American Woodturner

The Journal of The American Association of Woodturners Volume 1 Number 2 December 1986 $5.00

Dedicated To Providing
Education • Information • Organization
Among Those Interested In Woodturning

Auction Update and New Raffle

of Al Stirt's Bowl, pictured on cover

Our first auction was a success. We now have a $515 base to our special Educational Fund. With your help and support, we can really build this fund into a substantial force for the benefit of our members. For scholarships. For stipends. For educational seminars.

To help accomplish this growth, we plan to expand our sealed-bid auction program to include a selection of pieces to be raffled to our members and friends. We hope that you will all participate by providing donations of your work as well as by purchasing tickets that will give you a chance to win some fine pieces.

If you wish to donate a faceplate or spindle turning either to the raffle or to the auction, here's how to do it. Send an 8 x 10 high-quality black-and-white photograph labelled with your name on the back. Attach to it a physical description of the work: height, diameter, wood, title, suggested price, and a note about yourself. Prior to the publication of your piece, you will be asked to send it to us: we will send you back a receipt stating the amount of your contribution. (NOTE: you may be able to deduct some or all of the value of the work, depending upon individual circumstances.) To be considered for an upcoming Journal, your photograph and documentation must be received in our AAW offices by the following dates:

December 1 for the March Issue
March 1 for the June Issue
June 1 for the September Issue
September 1 for the December Issue

Pieces not selected for our Journal raffles or auctions will be saved and raffled or auctioned at our national meetings. That way there is a place in this program for everyone.

Thanks to your enthusiastic support, this is a chance to help ourselves and have some fun, too.

Now: if you wish to purchase raffle tickets for Al Stirt's vessel (similar to but not precisely the one pictured on our cover), simply indicate on the RETURN PAGE – the page on which your label is attached – the number of $5 tickets that you want. There is a return envelope in the center of the Journal.

Once we receive your order in our offices, we will send you one of two tickets with identical numbers. Your membership number will be on the back of both of them. That you received one set serves as a confirmation that we received your order. You don't need to keep your ticket, for we will simply use ours to draw the winner. We will draw on January 30, 1987 and notify the winner by February 5.

About the Vessel and the Artist

Again, let us clearly state that the vessel on our cover is not the exact one being raffled. The one that Al Stirt is offering differs from it slightly, but not significantly. The offered vessel is about 14" in diameter and seven inches high. It is also made of Butternut.

Al, who has been turning professionally for over a dozen years, lives in a small town in Vermont about ten miles form the Canadian border. He says that his pastoral setting helps him better to devote all his attention to his turning. Al prefers turning useful objects, as he likes the idea that people can enjoy his craftsmanship even as they can use his vessels. The idea for carving his turnings evolved from his study of fluted porcelain bowls. His works are featured in about 20 galleries across the nation, and appear in most serious collections of contemporary turned object.

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The Journal of The American Association of Woodturners

Volume 1 Number 2
December 1986

The American Association of Woodturners is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the advancement of woodturning. It includes hobbyists, professionals, gallery owners, collectors and wood and equipment suppliers.

The American Woodturner is published quarterly by the AAW. Regular membership rates are $15 for individuals and $50 for businesses. Supporting memberships are $100 and $250, respectively. Patron memberships are $1,000 and $1,500 respectively. Send dues and address changes to: AAW P.O. Box 982, San Marcos, TX 78667 (512) 396-8689.

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On The Cover

Fluted Butternut Bowl, 17" diameter × 7" high, Allen Stirt, 1984.

Presidents Page

By David Ellsworth

Happy Anniversary! I say... Happy 10th Anniversary!!!

Say...what? All right, David, what's the skinny here? And do we really have cause to celebrate? Yes, in fact, we do. But this is not a celebration of objects turned on the lathe, or the people who turned them, or even a milestone in masterful technique. Instead, this is the celebration of an event.

In 1976, The George School near Newtown, PA., was set upon by a handful of lowly natives in search of a lathe. Fifty, I think it was. They were following the lead of an unknown tribesman — Albert LeCoff, his brother Alan, and an elder, Palmer Sharpless. They had come, naively, to learn. But what they left with was more than knowledge. It was the beginning of a new attitude among woodturners which had no rules and no limits. It was called "sharing".

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Almost like the Lone Ranger riding into the sunset. Well, I am certainly under no illusion that these characters had any knowledge of what they were about to do, but the fact remains that when someone actually PLANS to butt heads with fifty woodturners they are either into some divine mission or onto something BIG! In this case, both are true. The concept of education, information and organization in woodturning (so accurately stated by Stephen Hogbin) has almost become the "motto" of the AAW. To view its effects, we need to look at the "patterns" which have resulted from that particular event ten years ago.

