

# American Woodturner

The Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

Summer 2002

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Vol. 17, No. 2



**Nick Cook**

AAW 2002 Honorary Lifetime Member



*Dedicated to Providing Education, Information, and  
Organization To Those Interested in Woodturning*

## SUPPORT FOR AAW PROGRAMS CONTINUES TO GROW

### Honorary Lifetime Member

Congratulations to Nick Cook—the recipient of the 2002 AAW Lifetime Award. Nick's unselfish service to woodturning and to woodturners make him very worthy of this recognition. See the article on page 12 for more about Nick and his career in woodturning.

### Symposium Update

Providence, Rhode Island is almost ready for the 16th Annual AAW Woodturning Symposium. The local chapters, the AAW Board and Staff are working on the many details that go into making the symposium a success. I hope you have made your plans to come to this beautiful and historic region and see an outstanding slate of local, national and international presenters covering the gamut of woodturning — from basic to leading edge techniques, from wood selection to surface decoration, from galleries to slides, and much, much more. And the vendors are putting together a selection of the latest machines and tools and the finest woods for the trade show. I look forward to seeing you there.

### Demo Lights, Grinders, Chucks

Since I mentioned vendors, let me tell you about a project that has been completed and you will see for the first time at this year's symposium. The suppliers and manufacturers have always been great about loaning equipment to be used in the rotation rooms, but lights and sharpening systems have always been a problem. After discussions at the Board meetings, Mark St. Leger designed a shipping crate that doubles as a bench. The crate contains a grinder, a One-Way Wolverine sharpening system with a Vari-grind jig and a portable flexarm light. Mark, Bob Rosand and Linda VanGehuchten built the 14 crates. Willard Baxter, Larry Hasiak, Linda and Bob worked with the suppliers to secure the necessary equipment for the boxes. A great big

THANK YOU to Delta, Jet, Norton Abrasives, Teknatool, Moffatt Inc. and ONEWAY and to the aforementioned people for their donations and time. I think it will help make the demonstrator's job much easier.

### Help Make AAW Grow

If my memory serves me correctly when I came on the Board of the AAW 2 1/2 years ago we had about 130 chapters and 6,500 members. There are now more than 175 chapters and almost 9000 members. Where are all these members coming from? I think there are many, many woodturners who got started as I did. In the mid 1970s I was building a hutch for my mother and I needed some small spindles for it. I could not find anything in the catalogues that served my needs, so I decided to buy an inexpensive lathe (a \$29.95 AMT). With some crude scraping and skillful use of coarse sandpaper the spindles were completed. This is where my story differs from many. Instead of putting the lathe aside until the next project that needed a turning came along, my interest was piqued. I bought a book by Peter Child, *The Craftsman Woodturner* and then *Creative Woodturning* by Dale Nish. Not long after this the Appalachian Center for Crafts opened in Smithville, TN with Rude Osolnik teaching woodturning; I was there. Since that time I have attended lots of classes at various schools, been to many demos and symposia and taken one-on-one lessons from successful turners.

But many turners learn by themselves to do what needs to be done to accomplish their projects. They work this way for years. Then one day they see a turned object or a demonstration and the American Association of Woodturners sign is nearby. He or she might also see a copy of the *American Woodturner Journal* (especially noticeable now with the color cover) at the bookstore or newsstand. The third and maybe the most probable way we get new members is by being invited

by another woodturner to attend a chapter meeting. They enjoy the fellowship of being with fellow woodturners and begin to see the possibilities of lathe-produced work so they become chapter and AAW members. So what's the point of my ramblings? You are the one who helps the AAW grow. Invite your friends and acquaintances to chapter meetings, make them welcome, and ask them to join your club and the AAW and help us grow.

### Tell Us About Your Educational Program

I received a lot of positive comments about my President's page in the Spring issue of the Journal concerning teaching, demos and youth involvement. I also mentioned a couple of successful programs. One was the Brasstown, N.C. chapter's involvement with the Hayesville High School Vocational Program and the other was the Alabama Woodturners' mentoring program. We have also recognized other successful programs in the past but I would like to hear about more programs sponsored by our chapters. So let us know if you have a program that is working.

### Another Chance To Apply For AAW Educational Grants

It's time for the second round of the Educational Opportunity Grant. The first round resulted in 18 grants totaling more than \$13,000. Six of the grants went to chapters and the others went to individuals. If you applied in that first round and did not get selected and are still interested, please let us know and your application will be considered a second time. If you would like to make a new application see the EOG insert in the front section of this journal. The deadline is July 15, 2002.

**SEE YOU IN PROVIDENCE. DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR TOPS.**

— Bobby Clemons, president of AAW



# American Woodturner



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**Editor-in-Chief** Dick Burrows  
929 Maynard Ave.  
Knoxville, TN 37917  
865 689-8798  
FAX 865 281-2347  
sharpridge@earthlink.net

**Contributing Editors** Alan Lacer  
Ken Keoughan

**Administrator** Mary Lacer  
Eunice Wynn, Assistant  
651/484-9094  
fax 651/484-1724  
aaw@citilink.com

#### AAW Board of Directors

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#### A Note about your Safety

An accident at the lathe can happen with blinding suddenness; respiratory problems can build over years. Take appropriate precautions when you turn. Safety guidelines are published in the AAW Resource Directory. Following them will help ensure that you can continue to enjoy woodturning.



**On the cover:** The 2002 AAW Honorary Life Member Nick Cook is a versatile turner, equally comfortable with small production work, like the stoppers at left, architectural work and art vessels. Cook is profiled by Ken Keoughan in an article beginning on Page 12. Cover Photo by Marisa Pruss.

Submissions to *American Woodturner* are encouraged.  
Please contact the editor with articles or proposals.

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### Vessel = High-priced bowl?

For a long time I have been puzzled by "vessels". What is the difference between a bowl or pot and a vessel? Volume 17 #1 doesn't help much. On page 18 you have a Dave Ramsey segmented BOWL and on page 21 the same bowl is now a VESSEL. On page 16 you have Al Stirt "critiquing a vessel" which looks like a bowl to me.

A few years ago I was visiting a gallery in London and looking at some beautiful (and expensive) pieces by Bert Marsh marked "bowls." On a nearby shelf were some pieces of a similar shape by another turner marked "vessels" so I asked the attendant (a delightful young lady) to please tell me the difference between a bowl and a vessel." She thought for a moment and then said "I think about 40 quid (about \$65.00)." So maybe that is the answer, a vessel is just an expensive something else.

— Stan Clarke

### Why No Reviews?

I wonder whether I am alone in my objection to the AAW board's decision to scrap reviews of machinery, tools, books, and videos? While I obviously have a vested interest in the continuation of these reviews, they are a valuable service to members.

We have seen in recent years the disappearance of reviews from commercial woodworking magazines. Where they remain they are too often emasculated or have become advertorial. Factors have included: the desire not to upset advertisers, to avoid having to publicize competitors' publications, and to avoid legal action. I would hope that the first two factors do not apply to American Woodturner, and the ways to avoid legal action were discussed at length in American Woodturner and I believe solved some years ago.

Why then the scrapping? The re-

views provide an important service to members, many of whom work in relative isolation, by saving them from buying substandard products and pointing them towards buying the best. And what about equipment developed by members who wish to enable other members to share the benefits? How can a description not also be in a sense a review?

The reviews have in the past also provided among the most stimulating reading in our Journal. Adding color is welcome, but glamour is not a substitute for substance. I hope that this scrapping policy will be reconsidered and reversed.

— Mike Darlow, Exeter, NSW, Australia

### A Letter FROM the Editor

A recent letter to the Journal brought up an interesting point about how blindly a reader should follow a method described in the Journal, or any other publication for that matter.

Also, it might have exposed some of my own prejudices, especially about the nature of wood. In addition to its natural beauty and warmth, I've always felt the stuff had a deep, unpredictable contrariness designed to taunt and frustrate humans. I have similar suspicions about computer systems.

Wood reveals its dark side to me most often whenever the problem of drying wood comes up. No matter how careful I am, something is liable to go wrong-- my piston fit box lid seizes up, secretly and permanently, three seconds before I'm about to show my son how a lid is supposed to fit. And the rough turned bowl that I packed away so carefully in

wet sawdust and plastic magically becomes an art piece titled "A Study In Mildew and Fissures."

The question became more serious when a reader reported that he had lost a valuable stack of cherry blanks when he followed a drying method outlined by Ron Kent and Phil Wall in the last Journal. The reader, Ron and Phil ended up having a good discussion by e-mail, and I think we all learned something, which is a major goal of the Journal.

And several readers reported good success with the method, despite a loss here and there.

My apologies if I made the method seem fool-proof. Wood just won't allow that luxury. The best we can do is keep working and learning, and whenever possible sharing what we have learned with others.

Many of you have taken that to heart in recent months and we have been deluged with articles presenting techniques and designs for our explorations in wood. It will take us a while to get to all the articles, so we ask for your patience.

Meanwhile, please help us explain things better. Your comments and suggestions help a lot. We value your opinions, both to introduce topics and to comment on current happenings. Please keep them coming.

In discussing the wood drying there was some confusion on e-mail addresses and web sites. The new E-mail address for Phil Wall is

philwall@webworkz.com  
(web: www.riverhillstudio.com)

Ron Kent's contact info is e-mail  
ron@ronkent.com

(web: www.ronkent.com)

— Dick Burrows, Editor  
American Woodturner

### Summer Hours for AAW Offices

From now until Labor Day, the AAW administrative office in Shoreview, MN, and the editorial office in Knoxville, TN, will close Fridays at noon (Central Time). Answering machines are available at each location to take messages whenever the offices are closed.

## The Providence Symposium and Another Chance At *Nature Takes a Turn*

Local Chapters and AAW board and staff are busy refining plans for the 16th annual AAW symposium in Providence, RI, June 28-30, 2002.

This Journal contains a listing of events, as well as complete rotation schedules and registration forms. The symposium is shaping up to be one of the best, with something for every turner.

Preparations for the event will continue right up to the opening session, so it's important to watch for announcements and check the rotation board that will be near the registration area.

The changes noted in this Journal include:

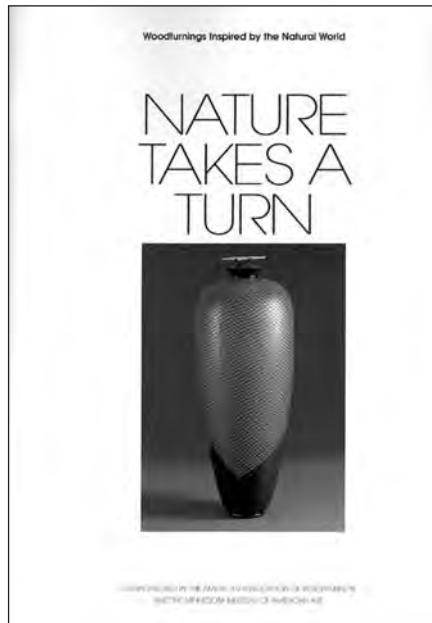
- A new demonstrator: Dave Barrieger, former AAW president and retired botanist, will demonstrate his work with elevated vessels, as well as discuss more about the nature of wood.

- In response to requests in the last few years, space and time has been provided for what's called "Ladies Craft Room," where those of us whose passion runs to arts other than turning can work and share common interests.

- "Evolution of Woodturning." This interesting topic is part of an evolving study by Canadian turner Dan Braniff. Braniff says it's difficult to tie the program down right now, but it involves a slide show of work by more than 40 turners from around the world. The slides, along with commentary from Braniff and the attendees should make for an informative program.

- More on tops: The symposium roster includes more details on the presentations by the two featured demonstrators who specialize in tops — Masaaki Hiroi of Japan and Christoff Guttermann of Germany. And collector Don Olney will show his collection (see Page 37).

Speaking of tops, don't forget to



bring yours to benefit children in the Providence area. Local chapters have selected an organization called "Meeting Street" to benefit from our donations. Meeting Street works with children with disabilities and developmental delays. They are rather excited about getting "tops" as

they use them frequently to help develop motor skills. The group will have information about its work at the symposium and their website is [www.meetingstreet.org](http://www.meetingstreet.org).

The Instant Gallery is always a visual delight for every turner. Turners in the Northeast this year also will have a chance to see another stunning display. *The Nature Takes a Turn* show will run from June 16-Sept. 8 at Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase College, State University of New York in Purchase. The show recently closed at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in TN. Reports received by the Journal indicate the response to the show was very good.

Other special features include a repeat of last year's Learn-To-Turn Night on Thursday. Some other special programs are described on the inside Back Cover.

If you have any questions on the symposium, contact the AAW administrative office.

— Dick Burrows, Knoxville, TN

### AAW Educational Opportunity Grants Awarded

AAW awarded 18 grants to individuals and chapters last February, following the first selection round of the year. The total amount of the grants was \$16,325. Applications for the second selection round are now being accepted. Last year EOG grants totaled \$20,175.

Clinton Biggs  
Brasstown Woodturners  
Mary Celine Thouin  
Kent Crowell  
Down East Woodturners  
Jean Francis Escoulen  
Jack Grube  
Loren D. Heyer  
Honolulu Woodturners

Michael Hosaluk  
Travis Kurznack  
North Dakota Woodturners  
Piedmont Triad Woodturners  
Ryan Outen  
Marion Rood  
Jennifer Shirley  
Fred Takacs  
Woodturners of Southwest Florida

The next deadline for EOG grants applications is July 15, 2002. An application is in the front of this Journal. If you need additional information, please call the Administrative office at 651-484-9094.

— Norm Hinman, EOG committee chairman.



## SOUTHERN STATES II – WOODTURNING WITH A DIFFERENCE

The second edition of the Southern States Woodturning Symposium in Gainesville, GA, last Spring went a step further in establishing its hallmark as the woodturning event with a difference. And it wasn't just the southern accents that set it apart.

Chairman and AAW board member Willard Baxter who founded the symposium recalled, "When we first conceived the idea of this symposium, our goal was to advance woodturning education in a different way. We've always believed that those who pay their registration should, in fact, reap the rewards by having a better symposium with less expense to the average woodturner.

"I think the success of this event lies in keeping registration fees to a minimum and plowing the proceeds back into woodturning education at every level. At the same time we try to offer something that will interest everyone," he said.

It doesn't take long to see that this is a different kind of gathering. A stroll through the outlying hallways of the Mountain Conference Center finds a variety of craftspersons at work including basketweavers, jewelry and broom makers and an instant gallery of woodturning second to none in quality of work presented.

AAW President and newly named chairman of "Southern States



Soren Berger of New Zealand showed how to make a vacuum chuck with hot melt glue, garden tubing and a shop vacuum. Photos by Gary Dickey.

2003" Bobby Clemons noted that if success of the event is measured in numbers, then they far exceeded expectations.

"At our first symposium last year, we had hoped to attract 150 attendees. A month prior to the registration deadline, we had double that number. This year's crowd will exceed 325 and more than half of those are turners who attended last year,"

he said

Clemons attributed the success of the event to its eclectic atmosphere and hard work by the sponsoring AAW chapters.

"I see this as more of a full family event than as something simply for the woodturner in a family. It comes at a time when everyone has been stuck inside for the Winter and when Spring comes they are ready to get out and have some fun," he said.

