 upright spinning wheels. He'd have put six hours in each wheel when done, and would get \$75 for each.

"I feel really good about it," he said. "I've been able to decide what I want to make and how many. I always get my price, and I never make the same thing again. I have lots of free time. And because they're multiples I can devise jigs, which I really enjoy. Also, I can get several thousand dollars out of somebody else's scrap wood, which I love."

The association's prize for best joinery went to David Matlin's acoustic guitar. As guitar repairman, Matlin keeps the whole county in music, drawing broken instruments from seven music stores. As an artist, he makes an acoustic and a couple of electrics a year—labors of love, for the acoustic guitars are too expensive to sell, the electrics barely return minimum wage. Matlin doesn't mind—he thrives on repair work and spends seven days a week at it. He's been in business four years in a shop he built near his home, and believes he's the only full-time luthier in the county. He says he's never been happier; it shows in the pleasant neatness of his workspace, as well as in the calm he radiates when he talks.

As with Hollinshead, finding his place wasn't easy. By now, the litany is becoming familiar to me: Matlin, 35, quit pre-medical school ten years ago, followed a psychedelic vision from Philadelphia to Mendocino, got married, then wondered what to do with his life. "I played guitar, and one day I realized that somebody must also make guitars. I found a course at the Guitar Research and Development Center in Vermont, determined that I could do it, so here I am."

Guitar work involves the whole range of woodworking

skills, plus electronic ability, plus an astute ear. "This work satisfies so many of my appetites," Matlin said. "Anything on a guitar can be changed to suit the player, and that's especially satisfying, to make an instrument sound just the way a player imagines it should. Guitars are sound machines where less is more, simplicity where everything works together."

Since freight surcharges make eastern hardwoods cost as much as exotic woods here, a goal of the woodworkers association is promoting local timber. Almost 30 hardwood species grow at the edges of the redwood forests and in commercial orchards along the river valleys. Most of these woods aren't commercially exploited, although a few smaller mills do saw them. Thus the association's shows include an award for best use of local wood, which Nelson Lindley won last Thanksgiving. He'd built a six-drawer chest (facing page, lower left) with top and handles of black acacia (a deep reddish color), black oak drawer fronts and frame, big-leaf maple side panels, Port Orford cedar drawer bottoms and back.

Lindley's shop is a 20-ft. by 30-ft. space in a large shed he rents from a rancher, on the coastal highway north of Fort Bragg. He works alone, he says, because he can't afford the time to train and supervise employees. The shop is fully equipped, but with light-duty machines, and the day I visited it was living proof that everything's not roses, even in the magic forest. The shop was a chaotic mess, for Lindley was cleaning up and rearranging after a large job, and was also tearing down his 12-in. Parks thickness planer. "If I'd known the castings were so bad I'd never have bought it," he grumbled as he showed me the valleys and hills he was lapping out of its bed, and a disintegrating bushing in the machine's main frame that he wasn't sure how to fix.

Lindley is 30, married with two children, educated as a commercial photographer and has been working wood here for seven years. Most of that time he's made kitchen cabinets and store fixtures. But last summer when the recession set in, "Everything stopped dead. I realized how dependent I'd become on the building trades. I had to shift my angle of attack." Although Lindley enjoys built-in cabinetry, he'd always dreamed of designing and building quality furniture one piece at a time. He took advantage of the lull to build his chest of drawers on speculation for the association show, 85 hours spread over nine long days, and at \$1,400 the biggest thing he'd ever done without money up front. It was sold shortly after the show and it brought in a commission for another chest. Said he, "The association is an information exchange, but it's also an inspiration. It awakened me to the fact that I can build quality furniture and find a market for it. People know quality and they can't find it. They know good stuff is worth the extra money."

Still, at that moment the firm market consisted of enough work for only two months, with a lavish entry door next on the list. Lindley's business has always grown by referral and repeat order, and he was confident more work would roll in. "People have made verbal commitments," he said, "but I never take any money until I have the design they want drawn on paper." With the drawing he estimates the price, then logs materials and hours and bills at an hourly rate—"I try for \$19. It's easier to get a high hourly rate for worse stuff; the less I enjoy the work, the more I'll want to be paid for it. For work I really want to do, I'll take less money."