By 1980, the concept of what was now known as "Woodturning Symposiums" had become firmly imprinted in the minds of those who were even remotely involved with the lathe. Thanks to John Makepeace, the concept spread to England in June of '80; there the first International Woodturning Seminar was held at his 16th Century castle known as Parnham House, a school for woodworkers. In turn, Dale Nish carried the concept to the West with turning workshops first at Brigham Young University, and now at the private facilities of Craft Supplies, USA., in Provo. Rude Osolnik initiated turning workshops at Berea College in Kentucky in 1980 that have endured even past his own retirement. Private craft schools throughout the country have included turning as a major part of their regular workshop programs, and colleges and universities have begun to resurrect those dust-covered clunkers as more and more teachers are re-discovering the lathe's potential. The University of California at San Bernardino even offers a Bachelor's Degree in woodturning. Thank you, Leo Doyle.

Does it end there? No. Ireland will hold its 5th International Conference this year. Ray Key is working on one in England, as well as Michael O'Donnell in Scotland for 1987. Michael Hosaluk holds annual workshops in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. New Zealand will do a conference in '87, and Australia — with a score of private woodturning organizations and is now planning its 4th International Conference. Did you know that over 40,000 lathes were sold "down under" in the past five years?

And what about the efforts of all those individuals who have been teaching in their own private workshops for years? The late Peter Child, Russ Zimmerman and countless others whose personal efforts have contributed so much to the technical and educational advancements in the field? Obviously, I am not trying to give all the credit for this expansive growth to one single event in 1976. But in consideration of the individual efforts by all of those involved including hobbyists, serious tinkerers, and full-time professionals, one thing is clear: It has taken a decade of individual efforts to produce a recognizable "Field of Woodturning", and it has been the impact of communication which has held us all together.

I recently attended a meeting in Chicago of the heads of this country's national craft organizations: GAS (glass), NCECA (clay), SNAG (goldsmiths), ABANA (blacksmiths), SDA (surface design). NAT (Consortium of Arts and Letter for Historically Black Colleges & Universities), and ACC (American Craft Council). One major concern which we all shared was how our organizations could become more "effective" in representing the needs of our respective memberships — hobbyists to professionals. A number of positive suggestions were presented, including the idea of joining each others' organizations so that we could share in our collective strengths and learn from our weaknesses. But the primary purpose of this meeting was to convince the American Craft Council — the umbrella organization for crafts in America — to begin to play a more active role in support of the activities of each of our individual organizations. This is especially important because of the increased maturity of the entire Art/Craft Movement over the past decade.

To that end, Norton Berman, the new Executive director of ACC, confirmed that a representative of the ACC would be present at ALL of our future craft conferences and symposia. What this means for woodturners is that we now have a direct voice to the ACC — a major breakthrough! Here is an example of what this means: Craig Nutt wrote an excellent article on the '85 woodturning conference, "Woodturning: Vision & Concept", which appeared in American Craft Magazine (Feb/Mar '86). Craig is a maker of fine furniture from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and a Craftsman Trustee of the ACC. This article would not have been written if the ACC had not asked Craig to attend, but it took many letters and phone calls on the part of Sandra Blain (Arrowmont Director) and myself to get the ACC to invite him at all.

This change of attitude by the ACC presents some interesting opportunities for woodturners and, of course, some interesting problems, as well. First, the "field" of woodturning