Clemons explained that the Southern States Symposium is sponsored by seven AAW Chapters, including: Alabama Woodturners Association, Brasstown (NC) Woodturning Guild, Chattahoochee (GA) Woodturners, Cumberland (TN) Woodturners, LowCountry (GA) Turners, Palmetto (SC) Woodturners and Peach State (GA) Turners. None of the chapters individually felt they could do all that it takes to sponsor a symposium, but by joining forces, it makes the event possible and at the same time has strengthened ties



Southern States founder and chairman Willard Baxter with scholarship winners Theron Rogers and Charles Stephens, both of Gainesville, GA.



Local demonstrators included Talmadge Murphey of Franklin, NC, and Frank Bowers of Stone Mountain, GA.

among the seven chapters.

Apparently, the regional symposium appeals to the attendees. One participant summed up his feelings saying, "It's the best place I know to get my questions about woodturning answered. It's an informal setting and the demonstrators interact more on a personal level with those of us trying to learn," he said.

As for the questions, if one wanted the simple answer to building a vacuum chuck, it was fascinating to watch New Zealander Soren Berger assemble one from PVC pipe fittings, wood, hot melt glue, garden irrigation tubing and a shop vacuum cleaner. It really worked!

"You don't know how lucky you are in this country to be able to go down to the local 'Home Depot' and get any kind of fitting you can think of. If I lived here, I would probably spend hours playing in the aisles there. There are so many things I could make," he quipped.

If the question dealt with chasing threads on a lathe, it was fun to sit in on Mark St. Leger's demonstrations, just to catch the "St. Legerisms":

Quoting Alan Batty: "If you really want to learn thread chasing, get yourself a ton of boxwood, lock

yourself in the shop. In a year you'll come out all screwed up."

Drinking from his coffee cup on the end of the lathe: "I wonder how they get that nice maple flavor in this coffee?"

A reminder to hand turn the piece for clearance before starting the lathe: "Even though the tool rest looks like a skew, we really shouldn't use it as one."

And: "I've read about those things called catches, but I'm sure that no one here has ever experienced one..."

In other demos, featured turner Bonnie Klein revealed the secrets of her threaded spin top box and turning bone, horn and acrylic, while Frank Bowers discussed pen making and Nick Cook went through his production turning routine.

Texan Gary Sanders shared the techniques needed for turning his space age elevated boxes and balance boxes, while Dave Hout demonstrated metal spinning.

If the question dealt with Christmas ornaments, Bobby Clemons provided the answers, while Maurice Clabaugh showed techniques for "Turning through the Knothole." Former AAW President Dave Bar-

riger, with chainsaw in hand, demonstrated the development of his famous elevated vessels as well as lectured on understanding wood, from the woodturner's perspective. Crowd favorites were demos by North Carolinian Talmadge Murphey on multi-axis turning and Don Russell's polychromatic bowls.

Baxter expressed his thanks to those who supported the annual auction which raised more than \$5,000 for woodturning education. In conjunction with John C. Campbell Folk School, the symposium presented two full scholarships to the school valued at more than \$600 each as door prizes at the Saturday night auction. Winners were: Theron Rogers and Charles Stephens, both of Gainesville, GA.

What's next for the Southern States Symposium?

"We're already working toward 2003, with Jacques Vesery, Lane Phillips and Michael Mocho among the headliners to demonstrate next year," Clemons said.

Southern States III is scheduled for April 25 - 27, 2003 at the Mountain Conference Center in Gainesville, GA.

— Gary C. Dickey, Lexington, SC

## BIG ISLAND WOODTURNERS: A FEAST OF HAWAIIAN WOOD AND ART

Hawaii has long been known for its beautiful woods and its beautifully turned and carved calabashes (bowls). During the last two weeks of March, the Big Island Woodturners carried on this tradition by exhibiting their artistic talents at the third annual Big Island Woodturners' woodturning show sponsored by both our woodturning club and the Wailoa Center, an art center run by the Hawaii State Parks Division under the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Our rather small club had over 30 participating members displaying close to 200 turnings. The main gallery showed off the varied talents of our club members and levels of woodturning expertise ranging from master woodturner Jack Straka and past AAW symposium demonstrator Kelly Dunn to master of the large cook pine vessel Elmer Adams and the artistic eloquence of Barry Ching's turned and carved pieces, as well as our novice turners. Our non-juried show was open to the public for viewing during a two week period which allowed them to vote for the people's choice award for which prizes were awarded, along with the turners' choice awards at the closing ceremony.

In addition to the main gallery exhibit, we also displayed a fruit wood exhibit in the Mini Fountain Gallery of the Wailoa Center as an educational tool for both the general public and our fellow woodturners. We collected as many fruit wood samples as we could, assigning a different fruit wood to our club volunteers. Our purpose was to give some history and facts about the various fruit trees grown in Hawaii. Many of our turner volunteers turned a sample both side grain and end grain explaining in their narratives the do's and don'ts, and the ease or difficulties of turning the different fruit woods. This exhibit was



Part of the Gallery at the 2002 Big Island Woodturner's Show in Hawaii. The second piece from the right, "Separation Anxiety" by Barry Ching won the Best of Show/ People's Choice and Artist Choice award. We will have color photos from the show in the Fall Journal.

also rewarded with a people's choice and a turners' choice award.

In promoting the primary purpose of the Big Island Woodturners and the AAW, that being to promote a wider understanding and appreciation of woodturning among the general public, hobbyist, part-time and professional woodturner, we sponsored a day of demonstrations open to the public. Three work stations were set up and ran continuously for most of the day. Doug Elite demonstrated how to turn toy tops after which he gave them to the kids in the audience. Frank and Allen Sharp demonstrated the art of natural rim turning using tangerine, a wood and form for which Frank is becoming quite renown. And just to keep everyone guessing, Marty Hopman demonstrated how he pierces and creates designs on goose eggs.

The last day of the show incorporated our bi-monthly woodturner's meeting in the morning hours followed by our version of the Instant Gallery walk-around held at the symposiums. A "meet the artist" cookie and punch party offered to gallery owners and the general public was also held at this time. Three of our club's founding fathers, Jack Straka, Elmer Adams and Kelly Dunn walked us through the main

gallery offering a critique of one show entry from each participating woodturner, except their own of course. Funny how that worked out.

In closing down the show, our current president Herb Ishii and show chairman Dennis Hakes, to whom we as a group owe much thanks and congratulations on a job well done, announced that the people's and turners' choice awards were both in agreement. Barry Ching won in the main gallery for his norfolk island pine turning/sculpture titled "Separation Anxiety," and Ralph Michaelis won in the mini gallery for his false olive fruit wood display.

In sponsoring this and past woodturning shows in Hawaii, we have helped to keep woodturning enthusiasm alive and well, both by promoting woodturning as an art form and by challenging our woodturning brotherhood to be the best they can be. Do we as woodturners realize how much fun we are having? To view some of the fun we are having out here in the South Pacific, check out Rick Frazier's website <http://www.dreamingofhawaii.com>. He documented our whole show. Now that's enthusiasm.

— Gregg Smith, Kailua-Kona,  
Hawaii



## AAW FOUNDING MEMBER BUZ BLUM REMEMBERED

Buz Blum's friends present such an affectionate portrait of him that I regret I met him just briefly once and never knew the person behind the pieces in the symposium galleries.

I read he was a founding member of the AAW, but didn't know about the adventure that had taken him from his hometown of New York, NY to Alaska, where he was a self-employed craftsman, owner with his wife Alma, of a Bed and Breakfast, and an alpaca rancher.

"For a man who walked so quietly through life, he certainly left deep footprints," Alma said in an obituary in the Wasilla Frontiersman.

An article titled "Mountain, stillness, meditation" by Eowyn LeMay Ivey, a Frontiersman reporter, eloquently added richness: "The bottom of each one of Buz Blum's wooden bowls has a symbol from the I-Ching that represents mountain, stillness, meditation. It is nearly impossible to sum up a man as complex as Buz Blum in a few words or paragraphs. He was an artist, an Alaskan, a Buddhist, a former New Yorker, an animal lover, an alpaca farmer, a yoga practitioner, a poet, a musician, a bread maker, a traveler, a husband, a friend. But when those who knew him describe who he was at his core, the I-Ching symbol seems to paint a more complete picture than words ever could. Earlier this month, the 63-year-old man died of natural causes at his home near Sutton, and with his death came the end of a rich, adventurous life and a 37-year-old love affair. Alma Blum met Buz



Buz Blum Jan. 29, 1939 — March 6, 2002

in the 1960s in his hometown of New York City where he had grown up as David Blum, no middle name, the son of David Blum, no middle name. To avoid confusion, the younger was called "Brother" by family members, which was eventually shortened to "Broth" and then "Buz" - with one Z."

Eowyn added that "While Blum seemed passionate about everything in his life, woodworking was among those dearest to his heart. He would spend hours and days on end in his shop, shaving away pieces of wood and creating new shapes and textures. His bowls have appeared in countless museum exhibits and local

galleries and have been featured in national magazines. But it doesn't seem that such fame was what drove Blum's passion. "The main thing I love is getting out in the woods with the dogs and looking at the trees," Blum said in an Alaska Magazine television program filmed last year. He would observe trees over many years, choosing which to use in his art. This, he said, was one of the most difficult aspects of his work - having to cut down the very trees he admired. But he strived to make it count, to waste as little as possible. Most of the wood was turned into his smooth, enticing bowls, many with trails of bark along their rims. The remaining shavings were used for animal bedding and to fuel their home's wood stove."

In the article references to Buz's friends and fellow artists make the sense of loss and a reverence for the legacy he left unforgettable. Through Alma, he even left

a tangible legacy to a stranger. In her note to me she sent along his recipe for Sourdough French Bread, rich with dried cranberries, pumpkin seeds and an anecdote about frozen dough and Christmas Eve. We plan to celebrate the gift with a special baking next Christmas.

Meanwhile, Alma sends "love to all his friends" and adds:

Would love 3X5 or 5X7 cards from people who crossed paths and lives with Buz, with an anecdote of their time together, a story, a shared laugh. Or a finish to "Buz was ..."

Alma Blum's address is PO Box 732, Palmer, AK 99645.

— Dick Burrows, Knoxville, TN

## OHIO VALLEY TURNERS BRING IN YOUNGER TURNERS

In his President's message in the Spring 2002 issue of *American Woodturner*, Bobby Clemons mentioned the fact that our young people are missing or present in small numbers at our clubs and symposia. Ohio Valley Woodturners did something about that.

Five of our members presented a turning demonstration at the invitation of the woodworking instructor at a local high school that still teaches shop classes. They were Earl Choromokos, President, Dave Morrical, Bruce Gibson, John Lannom and Joe Keeler.

On mini lathes that we brought with us, Earl turned a long stem goblet with captured ring, Dave turned a bowl, John a sphere, Joe a platter and Bruce showed how to hollow a closed form.

Perhaps the highlight of the meeting was when Dave mounted a green log and showed how to make the ribbons fly and then invited the students to do the same under his watchful eye.

Eighteen students attended and their enthusiasm was overwhelming. Afterward they sent us a note of thanks with comments such as:

**"Your examples will generate further interest."**

**"I'm glad I was there"**

**Thanks for the great demo"**

**"I love wood."**

We plan to do more of this and not only at the schools. This summer our club is going to sponsor approximately 25 underprivileged children at a camp where we will do some demos and, possibly, hands on with the kids.

It probably goes without saying that the students' enthusiasm was catching and we caught it.

— Joe Keeler, Secretary  
Ohio Valley Woodturners



The look on the student's face and those familiar lacy curls say a lot about whether students can find joy in turning. Photos: John Lannom.



Dave Morrical turning bowl.



Students watching Earl Choromokos demonstrate.



## WOODTURNING GOES TO COLLEGE

We always thought turning was pretty high-class, and it's even going to college. Now, you can do something you really like and get college credit for it.

Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, Va, has begun offering a two college credit hour course on Beginning Woodturning. The 15 student limit for the Spring semester was quickly filled, as was the Summer session. A course for the Fall semester is also planned.

The course is the brain child of VWCC's Dr. Tom Cecere, an avid woodturner himself. The Spring and Summer sessions were taught by Bob Vaughan of Roanoke. Bob has demonstrated for local chapters and at AAW National Symposiums on his specialty --- tuning up shop machines like the lathe and bandsaw for accuracy and maximum performance.

The format of the first two sessions was about 15 % lecture and 85% turning.

"I knew people were having fun on the lathes the moment I announced a break from the lecture. Within just a few seconds 15 Jet mini



Not your typical College classroom -- Students at Virginia Western's new woodturning class, left to right, Clinton Scudder, Alan McClellan, Lorna Poole and Jerry Mayhew. Photos: Tom Cecere

lathes simultaneously came on and woodturning commenced.

The Fall semester will be taught by Willie Simmons, a professional turner, former shop teacher, past demonstrator at national symposiums and current president of the Blue Ridge Woodturners.

Willie's VWCC course will be held at the new Greenfield Center in Troutville, VA. For more information, contact Virginia Western Community College: ATTN Dr. Thomas Cecere, PO Box 14007, Roanoke, VA or call 540-857-7275.

— Bob Vaughan, Roanoke, VA



Students in the new college class obviously took their studies very seriously. At left is Clinton Scudder; at right, Dawn Paul.



## Making Useful Collet Chucks

For those with  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. X 16 headstock spindles, plumbing compression fittings for connecting  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. pipe to copper tubing make useful collet chucks. The  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. pipe threads fit the lathe spindles. The  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. "collets" hold a dowel or a pronged metal rod to drive bottle stopper blanks. The other sizes are also useful for holding various tenons. Other  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. pipe fittings are often useful. Flanges make good faceplates. Pipe caps with a hole drilled for a screw and a locknut make a screw chuck for small work. Various reducing adapters make useful cup chucks. These can all be cleaned up with a file, abrasives and elbow grease.

— Archie McCallister, Stuart, FL

### More uses for a Laser

I keep a laser pointer mounted on parallel arms on my lathe all the times (similar to the "Articulaser" setup used on stabilized boring bars). I can reach back and turn the beam on my work with very little effort. It has a number of uses:

1. Centering. Especially with the vacuum chuck, it's nice to be able to spot an accurate position.
2. Marking a hazardous point on a turning, which would otherwise be hard to see with the lathe running. This occurs sometimes on weirdly shaped natural edge bowls.
3. Marking a place where I want to take a light cut, as the contour is refined.
4. Marking the place to start cutting on a square piece. Say you are copying a banister spindle. You can lay the sample on top of the uncut wood, and position the laser beam for the start of the cut. If you use a pencil line, you have to mark carefully with a square, usually more than one side.

5. Sometimes you have a complicated turning with a spot you DON'T want to touch. If you mark this with the laser beam, you are less likely to make a mistake. I've seen experts make this type of error.

6. If you are turning a natural-edge bowl out of an irregular piece, with the lathe spinning, it is sometimes hard to bring the tool to the wood to start the cut, without catching. If you point the laser beam at the exact spot where the cut is to begin, even with the lathe running, you can bring the tool up quickly and with confidence, and not get a catch.