Lindley's chest happens to exemplify the style of work



Craig Marks scrapes the seat of a rosewood high chair (left). Photo: Staff. Writing desk by Marks (right), 37½ in. by 23 in. by 29 in., Honduras rosewood and California walnut, was judged best in show at Thanksgiving.

that's common in new-generation enclaves like Mendocino, a style some call Craftsman Modern. It also provides an instructive contrast with the deliberately innovative furniture that's valued in art-school woodworking environments.

Although the chest evokes simple and timeless country furniture, you go back only 100 years to find a solid precedent, to the Arts and Crafts movement generated by William Morris and his followers (*FWW* #26, p. 54), and in particular to the California version of Arts and Crafts developed by Charles and Henry Greene (*FWW* #12, p. 40). Today, the most influential practitioner is Sam Maloof (*FWW* #25, p. 48), whose work Lindley greatly admires.

This furniture, above all, is simple and straightforward, relying for visual effect on careful proportions, exposed joinery, plain but neat detailing and the figure of the wood itself. It prefers solid wood over veneer, clear oil finishes instead of stain and high shine, and eschews such decorative flourish as moldings and applied carving. Whereas the last century's iconoclasts struggled to find the appropriate role for their machinery, today's craftsmen have no difficulty moving from machine tools to hand tools and back again, as the job dictates, with the electric router their preeminent hybrid of a powered hand tool. On the side panel of Lindley's chest, the routed radius joining rail to stile is characteristic, as are the routed drawer dovetails and the top's buttery edge. Compared to the high-style contemporary furniture you'll find in San Francisco or Boston, his chest seems naive, almost rustic.

Although he prefers to work alone, Lindley lends a corner of his shop to Bob Bannon, a graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology's furniture program and a recent migrant to Mendocino. Bannon's experience at the Thanksgiving show reveals the difference between these two worlds, for he entered a sophisticated coffee table that sprang from laminated bentwood curves instead of from rigid legs. The association's technical jury decided the table swayed too much for coffee to remain in the cup. Bannon argued that part of his art is imitating the sway of the living tree, carefully controlled. The jurors compromised by allowing him to show the table but not to put it on sale.

The piece that won best in show, an honor confirmed by public ballot during the show itself, was Craig Marks' rosewood-and-walnut desk (above). Marks is a newcomer to the

area, just 25 years old, who is forming himself under the double star of Krenov and Maloof. He hopes to be able to make it doing work that's more refined, and more expensive, than is common here. Marks first came up last summer to attend Krenov's five-week course, where he built the desk. In line and feel, and with its lush, dark wood, it's reminiscent of Maloof. So is the ingenious bandsawing of its curved front apron, whereby the fall-off became stock for the drawer front. But its hand-planed surfaces and difficult joinery speak like Krenov, as does its small scale and the maker's careful attention to figure patterns in the wood.

That desk sold for \$2,000, another like it is bringing \$3,200. A wealthy family had commissioned the rosewood high chair Marks was making the day I visited. Thus he is encouraged to believe he can do well with lavish furniture, although few of the local craftsmen agree. "It's just a matter of getting in touch with the work and getting fast at it, and getting it to the city market," Marks said. "I plan to do it by building pieces on speculation for sale through galleries."

Following his summer with Krenov, Marks returned to Los Angeles to wind up his affairs and gather his tools. By December, he was in Mendocino to stay. He'd quit his job as a groundwater geologist a year earlier to struggle as a woodworker, and in this he was inspired by the example of Maloof, whom he'd been visiting, starry-eyed, since high school. His life's savings were enough for a full shop of new Powermatic machinery, now installed in the narrow slice of barn he rents from cabinetmaker Gary Church. Because he does little else besides work, Marks figures that what's left of his savings will keep him afloat for another year if need be.

Church, although he no longer participates in shows, is among the association's founders and important in local woodworking. Now 38, he was among the first of the new breed to set up shop here; one of the few to have learned from a cabinetmaker father, and one of the very few to earn a good living. Church's interest is kitchens, which he strives to make "creative and interesting for me and for the client. Other craftsmen aren't developing kitchens much, but people like things that are different, as long as they're functional."