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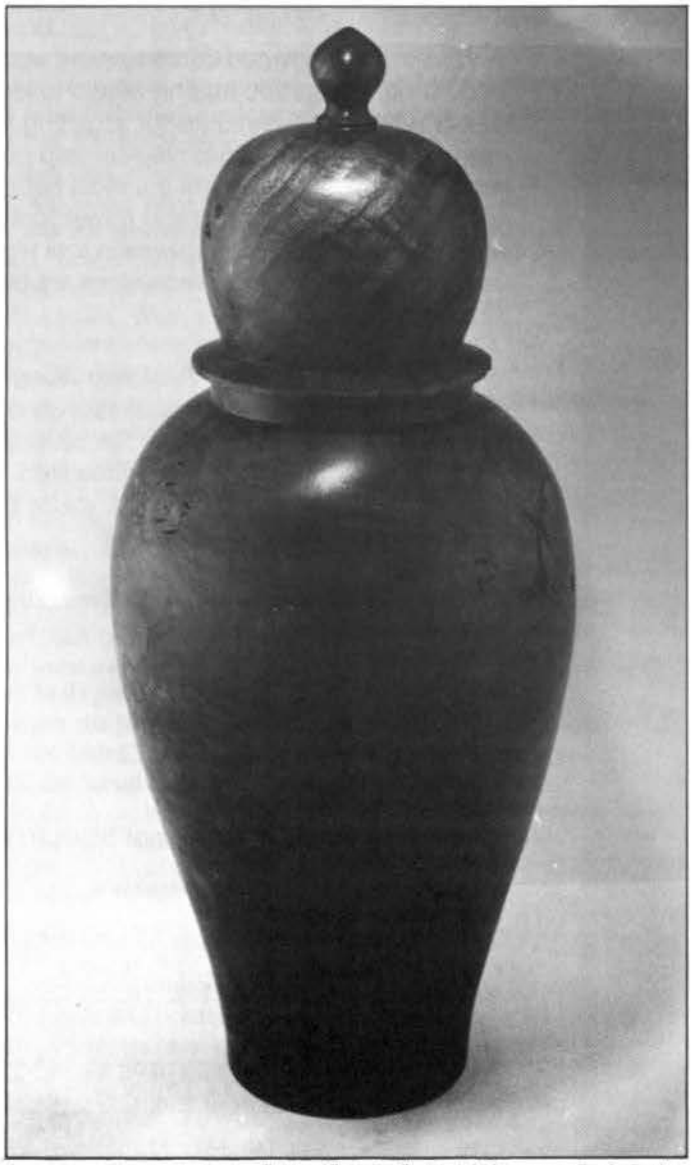
Turning Deep

By: Jake Irion
Photos by David Irion



Claro Walnut 6" X 15" X 3/16". Finish-Laquer (Deft-Satin)

I became a serious wood-turning amateur about five years ago when I acquired a new Powermatic Model 90 straight bed lathe, complete with racing stripes. I selected the slowest range of speeds available (215-1375 RPM) because I found I seldom exceeded 1000 RPM and my plans included trying some large material, which I knew could best be handled at low speeds. The Model 90 is a heavy duty lathe, weighing 550 pounds, with a big 1½" spindle. I believe a large turning, like the one illustrated, would be much more difficult to complete on something smaller.

My plans also included work with restricted openings, where the inside entry size would prohibit positioning the tool rest inside the piece as the cutting proceeds to the bottom. In other words, the cutting tool had to overhang the tool rest for the full depth of the turning.

Whenever I attack wood with a chain saw, I sometimes deliberately get carried away and cut a few pieces into sizes larger than I feel I can turn with my lathe. That's how I came up with the piece illustrated here. I had envisioned turning a large, oriental-type ginger or temple jar and wanted the stock to be large enough so that a lid could be turned out of the same piece. This piece of Claro Walnut measured 7" x 18-1/4" and weighed about 30 pounds. The finished piece is 6" x 15" and weighs about 10 ounces.

It is essential to balance large turning blocks in the lathe. To do this, I some times rough-out the stock between centers before mounting the faceplate. This approach gives me an opportunity not only to reposition the stock, if need be, but also to smooth-off one end to as sure a good surface for mounting the faceplate. My lathe came equipped with a heavy 8" faceplate drilled out for eight screws, all of which I use. I generally use #12, 1-1/4" flat head sheet metal screws, and unless the wood is exceptionally hard, I do not drill the screw holes, but rather drive them home with a drill motor equipped with a screw driving bit. I find that these simple procedures, which I use for large material, add a measure of confidence because I know that I have made every effort to assure a successful completion.

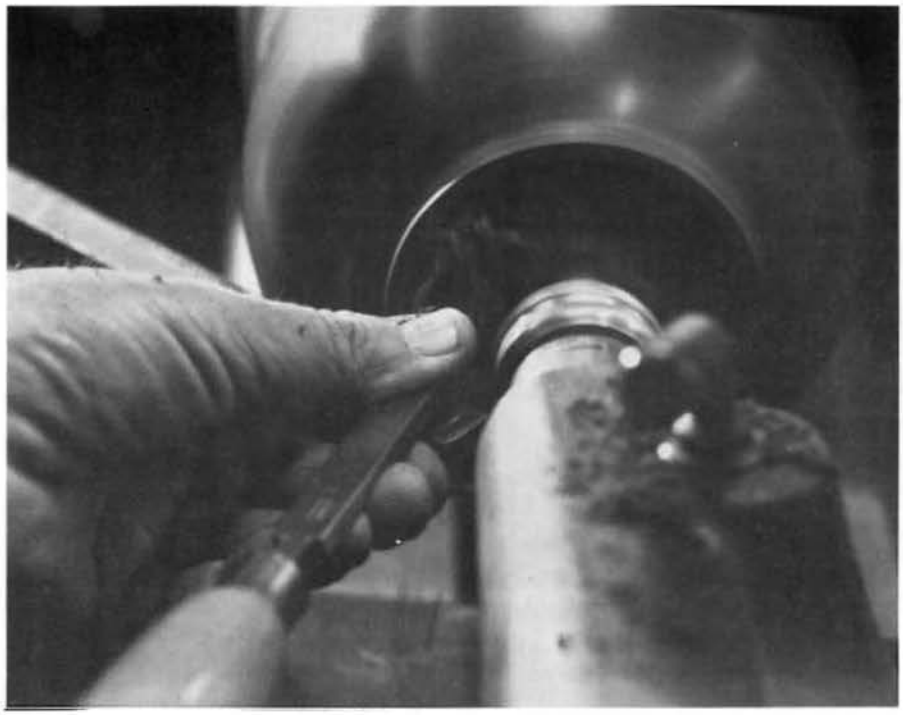
After attaching the face plate, I proceed to smooth-turn the cylinder to the largest size possible, using the tailstock for added support. I then part-off the