—Leo Lichytman, El Cerrito, CA

### Rubber Band Dampener

Here is my handy tip of the week. When hollowing out a goblet or other open form and it starts oscillating when you get it thin, put a heavy thick rubber band around the rim of the item. The rubber band will dampen the vibrations quite a bit and won't throw it out of balance. Of course this works when turning inside, not outside.

— William Noble, Santa Monica, CA

### Freezing Bowls

If you have a greenwood turning that you can't finish for several days, freeze it. Freezing will keep the wood from drying out and checking and no mold will grow. You need to protect it like you would food to prevent the frost-free feature from drying out the wood. Wrapping it in



Shop-built book press is handy tool for segmented work.

a heavy trash bag works well.

My students in a class that meets weekly have used freezing to put bowls into a sort of suspended animation for the week. There is no need to defrost. The only down side is that one student had to eat a container of ice-cream to make room for the bowl.

I've used freezing for years to save a special blank for a few weeks or months. It works just as well for work in progress.

—Allen Hockenbery Annapolis, MD

### Pipe fitters glue-up press

A book press, like the one shown above, is one of the handiest things a segmented turner can have. It

## Tip of the Hat for a Good Idea



Best Tip Award

The hat for the Tips editor's favorite tip in Summer issue goes to Leo Lichytman, El Cerrito, CA, for his idea on using a laser pointer, above.

We all like tuning tips and learn a great deal from what others have discovered. How about sending in some of your favorites?

greatly simplifies ring glue-up.

The screw is Home Depot  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. all-thread. The nuts and washers are also from Home Depot.

The pipe is from a local hardware store that carries EVERYTHING. You will have more trouble finding the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. pipe cross than anything else. Notice that I use black pipe, not galvanized. You can use galvanized if you wish, just clean off the galvanizing where you want to weld or glue.

The base is some oak from the shop. Make sure that the board is true and mark either a cross or some concentric circles so that the glue-up can be centered easily.

Things I found out the hard way:

1. I welded the nuts to the cross. I think that I would recommend that the bottom nut be glued on with two-part epoxy. Then glue the top nut. If the nuts are too tight, just bore out the upper nut so that it is only a guide bushing.

2. If the unions are from the same manufacturer and batch, you will be able to use multiples extensions for added height.

3. Lube the screw with paste wax, not oil. Oil can run down on your project.

— M.T. Riggs. Lawrenceville, GA

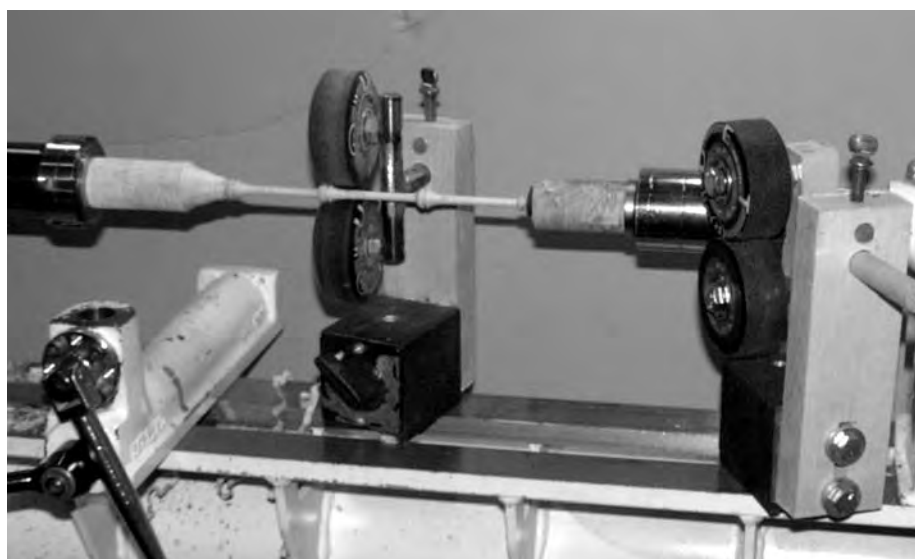
## Send In Your Tips

Share the ideas you have discovered in your shop. And become eligible for our Best Tip Award and a free AAW ball cap. Send your tips with your name and hometown to:

John Lucas  
PO Box 1292,  
Cookeville, TN  
38503.  
jlucas@tntech.edu



John Lucas  
Tips Editor



Two wheeled steady with magnetic base is very versatile for reducing chatter with thin spindles.

## Magnetic base Steady Rest

I've found that a two-wheeled Back Steady, shown above, can be very useful in suppressing chatter when turning thin spindles. Since it only has two wheels and the Magnetic Base has limited grip, it won't secure heavy spindles or suppress a catch. However, using the Magnetic Base means it can be mounted on the lathe in seconds without even turning the lathe off, and relocated with one hand if needed.

You can get a Magnetic Base from any Industrial Supplier (\$14.07 at [www.msdirect.com](http://www.msdirect.com)). Remove the plastic label from the front of the Magnetic Base. This will let you take out the screws that hold the front plate on. Shake the magnet out far enough to grab and remove it. Drill and tap for two  $\frac{1}{4}$ x20 bolts on the mid-line of the back of the base, about  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. from the top and bottom, then replace the magnet and front plate.

Make a T-shaped support for the roller blade wheels out of metal rod or wood dowel. Drill and tap for  $\frac{5}{16}$ x18 bolts slightly more than one wheel width apart on the arms of

the T. Since I do mostly small work I turned down the wheel diameter first by pinning the wheels against a wooden plate with the tailstock.

Make a 2-in. wide wooden support to mount to the base. Cut a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -by-2-in. slot in the bottom of the vertical support to allow for vertical adjustment, and drill a hole to mount the T-shaped support slightly less high than the center height of your lathe. Use a  $\frac{1}{4}$ x20 threaded insert or drill and tap through a cross pin for a thumbscrew to secure the T-shaped support.

Mount the vertical support on the Magnetic Base using a pair of  $\frac{1}{4}$ x20 bolts. Cut the bolts or use washers so that the bolts don't hit the insides of the base. Mount a spindle on the lathe and adjust for height, then tighten the bolts.

To use just set the base on the back of your lathe bed and slide it forwards until the wheels start to turn. Then lock the position using the lever on the Base.

The photo above shows a Back Steady in use, with a back view of another back steady so you can see the mounting.

— David Reed Smith,  
Hampstead, MD

# NICK COOK, WOODTURNER

*Our 2002 Honorary Lifetime Award Recipient*

KEN KEOUGHAN

THE FIRST TIME I MET NICK COOK, he was standing in his booth turning a small wooden box. He had a little crowd gathered around him and was chatting amiably with some of the assembled gawkers and squawkers. Nick was confident, pleasant and respectful of their knowledge of woodturning, as well as their thirst for knowledge of woodturning. But most of all, Nick was happy...actively participating in, contributing to, and appreciative of the world in which he and his life were engaged. He still is. And if as I believe, "happiness" is the product of a life well-lived, Nick Cook has earned his happiness.

Nick Cook is the unanimous choice of the AAW's Board of Directors for the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award for the year 2002. With the acceptance of this award he becomes the 12th person to receive it. His predecessors include: James Prestini, Bob Stocksdales, Rude Osolnik, Dale Nish, Palmer Sharpless, Al Stirt, David Ellsworth, Gary Roberts, Alan Lacer, Robyn Horn, and Ray Key.

Nick is still quite happily engaged in his life. He shares it with his wife, Cathy Wike-Cook, a host of activities in which they both have an interest and a multitude of friends and acquaintances in and out of the AAW. His accomplishments and resume are more than worthy of note.

## Woodturning in the early days

Nick was actively involved in woodturning before the AAW was formed in 1986. He was there at the gathering at Arrowmont when a group of turners, including Nick Cook, decided to found an organization to foster and promote woodturning...the AAW.

And although active within the organization, he didn't serve on the



Nick Cook in his shop in Atlanta, ready to turn out high-quality pieces, day in and day out in any scale and from any species of wood. And, he still finds time to teach and to throw the occasional gourmet barbeque. Photo Marisa Pruss

Board of Directors until 1990. During his 6-year tenure on the board, the AAW flourished. Membership began to mushroom; the Board's recognition of the value of communication with the membership resulted in the development of the AAW Membership Directory. And within the context of the Membership Directory, Nick's little black book of "Resources" became the initial basis of the AAW Directory of Resources.

During his final year on the Board, Nick was in charge of the annual symposium, the 1996 Symposium held at Greensboro. In several ways this symposium became a landmark event. It was the first held under one roof, and the first held in a "Conference Center" setting. Prior to that they had all been held in an academic setting. It generated an enormous audience, attendance totaled 1042. The

auction, benefiting AAW's Education Fund, generated a record total to date.

Stemming from Nick's chronicling of the time involved in organizing and orchestrating the whole thing, the Board began to act on the need for professional management of this annual event. The result, of course, was Butch and Pat Titus, paid professionals, who have been doing the coordination for the past several years and seem to be getting better at it all the time.

## The value of mentors

In talking about his formative years in turning, Nick looks back with fondness. His first and best mentor was his father, Clarence Cook. Clarence enjoyed a career in the U.S. Navy as a photographer. Despite the fact that the Navy moved him around a lot, Clarence worked with wood





Wine stoppers and other elegant, reasonably priced gifts are an important part of Nick's business, but he also does one-off objects, like the Bubinga piece at left, and the Big Leaf Maple Burl natural-edge vase, above. Photos: Courtesy of Nick Cook. Color photos are on Page 32.

and had some sort of woodworking shop wherever he was based. When Nick was a little kid people would comment on his skill with tools. "Nick started working with wood as soon as he could see over the table saw" Clarence would say with pride. After he retired and Nick was making a good living in production turning Clarence helped out with the non-turning activities required in the shop...packing, sawing, routing.

Nick also has wonderful memories of Rude Osolnik. He assisted Rude at Arrowmont in the early 80s. "We became close friends and I came to see Rude as a mentor. One of the things that helped build our relationship was that during one of Rude's slide presentations I groaned about the poor quality of his slides. They were really embarrassing. Rude being Rude, challenged me to do a better job. So I went up to his home on Poverty Ridge in Berea, Kentucky and started shooting slides of his work. He had work tucked away everywhere...drawers, shelves, cabinets,

inside boxes and in other work. Well, before I was through we had a snow-storm and I was stuck on Poverty Ridge. By the time I was able to make my way down off Poverty Ridge we had become, and would remain, fast friends. I can still hear Rude holler 'Hell's fire son! Where you been? I've done a whole day's work already.' That would be at 5:30 am and he probably had done a day's work already." It was Rude who urged Nick to make "small things that don't need to be high-priced, that you can make quickly, efficiently. You'll want to make a lot of 'em."

### Memories of Mel Lindquist

Another of Nick's mentors was Mel Lindquist. "It was Mel more than anyone else that got me focused on finishing. He really helped me to understand the importance of appropriate finishes and the ins and outs of doing them."

Dale Nish mentored Nick too. Dale's not sure how much actual mentoring he did. Of course, if you

know Dale you know that "It takes a modest man to sing a modest song." Here's what he said, "If you want a friend, you've got to be a friend." (Think about that.) "I like Nick and I've tried to be a friend. To do that I tried to be supportive. I bought some of his work; helped him find opportunities to show his skills and share them. I was able to do that when I ran the Symposium at Brigham Young University." And finally, Dale said, "I did with Nick what I try to do with all my friends...just let them know that I like them and respect them."

Nick more than returned that friendship. "When I was put in charge of developing the Osolnik fellowship in 1994 at Arrowmont, Nick Cook and Willard Baxter were both very much instrumental in getting the word out and promoting the event. Between them and the Georgia wood-turning groups they generated \$10-15,000 for the Fellowship Fund. My job was easy because what they didn't do Dave Hout did. Nick very much deserves the Lifetime Membership

Award that he will receive this year."

Willard Baxter who did the auction at this event, told me that the overall funding that accrued to the Osolnik Fellowship was in excess of \$100,000. (More about Baxter on Page 25 in this issue.)

I've dwelled at length on the mentors in this profile of Nick Cook for a reason. Nick's life is devoted to the art and craft of turning wood. He gives back a lot. Not just in time, in teaching, in sharing...but in a genuine love of the process and the people involved in turning wood.

When I asked him, "Why? Why so much attention to what I call 'service'?" He replied without a moment's hesitation, "Oh...my mentors, they all gave me so much...so very much. I'll never be able to pay them back but they sure helped to create an attitude of spontaneity, of generosity, of decency. They were all fine men." The men of whom he spoke were Rude Osolnik, Mel Lindquist, Dale Nish, and, his dad, Clarence Cook.

Nick Cook today makes a very good living in his world. He does a lot of architectural turning. His production work continues to sell well. They each account for about 40% of his revenue. The remainder comes from teaching. He gives private lessons in his shop. I would highly recommend them. He also teaches both at Arrowmont in Gatlinburg, TN and the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. He consults for several manufacturers of woodworking products and with Willard Baxter and Rude Osolnik was instrumental in the design and development of the current line of Powermatic lathes.

An interesting aside is that the man who married Nick and Cathy and has been an ordained Baptist Minister for over fifty years is none other than AAW's very own Treasurer and Auctioneer... you guessed it...Willard Baxter.

In summing up Nick Cook's con-



When Nick bills his shop as the only full-service turning shop in the Atlanta, GA, metro area, he's not kidding, as the photos above and at right show. He is equipped and versatile enough to turn out an oversize column or a pen or Christmas ornament. Good business? Certainly. But Nick brings a little special zest to the job, an artist's eye and sensibility that makes everything produced by his shop distinctive.



tributions to the world of woodturning, Bobby Clemons, current President of AAW said, "I'll tell you a typical Nick Cook story. The Brasstown Woodturners call him to come up and do a demonstration at the local high school with very little notice. Without a second thought, Nick said, 'Sure' and went up to Brasstown and did the demo. You know why? Because that's the way Nick is."

And so we come full circle. Nick Cook continues actively participating

in, contributing to and appreciating the world in which which he and his life are engaged...the wonderful world of woodturning. We are all of us fortunate to be able to call Nick Cook "a friend."

*Ken Keoughan is a turner in Friendship, ME and contributing editor at American Woodturner. Nick Cook can be reached on the internet at: [www.nickcookwoodturner.com](http://www.nickcookwoodturner.com) or at: (770) 421-1212. E-mail address: [75021.20642@compuserve.com](mailto:75021.20642@compuserve.com)*



# A SLEW OF PAPERWEIGHTS

*A money-making scheme for turners*

BOB ROSAND

**Y**EARS AGO I MADE A WHOLE SLEW of paperweights. They were inexpensive (that means cheap), heavy, not too well executed, and I thought that they were going to make me a fair amount of money.

These paperweights were basically a turned disc of wood with a hole drilled in the bottom. I filled the hole with steel shot, sealed it with epoxy and then covered the bottom with felt.

When I sent the last of these “beauties” to a small consignment shop I never expected that I’d hear about them again. Lo and behold, they eventually sold and the shop wanted more, but I really couldn’t bear to duplicate the old style of paperweights. I’m a better turner now and I also have more tools to play with. I needed to either refuse to make any more paperweights or improve the old model.

Since I’m always interested in making money, I decided that I’d at least make a few paperweights. For my “new and improved” version I decided to do away with the felt pad on the the bottom of the paperweights. Instead I use a wood plug and match the grain as closely as possible, so the plug blends in fairly well, although you can see a glue line.

