



Bonnie Klein
**Educator,
& Innovator,
Respected
Turner**

“Bonnie has
as good a
reputation
around the world
as any
demonstrator.”

—Dale Nish



Photo by Jill Greene/Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts

"It's like scooping sand out of a sandbox."

There's hardly a kid alive who wouldn't understand Bonnie Klein's description of turning coves. This world traveler from Renton, Washington, has a passion for teaching turning—and especially to the kids.

But it's not all kids in Bonnie's world. She's recognized for her turning skills, instructing the young and not-so-young, developing the mini-lathe, and dedicating time to the AAW.

For all her turning accomplishments, Bonnie has earned AAW's Lifetime Honorary Member status. She joins a prestigious fraternity including James Prestini, Bob Stocksdale, Rude Osolnik, Dale Nish, Al Stirt, Palmer Sharpless, David Ellworth, Gary Roberts, Alan Lacer, Robyn Horn, Ray Key, and Nick Cook.

Bonnie served two three-year terms on the AAW board, including five years as vice president and Symposium chairman during years of rapid growth in the association.

Bonnie is generally recognized for reinventing the present-day mini-lathe. A former dental technician accustomed to working in small scale, she felt comfortable attempting to turn doll furniture for her daughter on a Dremel toy lathe. "It had a 1"-long tool rest, 12'-long bed, and one speed," Bonnie recalls.

She then tried woodturning on a metal lathe. After several years of design work, Bonnie introduced her own mini-lathe in 1986 and followed up with her custom threading jig in 1992. Several USA machinists continue to manufacture parts for these tools to her specifications. Bonnie and her husband, Robert Purdy, still assemble the lathes in their workshop.

To complement the small-scale turnings, Bonnie introduced her own turning tools. She also has produced five videos.

The reluctant teacher

What has the mini-lathe meant to teaching? She's packed up as many as a 10 lathes and tools in her "Bonnie-on-the go" van. She's taught in classrooms with as many as 18 mini-lathes—try that with full-size lathes.

But the leap to teaching wasn't an easy one. Bonnie credits Dale Nish for the push into a teaching environment.

"When Bonnie first came to Provo," Dale Nish recalls, "she

The threaded box incorporates mopane, blackwood and bone. Below is a top turned for the step-by-step instructions beginning on page 28.



was quiet, shy, and reluctant to say or do much. But, she has a reservoir of talent. Then she started to warm up. It took a number of years to get her out in front of a crowd. Gradually, we worked her into a six-rotation schedule. And now she has as good a reputation around the world as any demonstrator."

Dale's compliments and respect continue. "One reason is her personality. There's no pretext, no hidden agenda. Just a solid person. She doesn't rock any boats or antagonize anyone. She's just being Bonnie."

It's a small world

What has Bonnie's small-scale turning meant to the turning world? "I think it has opened up a huge new arena of interest," Bonnie says. "It's also an entry point to woodturning for some. Retirement people travel with a lathe. One college student bought a mini-lathe and turns pens in his dorm room.

"The mini-lathe is great for teaching children. Mistakes don't

Continued

Bonnie Klein

seem so big or so expensive," Bonnie adds.

And don't forget the social aspect of turning. Although full-size turning often is a solitary hobby or vocation, it's easy to take a lathe with you to turn and talk with a group of friends.

Oh, yes, the women, too. "It's not a flag I wave around," Bonnie adds modestly, "but yes, small-scale turning is less intimidating for beginners--men or women.

"Actually, all the cutting theory on a small lathe is applicable to

large-scale turning. So some people do start out on a small lathe to develop skills. It's a good way to get handy with the tools and understand how they work."

The eternal student

You wouldn't think that a proficient woodturner would have the interest in branching out, but she's also turned Corian, aluminum, cow horn, cow bone, plastics, tauga nuts, ivory—"anything you can stick on a lathe," Bonnie admits. She's

completed a couple of metal-spinning classes, too.

She and Robert are building a forge behind their home to spark their blacksmithing interests. She's even completed three Arrowmont jewelry classes and enjoys all she's learned about metal-smithing. "I love going into something right from the bottom and experience the sense of accomplishment."

Small turnings gain recognition

Bonnie, a regular contributor to del Mano Gallery's "Small Treasures" exhibit, is pleased with the recognition galleries and collectors have given to small turnings. Some of the validation, she suspects, is that many collectors simply don't have additional space for larger pieces.

One of Bonnie's regrets is that she doesn't turn as often as she'd like. "I've been so involved in developing the mini-lathe and threading jig, plus teaching, that I haven't produced the volume of work I'd like to." But there's always next year.