lid section and set it aside to be turned later. I then face-off the remaining tailstock end of the piece so that the tailstock will re-enter the exact center.

I next turn 4" or 5" of the end supported by the tail stock to its final size and shape, including penetration of the inside so far as I can. When I am satisfied with the beginning shape, I then sand it smooth. It's very important to sand the opening while the tailstock is still in position, for once it is removed, the piece will develop a slight wobble before the penetration is completed, creating an uneven entry opening when sanded. This wobble is caused by stock distortion as it dries during the process of penetrating the inside. I deliberately leave the openings of pieces with natural defects so small that I am unable to get my hand inside for sanding. On the more perfect pieces, I prefer sanding.

Using a multi-spur machine bit mounted in the tail stock, I drill out the piece to a depth equal to the completion stage of the outside of the turning. I use a 1/2" roundnose to hollow-out the inside an inch or so deep; then with a 1/4" short-shanked bent tool I start cutting the inside curve to a thickness of about 3/16". I alternate between using the roundnose and longer shanked bent tools until I clear a point in the piece where the bent tool is no longer required. Even though David Ellsworth was my teacher in the use of bent tools, I never sit astride the lathe (it's hard on senior citizens!!!). In the next step, I return to the outside of the turning to finish cut and sand another three or four inches toward the face plate. I'm not certain that this alternating approach is necessary, but it makes sense to me, i.e., to finish the outside and in side in increments so as to save the thick, original diameter at the headstock until last. If the inside is to be sanded, I also do this work in increments as the piece is penetrated.

The penetration is now only about three or four inches deep, but already the 1/2" roundnose is no longer adequate. A home-made round nose made of 5/8"" drill rod, is now satisfactory to a depth of about 8". I find that in going deeper the tool starts to chatter and be comes hard to control. A machinist friend made me a tool of my own design out of a 1 x 36' steel rod. I had him grind down the cutting end to a gradual taper, flatten the bottom on a milling machine, and insert a recessed high speed steel cutter at a slight angle held in place with allen screws. Using this tool, I have no problem in penetrating to a depth of 12" to 14". I have used calipers frequently throughout the penetration in order to maintain a uniform thickness. My calipers are home-made out of hardwood and because of their size and shape will measure a 15" deep vessel easily. Natural defects in a piece make it easy to keep up with thickness by sticking a small piece of wire through the defect. Also, a good, hands-free light is very beneficial to illuminate the inside of the turning in order to see the wire as it is inserted. I have a small, quartz, gooseneck light attached to the lathe with self-adhesive velcro that does the job.



The initial penetration of the inside of the vessel which is still supported by the tailstock.

The last three or four inches of the penetration go rapidly as the shape tapers to a smaller diameter. I often leave the bottom a little thick intentionally in order to have enough stock left to turn a deep recess on the bottom end. Turning the bottom is routine with me since I took the time to learn the technique, which is well worth learning. I let the piece air dry for a few days before turning the bottom; otherwise, it may distort just enough to wobble. If I'm in a hurry, I dry it out in the microwave. I seldom allow my self to get in a hurry, but I do feel that it is essential to proceed to finish a turning once it is started.

When I part the turning off the lathe, I don't try for any records on how complete I can finish the cut. I don't mind sawing the last inch with my dovetail

back saw because I know I'm going to turn the bottom.

When mounting the piece in the home-made device I use for securing it while turning the bottom, I leave the bolts loose so that the final tightening can be done after mounting the unit on the lathe. I then adjust the tool rest close to the outside edge of the bottom of the turning. this proximity is a good guide for getting the piece true as the bolts are snugged-up.