Then I decided to do two different styles. One has a plug on the bottom, as I just described above, and is turned smooth. People love to roll it in their hands. It’s one of those items that people just seem to have to touch.

My second version has a plug in the top and the glue line is obscured by use of a Sorby texturing tool. I don’t necessarily recommend running out to purchase a texturing tool just for paperweights, but if you have one, it doesn’t hurt to take ad-



Photo 1: The simple elegance of these paperweights makes them perfect for gifts or sale items. The author either makes the plug concealing the weighted interior blend into the main body or accents the area with contrasting wood or texturing.

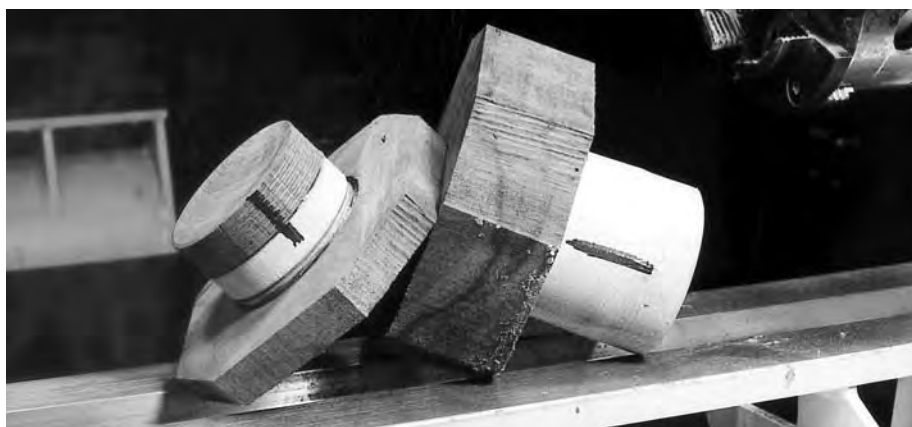


Photo 2: The two waste blocks enable the author to turn the base and plug from the same block. Lines marked help align the grain at assembly.



Photo 3: Rough turn the base to the desired shape; Rosand likes flat and squat.



vantage of it.

I should mention here that I give full credit to Rodger Jacobs of North Carolina for this idea. On one of my trips down south, Rodger showed me a similar paperweight that he produced. Though the idea is Rodger's, our techniques may differ, so don't hold him responsible for the methods I use.

### **The basic paperweight (plug-in-bottom)**

Access to a vacuum chuck makes holding the paperweights for final cutting very easy. But if you don't have one, a friction fit chuck will do. It's just a bit slower. That shouldn't be a problem unless you decide to start making the things by the gross.

I like to start with a block of scrap wood, burl or otherwise, about 4-in.-square and about  $1\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-thick. I glue the turning block to a waste block. Because the main body of the paper weight and the plug are turned separately, but come from the same block, next I glue another waste block to the other face of the block.

Before truing up the block on the lathe, I take the block to the bandsaw and cut off a slice about  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. thick. Before cutting the slice off, mark the block so you can line up the grain later after both components are turned. Because my scrap blocks are faceted, not round at this time, cutting the slice off on the bandsaw is not much of a problem. One of the edges of the block is large enough to support the piece through the cut, and the waste blocks provide hand-holds well away from the blade. As with any cutting operation, be very careful. Bandsaws can be a lot more dangerous than many people expect. You can now put the thin slice on the attached waste block aside until it's time to turn the plug.

Now, rough turn the paperweight to the desired shape. Mine are usually squat and flat. Drill a  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -in.



Photo 4: Bore out the center hole to accept weights. Photos: Bob Rosand.



Photo 5: Expand the opening with bent angled tools.



Photo 6: Author uses calipers to transfer the dimensions of the center hole to the plug stock.



Photo 7: After turning the plug to size glue it to the paperweight.



Photo 8: Finally, the author blends the plug into the bottom of the paperweight.

hole about 1-in. deep, plus or minus a bit — absolute accuracy is not necessary here. True up the hole with a spindle gouge or the long point of the skew, then using bent angle tools hollow out the interior. There is no need to worry about smooth walls or uniform wall thickness here. You want to make room for some steel shot and give the paperweight some heft.

Once the paperweight is rough turned and hollowed, you may remove it from the chuck and place it to the side. Place the “thin slab,” the one that will become the plug in the chuck. I use a set of veneer calipers to determine the diameter of the opening in the bottom of the paperweight and transfer this measurement to the section of plug material. The plug is then cut and trimmed to

fit into the bottom of the paperweight. Fill the paperweight with shot and glue the plug in place making sure that you pay attention to grain alignment. I cut off the waste block from the plug side with the bandsaw, but if you do this, use caution since the piece is no longer square and may roll when you cut it. An alternative method would be to use a parting tool.

Now you can refine the piece making the bottom slightly concave. Remove as much of the “top” as you can without making the turning unstable. At this point, I sand to about 220 grit by hand and then drop down to 180 grit and power sand to 600 grit. Now part the piece from the lathe, reverse it, place it in the vacuum chuck for final cutting and sanding.

If you are using the friction fit method for finishing, you will need a soft waste block 5-to-6-in. in diameter into which the paperweight is fit. I use scraps of white pine rather than something like plywood, as it is less likely to mar the wood.

### Textured paperweight

If you choose to make a paperweight with a textured top, you follow the same basic procedure except that the plug goes in what will be the top of the paperweight. To hide the plug line you need to texture the piece. I’ve found the Sorby texturing tool to be great for this. Turn the tool at about a 45° angle and run it across the top of the paperweight once or twice and the glue line becomes almost invisible. Using a contrasting wood for the plug also works great.

The finished paperweight can then be oiled and waxed. Good luck, and call me if I can be of any help.

*Bob Rosand is a professional turner and teacher in Bloomsburg, PA, as well as being vice president of AAW. His e-mail address is [rrosand@ptdprolog.net](mailto:rrosand@ptdprolog.net)*

# A MACE FOR GRADUATION

## *Snakes and symbols for academic turning*

GERALD COOPER

**W**HEN I WAS ASKED IF I wanted to turn an academic mace for the graduation of the first class from the Pikeville, KY, College of Osteopathic Medicine, I wasn't too interested.

The class wanted to present the mace as a gift to the college last May, and the class organizers had a sketch of what they thought they wanted. Despite my initial lack of interest, they kept talking about the project and the more they talked, the more I began to think the commission might be a real challenge.

For one the committee had several symbols they felt should be incorporated into the mace.

That seemed only fitting, in light of the long history of the mace. In the Middle Ages bodyguards of the king used them as weapons. Gradually the mace evolved into a symbol of a university's right to grant degrees to graduates.

- The first symbol was the medical motif of the snake coiled around a tapered shaft.

- Next, the committee wanted an orb with a round seal of the college on one side, and one of the school of medicine on the other. Each of the seals would be about three inches in diameter.

- Since the school and its environs had a Scots-Irish heritage, the committee wanted this to be symbolized in some way.

- Pikeville is surrounded with mountains that are mined for coal, so they wanted black mountains on top of the orb.

- There are 99 steps from the main street to the college campus. These are referred to as the 99 steps to success. The committee thought this was significant enough to be incorporated in the mace in some way.

Even though I had become intrigued with the project, I really had



Snake, shaft and globe provide a turning puzzle to challenge any shop. Photos by the author. Color photo on page 34.

some doubts about the whole thing. It took about a week before I even had the nerve to go to the drawing board, but when I did I began to see some possibilities. With some help from my brother in Los Angeles, who is an excellent artist, we began to come up with a design and a plan for creating it.

### **Developing a design**

I decided that the whole mace would be 38-in. high. The shaft

would be one piece of cherry and the orb or globe would be walnut. Before being hollowed, I figured it would have to be mounted five times to turn circles for the seals and carvings and a recess to fit the main shaft.

The orb was designed to be supported by hand-carved thistle leaves, which are a national symbol of Scotland. Between the two circular 3-in. diameter school seals were put 3-in. diameter circular hand carved Celtic knots, which are indigenous to Ireland and Scotland. Running around the tapered staff between the snake coils are 99 steps, also hand carved. The cap of the hollowed orb has four black mountains that are arranged so that from any side you see two mountains, one in the foreground and one in the background.

### **Handling the snake**

When I took the job, I had no idea how I was going to do the snake. It was the most challenging part. Believe it or not, I woke up in the middle of the night with the idea of how to go about it.

I had made a full-size drawing of the mace. At the top of the shaft the snake was 1/2-in.-thick in the area below the head. I turned the shaft 1/2-in. bigger than what I had drawn out for the full length. I wanted the snake to taper as the shaft tapered, but I had to disregard that at first, because I planned to use the present, oversize taper as a guide for my router. Using the tapered guide, I could route out the wood between the coils of the snake and in effect carve out the tapered shaft to match the diameters indicated on the drawing.

I made two wooden tool rests and a beam to go the length of the shaft, and a harness for my router that would allow the router to advance 1/2-in. into the wood. I set the beam





Photo 1: The author laid out the snake coiling around the oversized tapered shaft with masking tape.

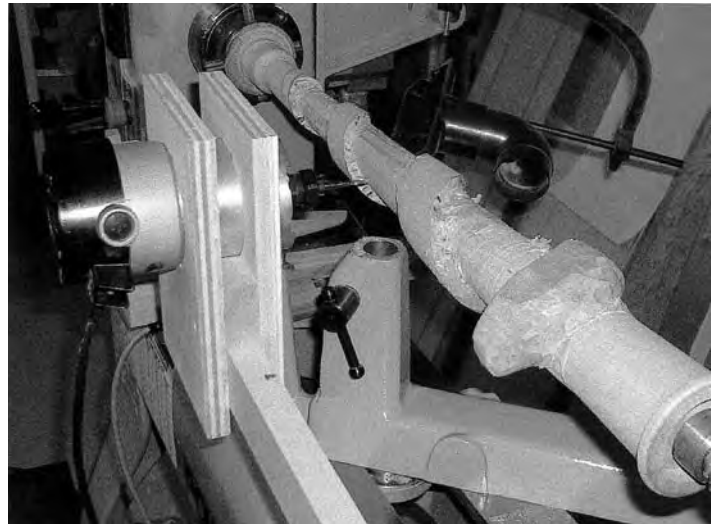


Photo 2: Next, he made two wooden tool rests and a beam along the shaft, and a harness for his router.



Photo 3: After roughing out the snake with the router, Cooper tapered the snake on the lathe, then hand carved the reptile with a variety of hand and power tools.

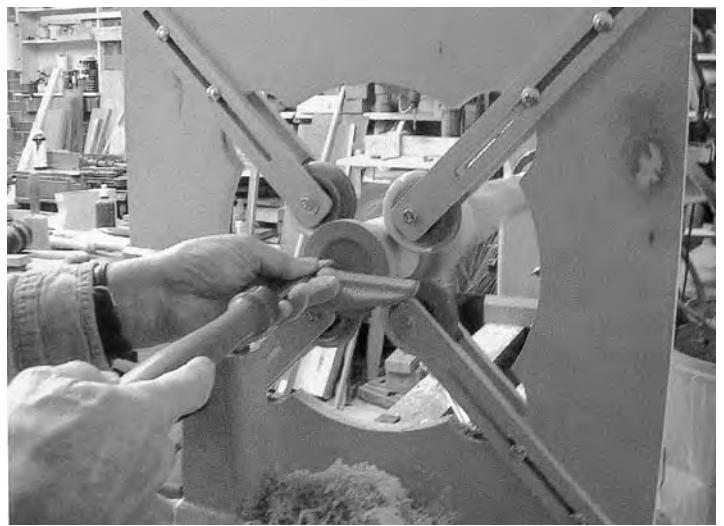


Photo 4: To recess the top of the shaft to receive the tenon turned on the bottom of the globe, he supported the shaft on the lathe with a steady rest.

so the router just touched the surface of the shaft. After sketching the snake on the shaft, I hand turned the lathe, advancing the router into the wood.

Now I had a roughed out snake that was  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. thick all the way down the shaft. I turned my lathe back on and tapered the snake as I wanted it, then carved the rest by hand. I recessed the top of the shaft

to receive the orb tenon. To hold it I made a steady using roller blade wheels, using some of the ideas shown in back issues of *American Woodturner*. The shaft is cherry, and I lightly stained the snake so it would stand out a little better.

### Making the Orb

The orb or globe seemed more straightforward, but there were still a

couple of fine points to deal with.

In order to get four perfectly round recesses on the four sides of the orb, the orb had to be a perfect sphere. I made a template guide for this. The template let me gauge my progress exactly, as I began to turn the sphere. (For more on turning spheres, see the articles by John Brewer, p. 26, *American Woodturner*, Summer 2001 and by Brian Sim-



Photo 5: Orb begins with a glued up block of thick walnut squares.

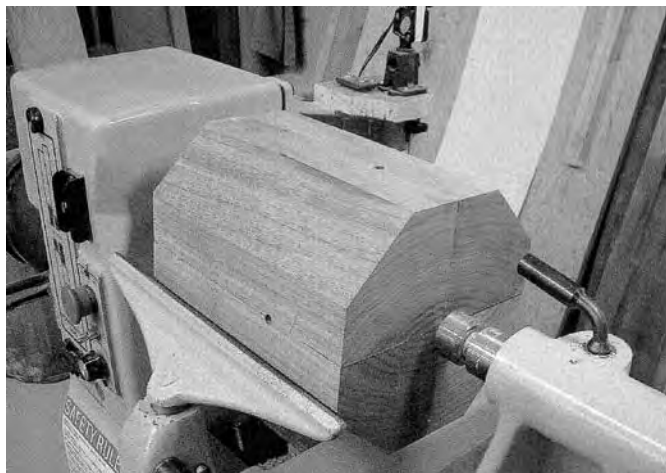


Photo 6: Before mounting the blank on the lathe, the author sawed off the waste corners.

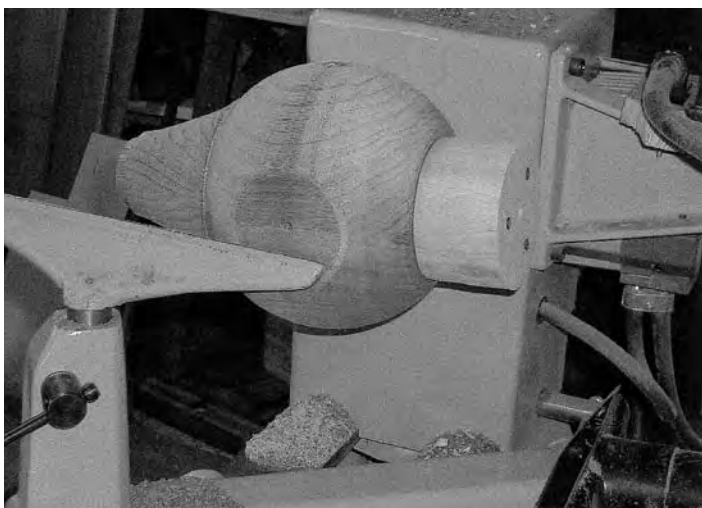


Photo 7: In roughing out the orb, the author left flats for the school seal and celtic symbols.