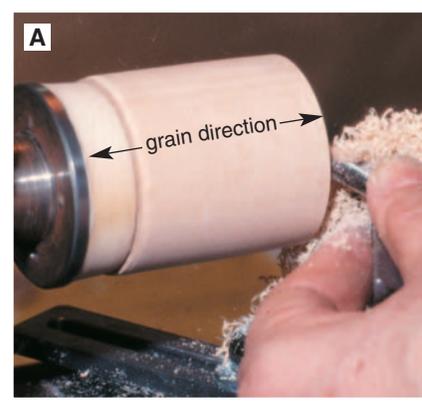
You can contact Bonnie Klein at BLKlein96@aol.com or at her website BonnieKlein.com.



At Arrowmont this spring, Bonnie demonstrates turning a lidded box to her class of 14.

Bonnie's colorful tops

- A.** After mounting a 2x2" maple block to a faceplate, true the sides and face.
- B.** With a fingernail gouge, shape the tip. Then begin removing stock for the handle, turning to about 3/4" diameter.
- C.** Pull a chatter tool along a line to 7:30, pressing hard enough to create chatter. Experiment to get the feel of how lathe speed and pressure affect chatter.
- D.** With colored pens (Bonnie prefers Tombow or Staedtler pens), decorate the top with color.
- E.** Finally, turn down the handle to about 3/16" diameter, then separate off top.





For her in-law's 50th anniversary, Bonnie turned this set for the avid chess players.



Bonnie signs and dates all her work. Above is the inside lid of the mopane box shown on page 27.

Share the woodturning joy with the next generation

Bonnie Klein has been teaching kids how to turn for nearly 20 years in settings as large as 12 and 14 kids. "When my mom sees me teaching kids," Bonnie says, "she describes it as three hours of bedlam."

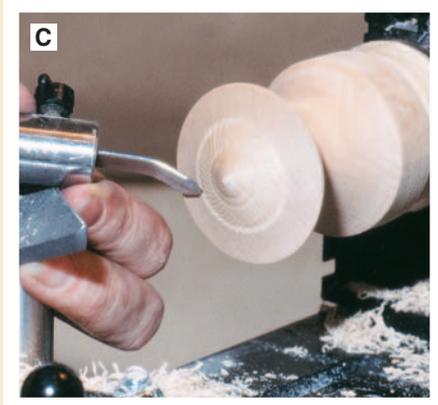
Over the last two decades, she has heard and seen just about everything. One recent example: a young boy couldn't grasp her concept of pulling the chatter tool to 7:30 to decorate the surface of a top. "I have a digital watch," he reported. Okay, time to update the message.

Bonnie encourages woodturners to share their joy of turning with kids. Here are her top tips the next time you work with kids—your grandkids, the neighbors, the local scout troop or 4-H club:

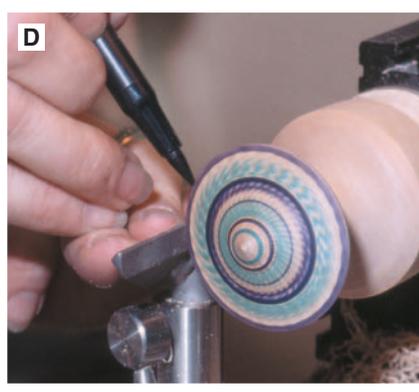
- Keep each project short—under one hour—to hold their attention.
- Stress safety in two key areas: goggles and hair. Insist that girls and boys tuck in their ponytails.
- Unlike adults (who can work at their own pace following your demonstration), kids learn

quickest if you guide their hands and tool as you describe the technique. "Talk to them while you show them how to rub the bevel."

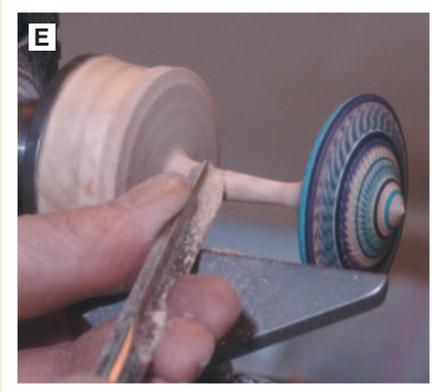
- You'll need at least one other parent or assistant to keep the kids busy while you move about with one-on-one instruction.
- Be alert to the kids who aren't interested in listening. These turners have already made their mind up to chart their own course—and they may succeed.
- Don't get hung up with techniques—keep it fun.
- Turn with a minimum of tools—just a gouge and one parting tool.
- The very young can safely turn with a roundnose scraper. "A 5-year-old had fun turning tops with just a 1/4" roundnose scraper and colored pens," Bonnie reports.
- Select a project with play value (a top or yo-yo), show-off value (something for their room) or an incentive for completion (a pen as a parent's gift).
- Aim for easy surface decoration—colored pens and chatter tools are successful.



C



D



E