I mount the piece for the lid on a faceplate, and after completing the largest finished diameter, I make the cuts necessary to mate it to the base. I bring the base to the lathe and try it on for size, usually several times, before I get it to fit. I use a design that allows a lip in the lid to fit inside the base with a slight recess in the lid for the lip of the base to fit into. This design makes it difficult for the lid to get knocked off and always leaves the lid centered on the base. I prefer that the lid fit loosely enough to be removed and replaced with one hand. It it's a deep lid, such as this one, I then finish the outside except for the pull knob area and then start inside. The last step in the process is to finish as much of the knob as possible before parting the piece from the faceplate. I mount a leather-padded, ball-bearing center in the tailstock and run it up snugly against the inside surface of the lid. This gives more stability to the piece and helps make it possible to substantially finish the knob. What little finishing remains can be done while I am holding the piece with a 3-jaw chuck. If for any reason the knob is unsatisfactory, it can be removed and separate knob turned to take its place, but I like the idea of a turned-in-place knob better because grain and color are not a problem.

I use many different finishes, depending on the wood, the design of the piece, and its ultimate use. The finish I like best uses WaterLox buffed with white diamond Tripoli and then a leather stick wax. This is a great finish on most hard woods, but I've had a lit tle problem with it on walnut, so I use lacquer (Deft - Satin). I sometimes leave the lacquered finish as applied, but do vary the treatment by rubbing with very fine steel wool or by hand rubbing with rotten stone and oil. On most walnut burls, I find that quite often the piece will darken, regardless of the finish, to such a degree that, except under strong lighting, the grain and figure is virtually destroyed. To overcome this effect, brush on a mixture of aliphatic resin glue thinned with water. This sealing effect raises the grain slightly, but the piece can be sanded with 400 grit wet or dry paper very quickly. This treatment is also effective in preventing sapwood or any other light wood from darkening.

The working end of the 1"X 36" tool with high speed steel insert.

Re-chucking for turning the bottom end of the vessel. Note disc to hold piece together.

About The Author: David Irion, from Hobbs, N.M., is an amateur woodturner. An oilfield servicing contractor for many years, he now makes his living as Director of Buildings and Grounds for New Mexico Junior College.

Announcements

Congratulations To Albert LeCoff

Albert recently announced that he is going forward with a project that has taken ten years to develop: THE WOODTURNING CENTER will become a non-profit center for research and development, and will include a museum for turned objects of every kind. With a matching grant of five thousand dollars, the first steps in this long time dream are now becoming a reality.

Because of this commitment, Albert has decided to step down as vice-president of the AAW, in favor of becoming an active member of the board of advisors - particularly in the areas of symposium and conference development.

The AAW and the woodturning center expect to work hand-in-hand on future projects within the field, so we wish to extend our very best wishes and continued support to this ambitious project.

Auction Winner

Robyn Horn of Little Rock, Arkansas submitted the high bid for David Ellsworth's vessel, featured on the cover of our first *Journal*. Thanks, Robyn. Your contribution represents our first deposit to our "Special Funds Account."

As we said in that issue, funds from our auctions and raffles are placed in a dedicated account to be used for educational and relief services for our members. If you want to become involved in that aspect of AAW, contact Bill Hunter. More information about his committee is printed on the inside of the dust cover to this Journal.

More About Local Chapters

We now have three recognized Local Chapters; Bucks County, Pennsylvania (Palmer Sharpless); Northcoast Woodturners — Cleveland, Ohio (Dave Hout), and Seattle, Washington (Bonnie Klein). Welcome to the fold.

For those interested in forming your own Chapter, Palmer Sharpless, Chairman of the Local Chapters Committee, now has available sample "draft" By-laws to help you through the paperwork. Write to him at: 192 Durham Road, Newtown PA 18940. So far about 80 members are in touch with Palmer about forming these chapters.

Arrowmont Seeks Helpers

Arrowmont School is looking for "young" woodturners to act as shop assistants for future classes. Candidates should be qualified in lathe maintenance as well as other shop machinery. For more info, contact: Arrowmont School. P.O. Box 567, Gatlinburg, TN 37738.

Want To Be Interviewed

Merryll Saylen has joined some ten other AAW members serving as Page Editors. She is responsible for our "Interview of the Issue." If you think that you would make an interesting subject for an interview or if you have someone in mind, please write. You don't have to be a pro, just an enthusiastic turner!! Pros welcomed, of course. Merryll Saylen, 927 Grayson St., Berkeley, CA 94710.

Welcome Aboard, Dick Gerard Congratulations To New VP, Leo Doyle

When Albert LeCoff resigned from our Board, he left a vacant position; he also left a vacant office, the Vice Presidency. To fill the vacant position, the Board went back to its roots — to the original ballots from those who attended the October, 1985 Arrowmont Conference that initiated this Association — and reviewed the candidates next in line. Dick Gerard was the next eligible AAW member, and when asked to accept, willingly did so. Dick has been working closely with AAW since its inception. He had come to Arrowmont with his own survey to probe conferees interest in just such an association. Once AAW began to form, Dick served on the Steering Committee that drafted our initial Charter and By-laws. More recently, he has been working diligently as the "From the Trenches" Page Editor. We are all fortunate to have him working with us on the Board of Directors.