Photo 8: Area supporting the orb is embellished with hand-carved thistle leaves.

mons, AW, p. 26, Fall 2001. Both Simmons and Brewer will be demonstrating at the Providence symposium.)

Before beginning the turning, I drilled holes on all four sides that would allow me to remount the orb on each side using my screw center. After screwing a weight block on the top of the orb to distribute the weight, I made recesses on all four sides, then turned discs of walnut about  $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. thick with a bead frame to hold the seals and Celtic carvings. Using the scroll saw, I cut the shape

of the Celtic knots, then glued them in the frames and turned the face of them the radius of the orb before carving the over/under knot work. I then remounted the orb in its original position and hollowed it to about  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. thickness. This allowed enough material to accept the seals, without making the complete mace too heavy to be manageable.

I wanted to make the mountains of ebony but was not able to find a piece that size, so I used basswood and stained it with Behlen's black dye. Behlen's Finishing (Rt 30. Ams-

terdam, NY 12010) products are available from many woodworking and home supply houses.

When I had completed the hollow orb, I suggested to the class that we put a list of their names and all the college staff inside it. That made everyone really part of the project, in that they could always say that their names are in the college mace. This idea went over big. I also included my own name.

*Gerald Cooper, a retired minister, is a carver and turner in Berea, KY.*



# MASTERS OF WOOD

## Turned Art Brightens Arizona Gallery

MEGAN BATES

THE "MASTERS OF WOOD" SHOW AT Gallery Materia last March included the works of seven master wood artists. The show was part of the Scottsdale, AZ, gallery's continuing effort to present wood art, and followed on the heels of a solo Phil Moulthrop exhibition.

Turners included in the "Masters of Wood" show were Ron Fleming, William Hunter, Stoney Lamar, Bud Latven, Peter Pierobon, and Michael Shuler. The carved work of Robyn Horn was also included.

William Hunter, who played a part in curating the show, also contributed three vessels. Kinetic Allure, Shape Shifter, and Rhythms & Chaos were all examples of Hunter's gestural "Kinetic Rhythms" series. The leaning bars or "slats" incorporated into these pieces capture a diagonal slice of air between them, and the vessels resemble stylized tornados, full of natural movement and energy. Hunter also included Chasing Infinity II, a turned piece that is in fact a sculptural object; two interlocking but not connected spirals of Olive burl forming an airy, turned-wood mandala.

The work of Ron Fleming also reflected on the movement and structure of organic forms, but in a more literal sense. His two turned and carved vessels, made from found Weeping Tree wood and Cuban Mahogany, display Fleming's signature natural touch, with a pattern resembling delicate and slightly curling leaves creating the form of the vessel. These pieces, like Hunter's, allow light to penetrate the precisely worked surfaces, into the center of the vessel.

In contrast to Fleming's highly organic pieces, New Mexico artist Bud Latven's pieces were examples of his worked and precise turnings. Latven maps out many of his geometrical

**Color Photos of the Masters of Wood show are on the Journal's Back Cover.**

forms on a digital drawing program before executing them. Torsion #7, included in Gallery Materia's "Masters of Wood" exhibition is a perfect example of this technique, and is also, Latven comments, the only one of its kind in the current market. The piece is a funnel shape that flares out at either end to a wide cone. The rim is uneven, and, like the entire surface of the piece, mapped out in precise squares. Torsion #7 presents an interesting juxtaposition of warm material and mathematical form and texture.

Michael Shuler's vessels are also turned from a pieced block of wood. Shuler's method of turning gridded blocks of various hardwoods creates bowls peppered with flecks of woods of exotic colors, in a striped and spiraling pattern that becomes more and more miniscule at the vessel's bottom. The Gallery Materia show included a sampling of Shuler's pine cone vessels, as well. These tiny, fragile pieces have become one of Shuler's signature skills. Encased in resin and then turned, the pine cones reveal a layered, rastered pattern that is then flattened and buffed to a smooth sheen.

Moving away from the traditional vessel form was the work of Peter Pierobon and Stoney Lamar. Pierobon, known earlier in his career for his furniture work, has of late been using the lathe as a starting point, turning large platters and then carving them into impressive round wall hangings, oftentimes containing secret or symbolic languages. The three pieces by Pierobon included Con-certo, a mahogany round with a three-foot diameter, into which the artist has carved an accurate musical score, and PLUR and VALK. The lat-

ter two, milk painted dimensional cutouts with the carved elements, are tricky in that their configurations imply a written language, but in fact, Pierobon says, they cannot be read. Pierobon makes reference to the Lewis Carol rhyme,

'Twas Brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogroves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

remarking that, like VALK and PLUR, these are "Words that sound as if they have meaning but in fact do not, another way to play the game..."

Stoney Lamar's work also uses the lathe as a starting point. Represented in the "Masters of Wood" show were three of Lamar's wood and steel sculptures. The steel base and spine of each piece adds to the work both structurally and aesthetically, but their whimsical shapes subtly form the focal point of Lamar's work. Echoing Lamar's work in their verticality, Robyn Horn's "standing-stone" sculptural objects take on their own individuality and personality.

Considering the fact that only seven artists were included, the show presented a fairly comprehensive selection for wood collectors and admirers. From sculptural to vessel-forms, material-based content to technical savvy, and many combinations of the above, the show "Masters of Wood" at Gallery Materia displays the extensive range and skill of wood turners working today. It should also supply interesting ideas for aspiring turners to draw from and extrapolate upon in the future.

Gallery Materia is located at 4222, North Marshall Way in Scottsdale, AZ. Information on hours and schedules can be obtained at (480) 949-1262 or gallerymateria@qwest.net.

*Megan Bates is a writer in Tempe, AZ*



# THE MONOGRAM VESSEL

## A Personalized Turning

DAVE BARRIGER

RECENTLY I WANTED TO PRODUCE A special piece for a special friend. I decided I could modify my elevated vessel concept (see the Fall 1998 issue of *American Woodturner*) and sculpt the pedestal into a letter, or monogram. It quickly became apparent that any letter, number or symbol could be worked into the piece.

These personalized vessels make great gifts with a personal touch for individual birthdays, anniversaries or retirements, or for special events like the one that started my search. They also can express a personal feeling of the artist. If marketing is what you have in mind, it probably would not be practical to have a complete set to sell at shows, but commission pieces work well. I find them to be fun to do and not really difficult, if you have the right tools. You're right — this design does require a few tools not normally used by turners, but some are common to carvers. The rest are normal woodworking tools. I like to do as much of the work as possible with power tools, but you could do most of it by hand, if you tend to be masochistic.

### Form:

Monogram pieces require some planning. You will need to design your piece before putting your wood on the lathe. I suggest drawing out the design of your monogram first. I sometimes select a font I like on my computer and then print it out in the largest size available. This gives me a model, but (at least on my computer) it is not big enough for a pattern. Fortunately most copy machines can enlarge the computer printout to the size you need for a pattern to fit your design.

Next I design the shape of the vessel to compliment the monogram. The



When he needed a special gift, the author discovered that with a little planning letters, numbers and symbols could be incorporated into many turnings. Photos by the author. The pieces are in color on Page 34.

vessel could be a very open dish type with either an even or natural edge. It could have a rounded bowl shape, or be a hollow form, whichever you prefer, or you think best fits your design. Remember you must come up with a base that will allow the piece to stand without wobbling or tipping, and all the components must be in balance, both for visual appeal and stability.

The size of the piece can vary from a small goblet up to as large as your lathe will allow. Balance is most important, but should easily be accomplished to suit your liking. I personally think the monogram should be definitely eye catching but should not dominate over the vessel portion.

### Tools:

In addition to the basic turning

tools and lathe, I use a bandsaw, drill press with wood bits, carbide burrs on a die grinder, drum sanders, and a random orbital sander. I do find that some inside cuts still require a coping saw and hand rasps and sanding sticks to finish.

### The turning:

I mount the stock in a scroll chuck after preparing between centers. The vessel portion is defined and then hollowed (see photo # 1). For taller ones, I also use a steady rest for completing the inside of the vessel portion. For all outside work, the tail stock can be used to steady the work.

The gift was for a 50th anniversary, so I decided to have a 0 supporting the number 5. As you can see in the photos on the next page, I roughed out the bottom and middle to indicate

the two different areas.

The bandsaw is now used to cut the monogram area to a flat center section. I prefer a quarter inch blade for these cuts. Be sure your design is able to fit on your bandsaw. Since you are cutting near the center line of the round blank, the torque is minimal, but you still need to be extremely careful! I always prepare a cradle for the piece to rest in which will prevent it from rolling (see photo #2). The thickness of the monogram portion is dependent upon the overall size and the amount of attachment remaining at each end of the monogram.

In designing the piece, you determined the outside form of the entire piece. The closer you can come to the final outside lines of the monogram, the better it will be later. As you can see in photos #2 and #3, I had the shape of the vase and the Number 50 in mind as I turned the area. The closer you can turn the area to the finished shape, the better. I only rough sand the letter portion but the vessel and base may be fine sanded and a coat of finish applied, if you prefer. I cut and sand the bottom as far in as possible but leave enough wood in the center for support. I have ground an old screwdriver blade to have a point on the side which allows me to cut grooves in the base from the side, as you can see in the photo, top left, on the next page.

### The sculpting:

From this point, the lathe primarily will be used as a "holder" for other shaping processes. Preliminary sanding can be done now to the two flat surfaces to provide a relatively smooth surface for laying out the monogram. This sanding can be done with a random orbital sander which works quite well into the curved area at the top and bottom. A small drum sander will work the curves if necessary. For sanding, I put the piece back on the lathe which now is being used



Photo 1: After roughly shaping the outside of the vessel-- a base, a zero, a number 5 and a cup- he bored out the cup section before hollowing it on the lathe.

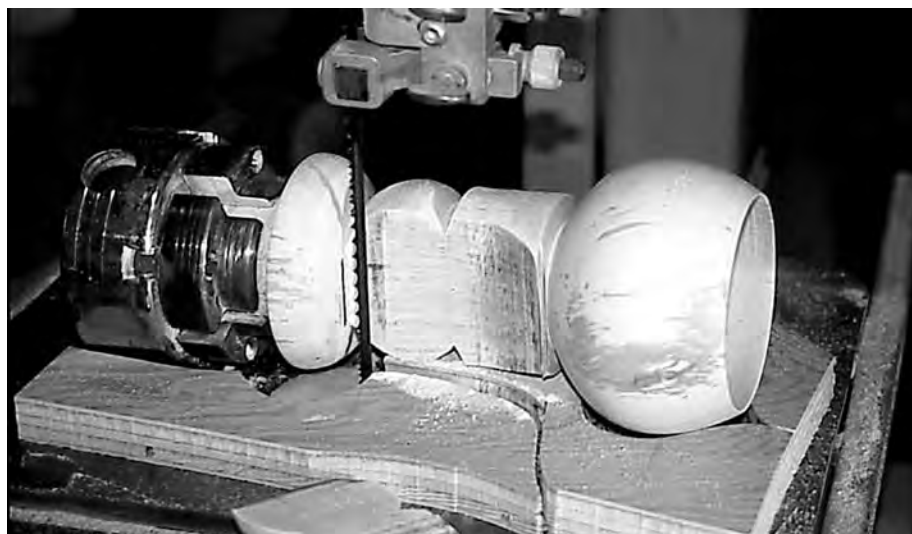
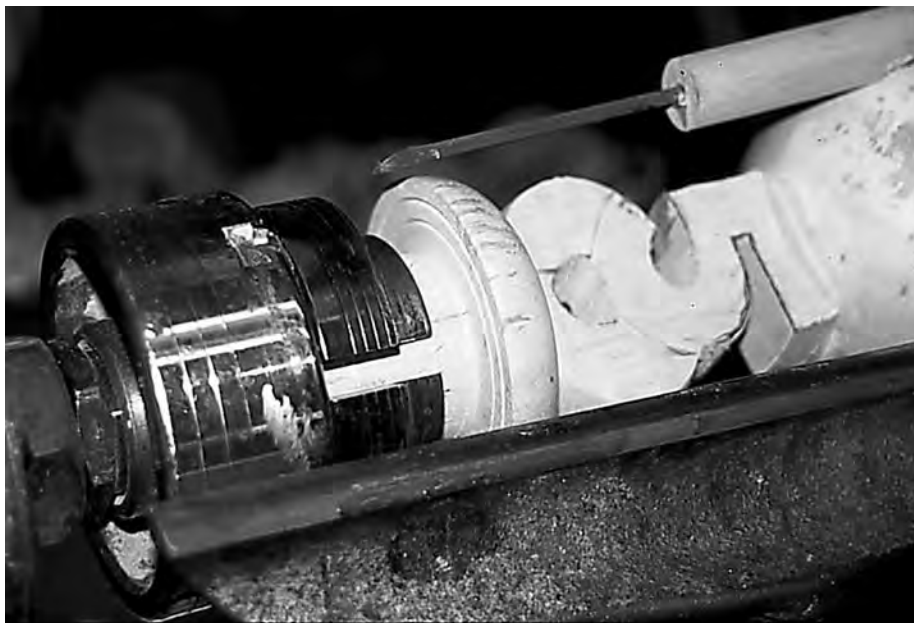


Photo 2: With the turning in a supporting cradle, the rough cylinder between the base and the cup is bandsawn flat. The notch indicates the area to be carved, as shown below.



Photo 3: The zero-shaped support and the number 5 are clearly defined, above, on the bandsawn and sanded surface, ready for carving.





Carving can now be further refined. The special tool made from a screwdriver, above, left, is used to cut grooves in the bottom of the vase. The 50 is further carved with various hand tools, using the lathe as a support, or with the turning held vertically with the chuck screwed to a mandrel.

as a vise. A large cone center can be used to support the vessel end. The interior portions of the monogram which need to be removed can now be sketched on the wood surface. Wood bits can drill out much of these spaces, then the coping saw, power carbide burrs, or whatever works for you will remove the rest of these areas. Any areas to be removed that are open to the side can be cut on the bandsaw, or with a hand saw. To clean up these areas use small drum sanders where possible. To shape the inside areas, I especially like the hand micro planes. For areas too small and tight corners it will require a little hand sanding. I glue strips of sandpa-

per (of different grits) to small dowels or to thin sticks for the corners. I like to rip the corners off of small turning squares by setting the bandsaw at 45 degrees and use these triangular shaped strips to which I glue sandpaper to make sanding sticks. Carving techniques can be used to separate or enhance letters, or to add detail. The detail work can be done in a vertical position if you have a mandrel to fit in the tool rest holder, above right. Your only limitation is your imagination.

### The finishing:

It is ready for final sanding and applying the finish of your choice. I

put the finish on all but the bottom while it is still being held in the lathe because I don't want to handle the piece after sanding, before the first coat of finish has been applied. Once the finish is dry the bottom can now be finalized. Depending on your design, it is probably not wise to part off the base with the lathe on. I usually find it most practical to cut off excess with the bandsaw by using a V block to cradle the round base and then sand out the base with a disc sander. I prefer the random orbital for the final sanding of the base. Now you can sign it and put the first coat of finish on the base.

Just let your imagination run wild and there is no telling what interesting designs you might come up with. This is what is so great about turning. Never let your tools imprison your creativity.