Like so many of the others, Church lives here because it's beautiful. Sitting in front of windows looking along the ridge to the sea, he suggested that such beauty could be a handi-



Gary Church (left) makes innovative kitchens; behind him are sample doors and drawer fronts. Philip O'Leno (right) is as close to a period furniture maker as you can find in Mendocino—he works in the turn-of-the-century California Arts and Crafts style. Photos: Staff.

cap. "It makes it harder to create; you're always competing with the surroundings, and you can't win. In the city, things come in opposition or reaction to the surroundings. A lot of people came here to drop out because there's no hustle here, but there isn't much money, either." I asked him to predict Krenov's impact, and he replied that it could only be beneficial. "But if a lot of young woodworkers follow Krenov here, they'll find it slim pickings—unless they're meant to be here and they're willing to be poor."

I had heard this before, and I found it again on the next ridge north, at the home of Philip O'Leno, the first to knuckle down here, 13 years ago. O'Leno lives and works in as idyllic a spot as I've ever seen, at the end of a narrow dirt road with the forest a step to the east and the ocean shining across the western horizon. His low, old farmhouse hunkers down between the tiny hair-styling studio operated by his wife, Ea, and his own tilting barn of a shop. There's blacksmithing gear by the shop-wide doors, a crowded but well-swept woodworking space within and a lumber-crammed cranny off one side. A small window peeps through the forest toward the rising sun. The setting sun fills the doorway.

Here O'Leno makes cabinets, tables, doors, lamps, beds and benches, plus an occasional restaurant bar. He works exclusively in the California version of the Arts and Crafts style. He's a serious student of design whose work could drop unnoticed into an 80-year-old Greene and Greene interior. He's very good, and he could prosper if he would run a business-like operation in San Francisco or Los Angeles. But O'Leno prefers to work alone, prefers to stay here, and prefers that his work stay here too. He gets no satisfaction from out-of-town orders, doesn't even like to leave home for a weekend. For to O'Leno, as for many of the others, the trade-offs are simple: This is "the choice beauty spot on the planet." □

For more information

... about the Mendocino Woodworkers Association, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Box 95, Caspar, Calif. 95420.

... about James Krenov's classes, write Creighton Hoke, Woodworking Program, College of the Redwoods, 545-B North Main St., Fort Bragg, Calif. 95437.

... about galleries that feature quality woodworking, write: Gallery Fair, Box 263, Mendocino, Calif. 95460; Artisan's Guild Store, Box 1515, Mendocino, Calif. 95460; This Is Not Art, Box 309, Mendocino, Calif. 95460.

How they jury shows

One of the most useful things a woodworking organization can do for its members is to organize and sponsor public shows of their work. An often troublesome bugaboo is how, or even whether, to screen the work that's entered. When the Mendocino Woodworkers Association planned its first show, there was a lot of resistance to jurying of any kind, but the more experienced craftsmen insisted. Since that show was a great success, there's been no opposition to jurying. A peculiarly democratic method of doing it has evolved, one that contributes to high standards without being autocratic.

Any association member can enter the semiannual show. Last Thanksgiving, more than 30 members brought almost 90 pieces of their work. The night before the event, a technical committee screens the work to weed out bad craftsmanship. When a piece is rejected the jurors take pains to explain exactly why. They even arrange instruction if that's warranted—I heard, for example, about a chest that was rejected for sloppy drawers. The maker stomped out in anger, but later accepted a day of instruction from a member who had mastered drawer-making. Sometimes a maker will be allowed to display a promising piece that's technically flawed, but not to sell it.

The next morning, a different three-man jury (at Thanksgiving, a local sculptor and two craftsmen from woodworking associations in neighboring counties) awards cash prizes in such categories as best sculpture, best joinery, best use of local woods, best minor piece (under \$150) and best overall. The association solicits prize money from area businesses.

The technical jury, and often the awards jury as well, is drawn from the members of the Mendocino Woodworkers Guild, an honorific group of journeymen within the larger association. Members can be elected to the guild by a chicken-and-egg procedure. During each show, all the craftsmen participating, whether guild members or not, get to nominate new guild members from among themselves. The theory is, if you're good enough to show your work, you're able to recognize superior work. When a name appears on two-thirds of the ballots, that nominee becomes a guild member. The honor mainly conveys status among one's peers, and exempts the guild member from technical screening at the next show, but it may also saddle him with the duty of being on one of the two juries. It sounds cumbersome, but works well. —J.K.