After electing Dick Gerard to the Board, Leo Doyle was nominated and unanimously approved to fill the position of Vice President. We are all pleased with these two developments, and wish both men tremendous success.

Turners – Please, Please, Please

Let us know, well in advance, when you will be featured by a gallery. We will announce it in the *Journal*. We can also make mailing labels of members in neighboring states available to the gallery. But, we can't do anything if we don't know about it. So write, call or send telegrams. – Bob Rubel

Conferences

Thinking about attending the Australian or New Zealand Turning Conferences? Dick Gerard is serving as AAW's touring coordinator. Please contact him at 410 Railway Court, Indianapolis, IN 46256.

Roll Your Own

by Jim Thompson

Contrary to what some say about building your own lathe, do not go to your local bearing house and buy a self-aligning ball bearing pillow block.

The common, over-the-counter pillow block bearing has too much clearance between the inside race, balls, and the outside race. Pillow block bearings are designed to take a load in one direction; like belts pulling in one direction. For example, on chains and gears, the load is in one direction. In a lathe, the load is in all directions around the center of the headstock.

In the best metal turning lathe, the headstock bearings will be tapered bearings similar to the front wheel bearings in your new BMW. The tapered bearings have to have a housing machined for them; seals and a headstock shaft with the length adjustable to load the bearings.

The best and easiest way to set up the headstock is with a split pillow block with adapter sleeve. This bearing assembly has a double roll ball bearing and looks very much like the average pillow block bearing; but there is a lot of difference. First, the bearing has a taper on the inside of the inner-race which fits the taper of a sleeve which fits the headstock shaft. The sleeve is split and has threads on the small end. After the bearing is put on the sleeve, the nut is tightened in order to push the bearing up the taper and the inner-race of the bearing expands to take up all the clearance in the bearing. You can actually tighten the nut so much that the inner-race will break. With this set-up you can load the bearing and take up all internal clearance — which is what you want on the headstock.

This set-up for headstock bearings has worked for me and has improved my lathe designs. I use a two inch shaft on all my lathes and have no problems with vibration. All of my work is end grain and I have done work two and one-half feet high. The lathe I built will swing fifty-six inches in diameter.

About The Author
Jim Thompson is a lathe tool builder in Greenville, South Carolina.

NOTE: Jim recommends a data-sheet on these bearings distributed by: SKF Industries, Inc., 1100 First Ave., King of Prussia, PA 19406. Ask for Sheet #640-810.

Finishing Techniques

by Bryan Johnson

After turning your project and sanding to your satisfaction (at least 220), add paint thinner or turpentine (they work equally well) to thin the boiled linseed oil. Apply this mixture to the wood until the wood will not accept any more. Allow to air dry for sixteen (16) hours. Make a paste with rottenstone and the same linseed oil mixture you just used on the wood. Put a small amount of paste on a piece of white cotton cloth and fold cloth over several times to capture the paste inside the folded cloth. With your lathe running from 850-2000 R.P.M., apply pressure with the paste filled cloth until the paste is very hot. Now move slowly over the entire surface until the desired surface is obtained. If you are turning a bowl, repeat the same procedure on the inside (add a little oil) by simply wadding the cloth and applying pressure on the inside of the bowl. For more shine, melt some beeswax with the linseed oil. A microwave oven will melt and mix the wax and oil very well.

From The Trenches

Dick Gerard, Page Editor

In the last issue, I said this column would be used to air individual statements by our readers, and to publicize local groups' events, fund raising ideas, etc., a real potpourri of subjects that just might not "fit" anywhere else. My dad raised me always to follow through on promises, so in this issue we feature a pair of submissions from our members. Since both deal with the past — the first, an individual's recollections, the second, a history of the American wood lathe — it seems only fitting that they should be presented together. Remember, this is your *space as much as anyone's. Articles should reach me no later than December 15 if you want them considered for the March issue. Keep those letters coming! Dick Gerard, 7410 Railway Ct., Indianapolis, IN 46256.*

The following article was submitted by Bob Fleming.

I Remember...

I was introduced to a wood lathe in the late '50s and for many years thereafter, using carbide tipped tools. I scraped and sanded and sanded and sanded and ————.

I was accepted into the 3rd seminar at The George School where I met Al LeCoff, Palmer Sharpless and many other fine woodturners. My recollections of the first demonstration are still quite vivid.