Allow yourself to dream an idea, then find or make the tools and create the techniques to transform your dreams into reality.

*Dave Barriger is a turner and teacher in Apopka, FL, and a former president of the AAW Board of Directors. He will be a demonstrator at the 16th annual AAW national symposium in Providence, RI, June 28-30.*



The author often demonstrates and sells his work at fairs and shows around the country.



# WILLARD BAXTER

*The AAW symposium auctioneer and a lot more*

**KEN KEOUGHAN**

**W**HEN WILLARD BAXTER STEPS up to the podium on Saturday evening, June 29 many of us will see a face and a figure that is familiar to us because it will be the ninth year that Willard Baxter has been auctioneer at AAW's annual symposium. In the eight years already on the books the auctions that Willard has conducted, the Education Fund has received \$189,367 and issued 169 scholarship awards.

Willard may dink around a little bit, offer an anecdote or a little idle patter, but before long he'll take a good drink of water, rear back and start gathering and boosting bids. With a little luck he'll generate enough money to top last year's \$32,000 that the auction yielded, and it will all go to AAW's Education Fund.

First let me say that this doesn't come easy. There are auctioneers and then there are AUCTIONEERS. Willard brings a lot to the podium. He has been an auctioneer for 25 years working exclusively for charitable organizations. During that time he has learned a lot.

He knows how to gerrymander the seating arrangements so that he is in a position to spot the likely bidders easily. He knows who to get and where to put his spotters. He knows that if the bidders are seated in relative proximity to one another or in disparate clusters that their own competition can flourish. Beyond that he knows that what he is working for is something he believes in ...education and woodturning.

But there's much more to Willard Baxter. He has been an ordained Baptist Minister for over 50 years. He married Cathy Wike-Cook and Nick Cook, the AAW 2002 Honorary Life member (Page 12) and remains a close friend and welcome guest in



their home. While he is retired from the ministry he is still active locally in and around his home in Gainesville, GA.

Willard is a solid stable man. He has been married to his wife Sarah for 46 years and she still adores him, even though she is old enough and wise enough by now to thoroughly understand him.

Willard is the Resident Woodturner at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. It was he who helped the Campbell woodturning operation go from 7 partially filled classes when he started teaching there to 37 classes that are chockablock full in 2002. When he got there they had 7 lathes that mostly worked some of the time. Now they have 10 lathes that work all of the time. In addition they have 10 "mini" lathes for back up and/or special classes. This year they will have 350 + students learning about woodturning at John C. Campbell.

Among the instructors will be: Bobby Clemons; Dave Barriger; Nick Cook; Dick Sing; Bonnie Klein; Mike Mahoney; Bob Rosand; Mark St.

Leger; David Hout; Soren Berger; Alan Lacer; Pat Matranga; Linda Van Gehuchten; Doug Barnes; Johannes Rieber; Lee Carter; Jim Leonard; Tom Fortenberry. Willard Baxter recruited this highly talented group of very accomplished instructors.

Baxter has enjoyed another career, a career in law enforcement. In preparing for that career he went through the FBI training program at the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. He is now the retired Director of Emergency Management at the county level in Hall County, GA.

But can he turn wood? Yes. He studied under and eventually traveled with Rude Osolnik. He also took instruction from Dale Nish, Ray Key and Johannes Rieber.

Willard has also been a force in many woodturning organizations and assemblies. He is past president of the Georgia Association of Woodturners and the Chatahoochee Woodturners of Gainesville, GA and is presently on the Board of the American Association of Woodturners on which he serves as Treasurer. He is also a tool dealer working with Oneway, Powermatic, Jet and Sorby.

So you see when Willard Baxter strolls up to the podium in Providence...he is bringing some real skills to the front with him...people skills, teaching skills, woodturning skills, and learning skills. When I asked him how he came to get so involved in the world of woodturning he said, "For me it began with Rude. Rude made woodturning so simple and yet so profound. And now, I love the act of turning and I love a lot of the people who are participating in turning. God bless 'em all."

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*Ken Keoughan is a turner and writer in Freindship, ME and contributing editor to American Woodturner.*

# SURFACE DESIGN FOR TURNING

*An Arsenal of New Techniques and Ideas*

BINH PHO

**S**URFACE DESIGN IS A TERM THAT HAS been ringing loudly throughout the woodturning world lately, but despite the current enthusiasm it is not a new idea. Contemporary woodturners, such as Michael Hosaluk, Frank Sudol, Giles Gilson, John Jordan, Jack Vesery and many others have been exploring the field of surface design for years. Turners have been probably concerned with the idea in one form or another for centuries.

The arsenal of techniques and ideas available to turners interested in surface design is too immense to be covered in a single article or book. I am not by any means “an expert” in any of these areas. I will in this article share what I’ve learned about the three main techniques I employ to design and finish my vessels: airbrushing, piercing/texturing, and gilding.

Each one of these techniques is a very broad and rich field, and I doubt that I’ll learn all there is to know in any one of them. But it is the stages of exploring, conceiving and expressing that make the field exciting and enriching.

## 1. Airbrushing

Here I will talk about the three airbrush techniques I use. I prefer a double action airbrush, because it provides greater control than single action models. You can alter the air’s on/off mechanism while controlling the amount of paint by pulling the trigger. Controlling your paint flow allows you to vary your spray pattern from fine to broad without changing brushes or needles. It helps to dry the paint, and it allows you to layer the paint more efficiently. For more information on tools, equipment and accessories please see my article “The Cityscape series” in AAW Summer 2000 Journal.

### Blending With Transparent Colors



“Lavender Hill”/ 3.5” high X 2.5” diameter/ Ash, acrylic paint, Japan Lavender silver leaf.

Pho sprayed blue color from the lower left upward to the middle, then continued with red color to cover the rest. Notice how he used the wood grain to separate the colors and the areas where the two colors mix.

Photos: Binh Pho



“Festival”/6” high X 2.5” dia./ Birdseye maple, acrylic paint, various metal leaf.

Using the same approach as in the photo at left, Pho here mixed three colors. For the top kimono, he sprayed purple on the top right corner, then blue in the middle and yellow over the rest and overflowing to the lower kimono.

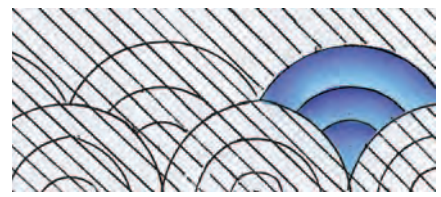
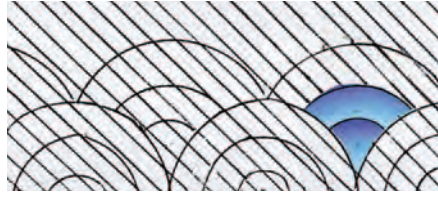
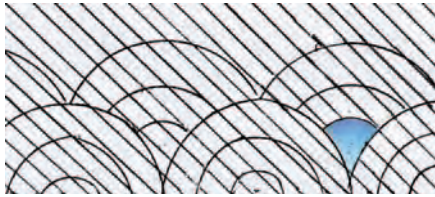
**COLOR MIX:** The airbrush capability and the transparent colors make this technique possible and very simple. Use low tack masking tape to cover the non-painted area. I spray the first color to the designed area, more intense at the edge and start fading away as I spray outward, then I apply the second color to somewhat overlap the first one and extend it out to cover the whole area. Being transparent colors, where the two overlap will create the third color. I normally

choose the grain pattern of the wood and let the color flow with it, as shown in the photos above.

**GRADUATING COLOR:** I rely on masking technique to achieve this effect, I use this technique to express a dramatic scene, even when only using one color. The key is to airbrush the edge of the design and let the over spray cover the rest (see figure 1,2&3, at the top of the next page). I create the waves in the above picture by removing the mask one layer at a time



## Graduating Colors



The masking fluid described by the author is used to block off areas, so that the airbrushed colors won't affect the wood surface. By selectively adding and removing masks while spraying various colors, you can create a variety of effects. In the demonstration shown above, the author, after removing the mask from a wave section, sprays from the top edge and lets the over spray cover the lower portion, so the color lightens from the top of the section to the bottom, Figure 1, above left. Next he removes the mask from the middle part of the wave, and again sprays from its top edge down, Figure 2, above middle; and finally he removes the mask from the top section and sprays, again from top to bottom, to complete the wave image, Figure 3, above right. Then he continues on to the next wave and repeats the process.

The masking/spraying technique described in the drawings above produces a darker color with the hard edge that graduates to a lighter color the further you get from the mask, as shown in the photo at right.



and painting very close to the edge of the neighboring mask. That produces a darker color with the hard edge that graduates to a lighter color the further you get from the mask.

**MULTICOLOR IMAGES:** First, apply the mask to the vessel. I use Liquid Mask made by Sign Strip, then sketch the image on the mask with the felt tip marker. The basic concept of airbrushing with masks is simple. If you paint over something more than once using transparent paint, it

will get darker. So, by removing pieces layer by layer, darkest layer first, the color will not be affected if those areas were hit with over spray since they're supposed to be darker than the current layer. Here's my technique, step by step, how to airbrush a cluster of bamboo leaves with multi shades of green.

Use an Exacto knife to remove the mask of the darkest piece(s). Apply the knife very lightly as not to leave scars on your work, in this case a clus-

ter of bamboo leaves over the bamboo trunk, as shown below left. I first removed the bamboo trunk mask and airbrushed it with dark green because it was a darkest area. I then repeated the process with the bottom leaf layers to make them look lighter than the trunk but darker than other leaves. Then the lighter layers were removed and sprayed next and so on. For the final touch, I used transparent smoke color to airbrush some slight shadows. Finish art work and remove the

## Airbrushing Multicolor Images

To create the bamboo leaves and trunk, shown at right, the author first removed the mask from the trunk, the darkest area and airbrushed it with dark green. He repeated the process with the bottom leaves to make them lighter than the trunk, but darker than the other leaves. The lighter areas were then unmasked and sprayed. For the final look, shown at far right, he sprayed on a transparent smoke color to create subtle shadows.





rest of the masking, as shown in the photo in the lower right corner of the previous page.

## 2. Gilding:

Gilding is an ancient technique to use ultra thin metal or precious metal leaf to cover a surface. This is a very rich and broad field that will require years of practice and learning if you want to be good. Here, I only discuss a basic and cheap trick to get the effect that I am looking for. First, the gild surface needs to be sealed with sealer or thick pigment color, then apply Oil/Water based gilding adhesive. Oil sizes are ready to gild when your knuckle taps the surface without disturbing the size or coming away with residue. My favorite is Rolco Quick-Dry size, it's an oil base, produces excellent results, dries hard and may be sealed after curing for 24

## Gilding



Gold and copper leaf partially cover the section shown above, but let the blue and red colors underneath show through. The whole piece, part of the author's Warrior Series #1, is shown at right.



## Piercing with airbrush



To enhance the airbrushing, Pho pierced a square frame to the left of the kimono and left the flames to accent the dragon.

hours.

Design: In combination of available leaves ( Gold, silver, copper, composition and variegated... ) and the underlaid color(s), we can create fairly interesting art work by not covering the entire surface with leaf, letting the underlaid color(s) show through. I normally combine gilding with piercing to enhance the design, as shown in the photos above.

## 3. Piercing and texturing

I primarily use two tools for piercing my pieces. One tool is from Paragrave in Orem, Utah. The hand piercer has a pencil-like tool, which is easy-to-use, but can give you finger fatigue after about 20 minutes.

The other tool is similar to a dental drill made in Saskatchewan Canada by Terrence DaSilva, which Frank Sudol also uses. This hand piercer is similar to a right-angle cutting tool, which is a little harder to learn, but is easier on your fingers.

Because the cutting is so rapid (up to 400,000 rpm), this air powered drill can make very fine control possible.

Both tools are well made and I like to use them equally, depending on

the application. They both require a steady stream - .8 to 1.5 cfm - of compressed air at between 30-45 lbs. psi.

Again, for tools and equipment please see my article on the Cityscape in AW Summer 2000 journal.

On most of my pieces, I use the piercing technique to enhance the airbrush and gilding artwork, but occasionally I use just piercing by itself on a piece. We will discuss both cases below. First things first. In order to pierce your work effectively, the vessel wall thickness has to be 1/16" to 3/32" of an inch. Piercing is very much like turning - it's a subtracting art, you cut away any wood that doesn't belong there. My philosophy is: "What do I want to express?" Piercing to me is negative space in the design forming a sort of design halo around the physical components of a piece.

**Piercing with airbrush:** I normally use the piercing technique to create negative spaces that form a frame around the airbrush or gilding artwork. You can simply cut away all the wood with random pattern that doesn't mean anything or leave some positive components related to the

## Piercing by Itself



The author sketches the design on the vessel with pencil, then traces it with a razor tip burn tool, above left. In the two views of the piece shown above, middle (back) and right (front), he creates a rectangular frame for the piercing area and removed the non-design elements. The carob wood piece "Lotus Blossom #7" is 9-in. H and 5.5-in. diameter.

design that you've envisioned to compliment the airbrush work. As you can see in the photo, lower left, previous page, I pierced a square frame on the left of the Kimono and left the flames pattern remain to compliment the dragon.

**Piercing by itself:** When the piercing is not incorporated with airbrush, I choose the simpler design, sketch it on the vessel with pencil then trace it over with my razor tip burn tool, as shown above. Before piercing, I need to decide the piercing area surround-

ing the design then cut out everything in between. The key to successful piercing is the uniform thickness of the grid lines. It should resemble a lace pattern or fit together like puzzle pieces, this will enhance your design. Another way to juice up the pierced pattern is to texture the surrounding surface by using  $\frac{1}{2}$  mm or 1 mm diameter round carbide bit. Remember, your piercing tool is rotating 400,000 rpm so with light touch to the surface, the round bit will leave its mark as fast as you can lift it up and down again, this tool is far more efficient than Dremel tool, shown, below left.

**Final thoughts:** Airbrush, Gilding and Piercing are just a few techniques to help you design the surface of your work. Make sure to express your feeling through it, but don't overdo it. In the beginning, it's hard to cut holes or spray paint on the perfect turning piece but at the end it's even harder to learn when to stop.

*Binh Pho is a turner and teacher in Maple Park IL, and a member of the Chicago Woodturners.*

## Texturing



The texturing, above left, was created with a Paragrave Ultra Speed drill and a 1mm round carbide bit. The completed piece "Bamboo Basket #7" is shown above, right.



# Members Gallery

*Work From Members In WA, OR, LA, and TN*



**Sean Ohrenich, Cannon Beach, OR.** Top, "Palimpsest", turned and carved spalted and figured big leaf maple, 8.75"H x 8.25"W. Bottom., "Willowy Residue of Folly", turned and carved from bug eaten black walnut burl, 5.375"H x 8.375"W



**Michael Werner, Stanwood, WA.** Top and bottom photos are two views of "Just Play"; body is made from a half log of cascara, the two feet (which are boxes) are made from ebony and the spinning tops from red palm and ebony; measures 6"W x 8"L x 2"H.