Barry MacFarland held up a skew chisel and spoke of its merits. Then he demonstrated the use of the skew and the gouge. I owned a skew and a gouge but they were used only rarely and usually with disastrous results. I remember saying to myself, "self, shut up and listen, maybe these wild people have something!"

Speaking of wild people, I remember my first impression of David Ellsworth. I just couldn't believe it when this bearded, half-naked, wild-eyed, hippie-looking character jumped astraddle a lathe and started to turn one of his famous hollow turnings. I remember my surprise as I recognized that beyond that first impression lay an artist, an innovator, and a real craftsman.

I remember Palmer Sharpless and his smooth approach to teaching and demonstrating and how well he related to my problems. I remember "Uncle Jake" Brubaker, his stories, and his pewter inlays. I remember — well, so many good things.

Since then, I have attended more turning conferences at The George School, Cedar Lakes, West Virginia and at Arrowmont. Maybe Dale Nish was right when he said "slow learner." I have enjoyed every minute of those conferences. Now that I am retired, I am practicing what I was exposed to. It is a challenge, it is fun, — and I am at peace. (Editor's question: Bob, does this mean that you turn half-naked and wild-eyed?)

This next item might be called "The Story Behind A Pictorial History of the American Wood Lathe." Harold Barker of Ada, Ohio sent this to me. Harold is an accomplished author, having written three books and many manuals. AAW members will be interested to know that Harold has recently completed a pictorial history of the American wood lathe. This manual describes creations from tree and pole lathes to the great wheel lathes, to treadle lathes, plus steam and electrically powered lathes. Now: on to his story.

My special interest in wood lathes dates back to 1937 when I was 8 years old. My parents gave me a blue box of highly prized carpentry tools. I immediately went into production using whatever scrap wood was available from nearby sawmills. During those lean depression years in the hills of West Virginia, I hoed field corn, raised popcorn, cracked walnuts, gathered scrap iron and sold wooden projects to raise money to buy nails, paint and more tools.

With no electricity 'til 1938, a powered wood lathe would have been useless, and there were no periodicals around home telling me what I was missing. With a wood lathe and some instructions back then, who knows what might have happened. We might have had less time to butcher hogs and cattle and sell hamburger form the back of the pickup at 2 pounds for 25 cents.

After high school, my cousin offered to teach me the wood millwright's trade. This man was a woodworking genius. He even built his own door sander and large bandsaw. The lathe shavings began to fly and the orders for more work came in. I even turned a wild cherry pineapple to decorate a mantle in the Winwood Mansion. All the wood machinery delighted me and instilled my lasting interest.

After a tour with the Army, I used a Montgomery Ward lathe to turn lamps to fund my college education at Glenville State Teachers College. During the '60s I secured 2 Rockwell lathes and turned several projects for my ranch home (which I designed and built). By 1970 I had become interested in lathe structures themselves. I started designing and building several lathes from surplus parts. I now have many patterns from which nearby foundries cast any part I may need.

Meanwhile, with research experience gained form graduate studies at Kent State and Western Reserve Universities, I gathered every machinery catalog and journal available from flea markets and public libraries. These sources depicted the progression of American lathe technology for every possible model. After studying the ingenious models of the Industrial Revolution, I often wonder whether we have really improved the quality of the lathe to any substantial degree.

My aim in preparing these wood machinery manuals is to make woodworkers aware of their technical heritage. In short, I relish wood lathes and other machines because I had none growing up. Over the years I have combined my research background with practical woodworking experience to produce another manual that will appeal to woodturners.

(Editor's Note: For information either on Harold's book or the lathes that he fabricates, contact him at 3108 Klingler Rd., Ada, Ohio 45810.)

Presidents Page

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need no longer feel like an island among the other more recognized craft fields. Now, our conferences and symposia, our people, and the objects that we make WILL be seen by the outside world on a more regular basis. In this case, greater quality in everything we do from symposia to the work itself will yeild a greater appreciation for our efforts. The result will be greater visibility and, of course, greater exposure.

But some of our AAW members are going to cry "Foul", as in, "But look at who's getting all the exposure! Always the same names and faces!" Yes, it is true in any field — and I mean ANY field from theater to medicine to space flight to sports — 100% of the people do all the work but only 2% get the recognition. What happened to the other 98%? Have our craft organizations forgotten them? Are we treading that thin line between public exposure and elitism? Well, let's take a look at that and see what comes up...

By 1976, you could count on one hand the number of woodturners who were receiving any "consistant" national attention for their efforts. These were the 2%: Stocksdale, Moulthrop, Osolnik (although he was primarily known in the Southeast). Lindquist's work was now being exposed, and the pioneering work of Prestini was yet to be re-discovered. By 1980, that number had quadrupled. To date, there must be close to 100 individuals including the young and the old, women, minorities, and a host of foreign folks, whose works are turning up in publications and on gallery shelves on a regular basis.