**John Lucas, Cookeville, TN.** Ornaments: top, walnut shell with maple finial; bottom, walnut and maple..







**Gerrit Van Ness, Anacortes, WA**, sent in the colorful pieces, above and below. Gerrit says he is a self-taught turner, who even though he has owned a lathe for years, didn't get serious until about two years ago. "The disease hit just before Christmas 2000, and I now can be classified as an addict.." His style is evolving, he says, and promises to send additional photos.



**Ron Alexander, Mandeville, LA**. Top photo, Hollow form, earpod with cocobolo rim, 8" x 12"H; Bottom photo, Hollow form, Norfolk Island Pine with cocobolo rim, 10" x 18"H



**Paul Stafford, Littleton, CO**. Top photo, "Yin Yang Sculpture", sycamore, 11.6"D x 13"H; Bottom photo, Italian Alabaster, turned and carved, 5" dia. x 7.2"H.



# Luke Mann

Waitsfield, VT

**L**uke Mann is a professional woodturner and a member of the Woodchuck Turners of Northern, Vt. He was featured on the cover of *American Woodturner* in Spring 1998. In that Journal he described his Six-Step system for bowl turning, from gathering the material for turning to delivering completed work. He also demonstrated

the system at the AAW symposium in Tacoma, WA. He began turning professionally after taking a course from David Ellsworth in 1992, but his early appreciation of wood was encouraged by his grandfather, a sculptor and woodworker.



**Clockwise from the right:**  
Red maple burl - lidded vessel, bleached, sealed, ebonized and sanded back, 5.75" x 8.25"; Spalted sugar maple - lidded vessel, twice-turned, carved 3-footed with 3-footed lid, 6" x 9"; Ambrosia red maple - hollow form, turned on the pith, 10.5" x 11"; Red maple burl - lidded vessel, carved 3-footed, 5" x 10.25"; Black oak burl - lidded vessel, ebonized and burnished, 6.375" x 9"; Oak, oak burl and yellow birch burl - four 3-footed dishes, burned and burnished undersides, each 2.5" x 6.25"; Sugar maple burl - hollow form, 6.25" x 10".





# NICK COOK

*Marietta, GA*

Nick Cook is a professional woodturner, former member of the AAW Board of Directors and this year's recipient of the AAW Honorary Lifetime Member Award. He is profiled in an article on Page 12. Nick is a very skilled and versatile woodturner, who operates what he calls the only full-service turning shop in the

Atlanta, GA, metro area. He is also a very popular demonstrator and teacher, who sees his efforts to promote turning as a way of repaying people like Rude Osolnik, Mel Lindquist, Dale Nish, and, most important, his father Clarence Cook, who helped and encouraged him.



Wine stoppers in a variety of woods and shapes.



Gavels with wood from sunken Confederate ships.

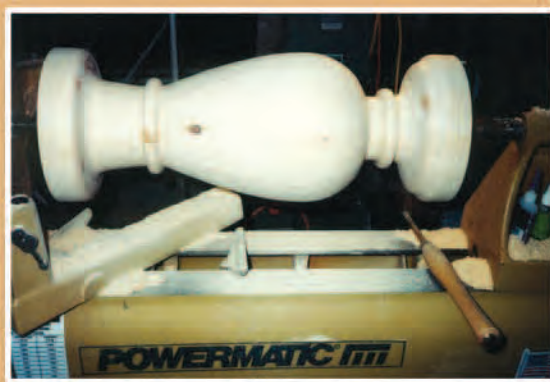
Photos: Nick Cook



Ambrosia maple and maple burl bowls.



Big leaf maple burl natural edge vase.



A table base.



Part of a custom stairway.



# Members Gallery

*Work From Members in FL, KY, NY, TX and Germany*

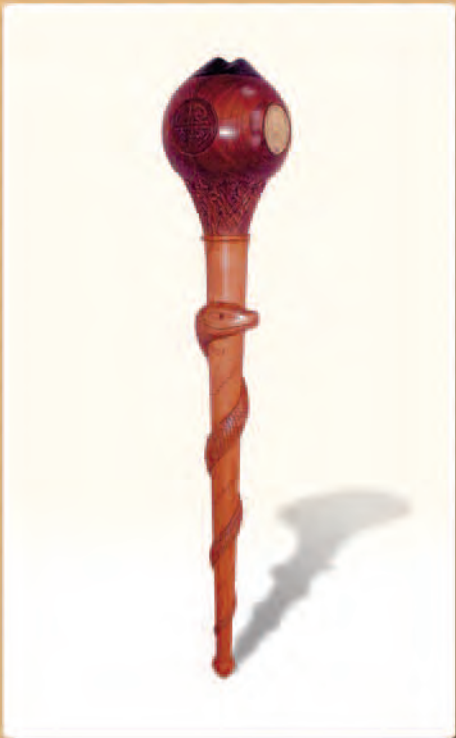


**Friedrich Kuhn, Germany.** Top: Walnut root: bleached and textured with a carved rim; Bottom: Oak: textured with carved and pierced rim, painted with acrylic .



**Kenneth Gadway, Morrisonville, NY.** Top photo, black cherry burl, 11"H x 8.5"W; Bottom photo, yellow birch burl, 8.5"H x 12"W.





**Jerry Cooper, Berea, KY.**  
Mace, 38" high; shaft is one piece of cherry and the orb is one piece of walnut hollowed out. See article on pp. 18.



**Chuck Hiestand, Odessa, TX.** Birdseye maple with mesquite segments and turquoise inlay.



**Dave Barriger, Apopka, FL.** Left and above photos are samples of his monogrammed elevated vessels. See article on pp 22.



# “BOWLS AND BEYOND”

*Work By Michigan Woodturning Artists*

**From left to right in photo at right: Work of the jurors –** Maple burl vessel by Gary Hoover; cherry burl vessel by Cliff Lounsbury; segmented vase by Jan Bloom; maple burl vessel by Tom Mogford and orbs in various woods by Gary Weierliller. *All photos by Matt Hammarlund.*



**Clockwise starting from the right:** “Wheat of Life”, sycamore, scorched and carved, by Laurence P. Skendzel, a design which Larry says was inspired by the work of Gael Montgomerie; “Indian Corn,” balm of gilead, purple heart, osage orange and padauk on a mesquite base, by Vern Hammarlund; “Eggs in a Bowl”, turned and carved walnut bowl, eggs in various woods; by Steve Sharpe; “Crock O’ Dials”, crock turned from a 68 lb. white birch burl, telephone dials of brass, wood and text; “Polar Bears - A Family Portrait”, spalted ambrosia maple on white ash base, all pieces bleached, both by Vern Hammarlund.





# DON OLNEY

*Rochester, NY.*

Tops are special, because they do things our sense of Logic tells us should not happen. Set a top on your hand, or on the floor, and it just lies there. It has a pleasing shape, but that's about it. However, start it spinning, and suddenly it is alive, and will do impossible things. It stands upright, defies gravity, and takes on a magical air.

— Don Olney, top collector.



Part of Don Olney's extensive collection of tops is shown in the photos on this page. Part of the collection will be displayed at the Providence, RI, symposium, June 28-30. Tops are the central focus of his life, says Olney, who owns a company that manufactures toys in Rochester, NY. His collection, which includes all kinds of spinning tops, peg tops, gyroscopes, is one of the largest in the world, he says.

# PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR WORK

*An essential skill for sharing and selling*

JOHN LUCAS

**M**ANY TURNERS HAVE BECOME very interested in photographing their artwork. It is certainly necessary to have good photos, if you intend to sell your work. It also is nice to share your artwork with others via the Internet. I know I like to see work by other artists, but I am often frustrated because the work is not clear enough to see the best details.

For the next few issues I and other photographers will offer some tips on getting better quality photos of your work. The photos shown in the article are un-retouched, straight from the camera. Modern computer programs like Photoshop could remove some of the hot spots or shadows, but it is always better to make the photos as good as possible, so that this type of retouching is unnecessary.

First and foremost, match the film to the light source. Most of the films available from stores that cater to amateurs are daylight balanced. If you shoot under tungsten lights, the photo floods sold by many photo shops, the colors will come out very orange. The easiest way to use daylight-balanced film is outdoors. Shooting outside in direct light will give you accurate colors, but there are a few problems.

Photo No 1, top right, was shot in the backyard using a tripod to support the camera. A tripod can reduce the shaky camera syndrome, which is always an enemy of sharp pictures. A tripod also lets you use a small aperture (larger f-stops), so there is maximum depth of field. Even at f22, this bowl was not completely sharp. I used a 200 mm lens, what would normally be considered a telephoto lens, so the background would be out of focus and I wouldn't see the trees and ugly shed. Backing off so the bowl would be smaller in the frame would give enough depth of field.

**Editor's Note:** Photography is an important skill for many woodturners. In the last issue Texas photographer Larry Mart gave some hints for taking better photos for the color pages of the Journal. In this issue, Tips editor and professional photographer John Lucas offers more pointers. We hope these photo articles will help members improve the quality of slides and photos they submit to juries for various shows and galleries. If you have a photo technique that you think will help, let us know.



Photo 1: Typical outdoor shot, with bright highlights and distracting background.



Photos 2: Same shot as above, but with a neutral background.



This photo isn't as bad as I thought it would be. The highlights are a little bright and the shadow obscures the foot, but it isn't horrible. A very glossy dark wood vessel would be worse. The background is distracting even though it is out of focus. If I had used a short lens, like a 35mm or 50mm, you would have seen more of the background and it would have been really distracting.

Rule No. 1 in shooting artwork is to pick a non-distracting background. You want to see the work; nothing should detract from the impact your work should have. Don't use a bed sheet. I can personally guarantee that you will get rejected from a show if you use a bed sheet. I used a piece of Vinyl flooring. To prepare it for photography, I painted the backside flat



Same shot as before, except the bowl is shaded with a homemade diffuser made from PVC pipe and white nylon. Photos by John Lucas.

black, then I painted the bottom part with gray primer, trying to feather the edge. Hang the sheet so you get a gentle sweep, as shown at left. This vinyl sheet is attractive and when it becomes scratched you can simply spray it again.

Photo No. 2, on the bottom of the previous page, is the exact same shot as the first photo, but with the background we just described in place. In Photo No. 3, above, I shaded the bowl with a homemade diffuser made from PVC pipe and white nylon. This reduces the contrast so the hot spots aren't quite so bad and

the shadow is softer. To fill in the shadow I bounced light back onto the bowl with one of the fold-up silver reflectors that I bought from the auto store. They are used to fill in your window to stop the sun from ruining your dash. If you place the reflector in the shadow it will simply fill in the shadow. If you place the reflector in the sun, it will act as the main light source and gives the piece more shape.

Aluminum foil wrapped around cardboard also works well. You can use the dull side or the shiny side.

The disadvantage of using the sun is that it moves. The diffuser helps solve this problem, at least for a short while. Wind can be a major problem. I got lucky; it was calm. Clouds can also be a problem. They change the exposure. Wait for the sun to come back out or shoot on a clear day. We'll discuss other lighting options and metering in future segments.

*John Lucas is a turner and professional photographer in Cookeville, TN. He also edits the Tips column for American Woodturner. He will be working in the special programs on photography and slides for jurying at the Providence, RI symposium June 28 - 30.*



John Lucas with his outdoor portable studio, complete with neutral background and homemade light diffuser on the left.



# FINE ART AND CELEBRATION

*Michigan turning show draws record crowds*

CLIFF LOUNSBURY

THE TURNOUT SAID IT ALL. I HAD the pleasure of coordinating a first-ever, statewide gallery show this year titled, "Bowls and Beyond: Works Originating on the Lathe by Michigan Woodturning Artists." Studio 23, a fine art gallery in Bay City, MI, hosted the show.

To my surprise, the March 1-30 exhibit drew record crowds opening night — more than 200 people. To me, the attendance said that wood, long regarded as popular craft, has landed on fine art's respected, if restricted, threshold.

Well-known wood art collector, Robert Bohlen, delivered the keynote address at the opening, describing the event as "astounding."

"It had three or four times as many people as probably have ever attended any gallery opening for wood in Michigan — maybe more," Bohlen said of the show. "It certainly moved woodturning in Michigan to a whole different level, and in a different arena."

"Bowls and Beyond" in fact quadrupled what Studio 23 openings typically draw, gallery directors say. It even topped the Salvador Dali painting exhibit that preceded the woodturning show.

The secret, I think, is that the show created an unprecedented opportunity. "Bowls and Beyond" was a first-ever chance for woodturners of all levels to show their work to a large audience in first-class surroundings.

Derek Jacob and Cliff Schroeder — ages 7 and 79 respectively — demonstrate the extent of the opportunity. Both participated in the juried Michigan show.

"I used to turn four-handed," Derek, a toothy second-grader, said at the opening, glancing toward his father. "But now I'm turning with two hands, on my own. Santa brought me



Cliff Schroeder, 79, shows Derek Jacob, 7, his "bowling ball colliding with 12 pins." Both were turners in the all-Michigan show. *Photos: Matt Hammarlund.*

my own lathe (a Vicmarc) two Christmases ago."

Derek had two pieces juried into the month-long "Bowls and Beyond." One was a small, walnut lantern, the other a kingwood Christmas ornament. They were among the first pieces to sell. I only wish I'd have had Derek's success.

"I just put on my trusty glove and use my favorite quarter-inch gouge," said Derek, all smiles in suit and tie, as if offering advice. "Kingwood is my favorite wood."

But "Bowls and Beyond" was hardly a just-for-children affair. AAW charter member, Cliff Schroeder, also participated in the show. The elder statesman submitted an impeccably turned piece — a bowling ball colliding with 12 pins, in one-third scale.

"I think the fact that it was just Michigan's show helped draw the level of interest that I saw opening night," Schroeder said. "I think people wanted to see what's being done in the state."

"I don't know how we stack up with the rest of the country," Schroeder added, "but I saw a lot of terrific work."

Schroeder was struck, too, that a child entered the show. The woodturning community needs to do more to involve young people, he said.

"The craft is gone from the public schools," Schroeder said. "Where else are young people going to get the chance to turn wood and see how easy it is? They're enthralled when we show them."

For many exhibitors, the prospect of showing their work to a large audience was exciting enough. Sixty turners showed 120 pieces in "Bowls and Beyond."

"What's great about this is that it gets woodturning to the general public," said Keith Fulmer, a concrete finisher from the Flint area, turning for two years. "It's also really nice personally — to hear what people think about my work."

Someone thought well enough to



A group shot of some of the proud Michigan participants of the show "Bowls and Beyond."

buy Fulmer's work. Fulmer, 43, sold an \$850, jarah wall hanging, some two feet wide, on opening night.

Participants drove up to 300 miles, bringing spouses, friends and family, to make the show opening. One turner, Vern Hammarlund, flew from Arizona with wife, Linda. A snow-storm grounded the pair, delaying their return for days.

"I've been turning three and a half years. It was the first time I'd ever had pieces in a gallery," said Hammarlund, a retired photographer. "I challenged myself to do my best work, to get accepted in the show. Once I was in, I wanted to see how I stood in the show and what everyone else was making."

Exposure wasn't the show's only fruit. More than a few participants said they were hobbyists who, until "Bowls and Beyond," turned in isolation. They had no idea what kind of work turners were creating in their own state.

Such was the case for Bob Baker, a retired school superintendent from

Bay City, MI. Baker's wine stoppers showed in "Bowls and Beyond."

"This blows my mind," Baker said during the opening. "I make Christmas gifts for my family on an old lathe my father made – nothing like these turners use. These are fantastic things they're making. I feel like I'm in court. I wasn't aware of the skill level or professionalism of wood turning."

Which is precisely what show creators hoped for. When I approached Studio 23 in March 2001, to pitch the exhibit, they embraced it eagerly. But I knew the gallery was taking a risk. For starters, it had never held a wood show. The gallery customarily exhibited visual arts, such as painting and photography. What it calls "functional art," such as woodturning, marked new territory.

Also, my proposal to open "Bowls and Beyond" to all artistic levels was hardly traditional gallery practice. But I was committed to the idea of extending the opportunity for turners of all skills to present their best work in a gallery setting.

To Studio 23's credit, the directors bought it. They understood the importance of telling woodturning's story. That story is about a medium in flux – advancing from its long-accepted status as craft toward a newer, fine art niche. The gallery, too, became committed to showing the spectrum of woodturning being created across Michigan, from novice to world-class.

"The show was a risk for us, but the caliber and quality of work stood up," said Emily Mattison, Studio 23 director. "We maintained the high-level profile we wanted."

The gallery also accomplished a more fundamental goal, she added: Outreach.

"This show reached people who probably wouldn't have come to a gallery otherwise," Mattison said. "That's our mission — engaging and encouraging people in the arts. We don't want an image as some kind of elite organization."

The wood show attracted viewers in another way the gallery was unaccustomed to – off the street, staff



members remarked.

"We were having people in constantly who saw the stuff in the windows and had to come in," said Craig Prime, Studio 23 curator. "That's unusual for us. I think it's wood's nature. You reach the heart of many, many people with wood."

Some visitors, not to mention show exhibitors, wanted to know more. They knew nothing of AAW or its local turning clubs. Several people made connections with club members, asking how to join the group.

"That's part of our service to the community," Mattison told me. "People asked, and we put people in touch with your organization (AAW). It's a way to direct the public toward more education."

For "Bowls and Beyond," the woodturning clubs were invaluable. The gallery entrusted show planning, jurying, catering and even funding to me. So I turned to Michigan woodturning clubs. Their support and volunteerism was vital.

Tool manufacturers, too, who advertise in this journal, gladly stepped up to the plate. Thanks from all Michigan woodturners goes to Choice Woods, Infinity Hollowing Systems, Jamieson Laser Measuring Device, Klingspor Sanding, Oneway, Packard Woodworks and Woodcraft Supply Co. All donated generously, as did a number of local businesses.

The show held other surprises, es-



The Gallery featured both stand alone pieces of art as well as turned wall pieces.

pecially for participants. Chris McMillan, a chemist for Dow Corning who started turning three years ago, found collector Bohlen singling him out. Bohlen told McMillan he liked the large ash vase the young turner was exhibiting. Bohlen said he was interested in seeing it again, perhaps for his collection, if McMillan reworked its relatively thick rim.

"I was stunned," McMillan said. "It was so encouraging, coming from a serious collector. I was walking two feet off the floor."

The morning after his encounter, McMillan bought a pricey air compressor and specialized sanding tools. He called me at home to announce the purchases and inquire about spending time in my shop to finish

the ash vase.

"The show got me excited enough to finally blow some money on an air compressor," McMillan said.

Other veteran turners, like Lyle Jamieson from Michigan's westside, agreed that the show gave a shot in the arm to wood art in general, woodturning in particular.

"I've been to many exhibition openings and none topped this for its many successes," Jamieson told me. "From organization to artists to patrons' perspectives, this was a great showcase of quality and creativity in the woodturning world. The show spanned the limits — from craft to fine art."

Fellow turner Gary Weiermiller summed up the experience for amateur and expert alike. Weiermiller, a professional turner from Cheboygan, MI, served with me on the "Bowls and Beyond" five-member jury.

"You could have subtitled the show 'Opportunity,'" he said. "That's what it was about."

My experience, too, was opportunity and enrichment.

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*Cliff Lounsbury is a professional turner in Tawas City, MI. Special thanks to Helen Lounsbury for her help in preparing this article.*



The five jurors for the all-Michigan show "Bowls and Beyond" with keynote speaker Robert Bohlen, third from left.

# WATER-BASE FINISHES

*These finishes have arrived*

RON ALEXANDER

WHEN I'VE FINISHED A PIECE, and the last grit has been sanded, I make a dichotomous decision: Do I want the amberizing effect, the chatoyance, of an oil-based finish; or do I want to preserve, as much as possible, the natural color of the wood. Much depends on the nature of the wood. With a cherry salad bowl I always use some form of oil or oil/varnish finish to impart that fine, red-brown clarity I admire. The figure of lighter woods, however, may be obscured by oil or varnish. Heavily spalted woods, in particular, have an unpredictable response to oils, usually bad.

Preserving natural color means switching to lacquers. For years I used nitrocellulose and acrylic lacquers, breathing their toxic fumes, cleaning my spray gun by filling the cup with lacquer thinner and spraying the VOC's (volatile organic compounds) into the environment, creating a fire hazard. There was little alternative.

When I first tried WBF (water-base finishes) in the late 70's and 80's, the results were unsatisfactory. Rephrase that: in my opinion they were bad! Most of the bad press regarding WBF is probably rooted in these early formulations. They raised the grain mightily, did not burn-in to previous coats, and imparted a variety of unpleasant hues to the wood, varying from dull gray to a bilious blue. Most of all they did not have the gin-clear clarity of NCL (nitrocellulose lacquers).

That has all changed. In the 90's the manufacturers had done their research. There are now numerous formulations of WBF that dry clear and uncolored, indistinguishable from NC lacquers in the eyes of professional finishers <sup>1,2,3</sup>. All right...they still raise the grain on first application but not



Three of the author's vessels, each finished with water-based lacquer for various surface effects: left to right, gloss, semi gloss and satin. Two of his vessels can be seen in color on page 30. Photos by the author.

nearly as much.

## Advantages of WBF

**Non-yellowing:** Almost all nitrocellulose lacquers will turn yellow over time; not immediately but over years. WBF avoid this and remain clear indefinitely.

**Unaffected by humidity:** I live in the South and humidity is a fact of life. The blush in nitrocellulose lacquers, induced by water, is my constant enemy. WBF, of course, are relatively immune to the effects of moisture.

**Hardness:** WBF, in general, are stronger than NCL and less brittle. Some formulations, in fact, are tough enough to be rated as floor and "bar-top finishes."

**Non-toxic:** The solvents in NCL, the VOC's (volatile organic compounds), while effective in solubilizing lacquers are also very effective at

eroding brain, liver and kidney. WBF use various glycol ethers to solubilize the resins in water. In high doses these may cause minor irritation in skin and lungs but are non-toxic and pass all rigid stipulations of VOC release. This is especially important if you work in a state with rigid VOC restrictions.

**Nonflammable:** Composed primarily of water, the solvents of WBF could be used to put out a fire.

**Water Cleanup:** Brushes and all other implements clean easily with water. This is especially important when cleaning spray guns. Flushing with water beats loading the cup with VOC's and spraying into the air.

**100% Burn-in:** Unlike formulations years ago, the new WBF have complete burn-in between layers of finish. Each application fuses with the preceding coat. There are no witness lines on rub-out.



**High Solids Content:** Whereas most solvent lacquers have 12-15% solids, the WBF carry 35-37% of active solids. This high solids content means fewer coats are required. This also eliminates the need for a separate sealer coat; the first application serves as sealer.

**Fast-drying:** These finishes dry almost as fast as NCL. A thin sealer coat is ready for sanding within a few minutes. Sanding produces a fine powder; a specialized sealer, containing stearates, is unnecessary.

### Additives

A complete formulary of additives is available to increase the versatility of WBF.

Flatteners, composed of a colloidal suspension of amorphous silica, can reduce the reflectance of glossy WBF through successive stages from semi-gloss to satin to matte and flat. I have to stock only gloss lacquer and modify it to suit each application.

Flow-aid additive will enhance flow out and leveling properties. This is especially helpful on larger pieces. It also eliminates fish-eye produced by oil contaminants on the surface.

Retarders slow the drying of WBF and are primarily of use on large brush applications.

**Ultraviolet protectors:** Although most WBF are UV stable, the finish itself will not degrade, they offer little protection to the underlying wood. These additives can effectively block the effect of UV on the basic wood color and any stains applied.

### Methods of Application

**Sanding, sealing, grain-raising:** I sand through progressive grits to 220. When I first started using WBF I would stop at 180 grit. I incorrectly reasoned that since the grain would be raised by the first application I could reserve the 220 grit for after grain raising. This was a mistake. One can actually minimize grain raising



The author with his favorite spray gun, a conversion HVLP system with gravity feed cup. When HVLP spraying of water-base finishes, he does not use a spray booth or fume mask. Some finishers feel a mask is necessary, no matter what finish is used. If you have any concerns, call the manufacturer for additional information.

by sanding to the finest grit, 220 or 320, and knocking down the raised grain very quickly with 320 or 400 grit. Sealing is done by flooding the surface with finish then immediately wiping off excess with a shop paper towel. This sealer coat dries in a few minutes. The raised grain is quickly smoothed by light sanding with the next finer grit. Alternatively one can circumvent this step by wetting the wood with water to raise the grain, then sanding.

**Swab and Wipe:** This simple technique can produce a smooth matte or satin finish with the piece on the lathe. It consists of brushing a coat of finish and again wiping the excess, with two or three repetitions. Very light sanding or a rub with an abrasive pad may be necessary. The finish dries almost as fast as a solvent lacquer and the entire operation can be completed in twenty or thirty min-

utes. Use a synthetic bristle brush with unflagged tips. Some have reported good success with foam applicators.

I am currently trying to perfect a technique of "French polishing" a WBF to produce a glossier finish while still on the lathe. Stay tuned for further developments. "Film at eleven".

**Spraying:** This is the most effective method for achieving a semi-gloss or gloss finish, best done after sealing and grain raising on the lathe. I am not a fan of glossy finishes but many of my customers are. I surrender to the demand of the marketplace. I discuss spray finishing and guns below.

**WBF Over Oil:** It is possible to have the amber chatoyance of an oil or oil/varnish penetrating finish, followed by film coats of WBF, but some care is required. WBF can be applied over oil based finishes if the oil is al-

lowed to completely dry. This will take a week or even longer. Alternatively one can apply a thin coat of dewaxed shellac over the oil, followed by WBF. Shellac serves as a transition film, being compatible with both oil base and water base finishes. Be certain it is dewaxed.

## Spraying WBF

**Spray Characteristics of WBF:** In the years that I sprayed NCL I used a standard siphon gun quite successfully. When I switched to WBF I had difficulty with this gun. No matter how carefully I gauged the sprayed surface, I regularly produced runs and curtains. When I changed to a conversion HVLP (high-volume low-pressure) gun the difficulties disappeared.

My analysis is that the HVLP gun can better manage the narrower interval between a just-wet surface and one with runs. There is negligible overspray; I do not use a spray booth. I feel a fume mask is unnecessary.

**Sprayguns:** It is not my purpose to run a comparison survey of all sprayguns. These are my personal observa-

tions and opinions. I believe that most woodturners try to use too large a gun. If you are operating a large production shop, spraying hundreds of large pieces a year, along with furniture, doors, etc. then perhaps the \$400+ outlay for a large, quart cup, professional gun is justified.

I settled upon the less expensive DeVilbiss "Finishline" conversion gun with gravity feed, currently available from Highland Hardware<sup>4</sup> and Rockler<sup>5</sup>. I emphasize the gravity feed, employing a cup mounted atop the gun. The advantage of this feed is that only small amounts of finish, one or two ounces, are necessary for function. This means I can modify a small amount of finish, with flatteners, etc., without altering a full cup of material.

Even smaller guns may be more effective. Jeff Jewitt, the noted finishing expert and author, has made a strong case for small, gravity-feed touch-up guns for most applications<sup>6</sup>.

## Choice of WBF

I cannot do a comparison test of all WBF in this article. Indeed, three comparison reviews of WBF finishes<sup>1,2,3</sup>

indicates what a daunting task this is. I can only report what finishes I have found to work for me. These are all gin-clear finishes which, in my estimation, are indistinguishable from NCL.

**Resisthane, by Hydrocote:** I purchase from Hood Finishing Products<sup>7</sup>. This is my current favorite. It is a pre-catalyzed lacquer, imparting greater strength. Hydrocote produces all the additives noted in this article as well as rubbing and polishing compounds.

**Oxford Premium Spray Lacquer:** Available from Jewitt-Homestead finishing products<sup>8</sup>. An excellent product. At the website Jeff Jewitt hosts a finishing forum where he answers all finishing questions posted to him.

**Crystalac:** This product finished very well in the large comparison tests noted above. I used it for several years, then lost track of suppliers. McFeely's<sup>9</sup> now carries the full line of Crystalac finishes.

**Superlac by Famowood:** This excellent product, which scored highest in the comparison tests, figured first in my shop for years. Then Famowood stopped production. I switched to Resisthane.

Lately, Hood Finishing Products has reproduced the formula in deference to many woodworkers who had configured their shop to this product.

## Summary

WBF have improved tremendously over the last ten years. Woodworkers who gave up on these products in previous years need to re-evaluate. The rewards in personal and environmental safety are worth the effort. Each year restrictions on VOC emissions become more stringent.

I doubt that I will ever return to solvent lacquers. There is no NCL effect that I cannot reproduce with WBF.

*Ron Alexander is a turner in Mandeville, LA.*

## Footnotes on Suppliers and Further Reading

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- 2 Brown, Tom: Guide to Waterborne Finishes. *American Woodworker*, Dec. 1995.
- 3 Charron, Andy: New Water-Based Finishes. *Fine Woodworking*, Nov-Dec 1998,
- 4 Highland Hardware, 1 800 241 6748, Website [www.highlandhardware.com](http://www.highlandhardware.com)
- 5 Rockler Woodworking and Hardware, 1 800 279 4441, Website [www.rockler.com](http://www.rockler.com)
- 6 Jewitt, Jeff: Touch-Up Spray Guns: *Fine Woodworking*, Jan-Feb 2002.
- 7 Hood Finishing Products, 1 800 229 0934, website [www.hoodfinishing.com](http://www.hoodfinishing.com)
- 8 Homestead Finishing Supplies, 216 631 5309, website [www.homesteadfinishing.com](http://www.homesteadfinishing.com)
- 9 McFeely's Square Drive Screws, 1 800 443 7937, website [www.mcfeelys.com](http://www.mcfeelys.com)



# “Masters of Wood” Show

at

Scottsdale, Arizona

This dazzling display of exquisite work brought together a wide range of wood artists. To learn more, see Page 21.

Clockwise from bottom: “Mateo”, weeping tree wood, 9” x 8” by Ron Fleming; “Kingwood Bowl”, segmented bowl of Brazilian kingwood, African ebony and veneers, 10” d x 7” h, and “Torsion #7”, cocobolo, 19.5” w x 14” d x 19.5” h, both by Bud Latven; “Pink Ivorywood Bowl”, 3.5” x 2.5”, by Mike Shuler; “Pirouette”, ash and steel, 25” x 11” x 5” by Stoney Lamar.