My point? These new faces had grown from the "grass roots" — that other 98% — and I think it is safe to say that they learned most of the skills of their craft to a greater degree form the education and communication provided through those early workshops. Equally important, they became inspired through the public exposure which has helped our "field" to grow, and it is organizations like the AAW that must give its membership a "choice" in how to participate in future growth. After all, it doesn't matter if we jab or gouge or scrape or grind, if we turn wood to support our families, for fun, or even as therapy — the bottom line is that we don't want to lose a talent!

HAPPY 10th ANNIVERSARY!!!

The Southern California Woodturning Conference was held at the Clarion Hotel, Ontario, California, August,21-23, 1986. The conference was attended by about 100 turners, and the hotel facilities were excellent. Many of the artists presented slide shows and demonstrations of historical and modern turnings. The highlight of the conference was the gallery, for it emphasized the results of the demonstrations and slide talks. The organizers and hotel are to be commended for presenting such a stimulating conference.

Letters To The Editor

Well! We get dozens of letters in every week — but some may also interest our readers. They are variously addressed to Bob Rubel, Volunteer Administrator of AAW, David Lipscomb, Editor-in-Chief of the Journal, or David Ellsworth, President of AAW. Feel free to write.

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on the first issue of The Journal!! Great Job! I enjoyed David Ellsworth's well written article on his observance of the evolution of woodturning. I must, however, take exception to his reference to the "Woodshop" and the woodshop teacher. For 20 years I have been one of those Woodshop teachers. While it's unfortunate that little has changed in the course David's son takes, a broader view would reveal that much has changed with woodworking in public education in the last 28 years. Across the nation, you will find that Technology Education teaches students about our rapidly changing society.

My classes in woodworking, for example, provide students with skills in woodworking for both avocational and vocational reasons. I place students who work in cooperative education ventures with woodworking industries and we're building our ninth house from start to finish.

What about Woodworking? I have an adaptive special education class where several students have produced simple bowls. Each one is a success as you can tell from the students' faces. And there is more. Lots more. For example, each student in the beginning woodworking class turns a faceplate and a spindle project. One of my advanced students comes into the shop during his open period just to get more time on the lathe. (I passed on the second of Vol. 1 No. 1 to him).

I agree, the Fine Woodworking magazine is a fantastic publication and makes a great reference resource; but it is far from the only thing necessary to provide instructional material for varied, basic, and advanced curriculum in woodworking.

I've taken a class from David at Arrowmont and respect his skill and knowledge but... "c'mon David, cut me some slack!"

Sincerely
Cecil Parker
"Woodshop" teacher
Waukesha North High School

Dear Bob:

Here is something I think the group should do in each issue. Do a story on an unknown woodturner. We have all seen and know the [more prominent turners] and it is nice to hear or see something about them; but if you want to make this group really work then take an unknown woodturner and put him or her into the spotlight. This will probably help a young and learning turner more than anything we can write.

Everybody needs a pat on the back every once in a while.

Thanks,
Jim Thompson

AAW Replies: Point taken, see our Announcements Page regarding Merryll Saylen's new project for an "Interview of the Issue." Thanks for the idea.

Dear Bob: I've just had a good look at our first Journal. Congratulations! I can see that many, many of our members are pouring time and thought into it. It is a grand first step. Keep up the good work.

Ross Lowell

Sirs:

I'm in shock.

I simply asked my secretary to locate a journal that specialized in Turners Syndrome (TS), a genetically linked female affliction. As she should well have known, TS concerns ladies, not LATHES. More to the point, she should have known that such a society could NEVER be located in a small town such as San Marcos, Texas. But no. Just my luck. With an incredible disregard for the logical she returned to tell me — and again pardon my incredulity — ONLY that she had found such a group, completely leaving out that it concerned woodworking. I presume that she presumed that I knew that.

Happy to have found a simple answer (I'll admit that I should have been suspicious when it came so quickly) and a new Society concentrating on Turners Syndrome, I called two of my colleagues, Drs. Stephenson and Domstead, and they told me to sign them up, too. We all paid the $100 that my secretary said we would be charged and waited for our first issues.

Imagine, then, my surprise — shock — astonishment — to find in my mailbox a Journal of WOODTURNING!!!!! Is my secretary one of your "plants"? I don't even own a lathe!

Now What?

James W. Godwin, MD

PS: Your Journal was so good, that the three of us have decided to remain what you are calling "Founding Members." Keep up the good work.

Dear Mr. Rubel:

...Your contributor, Miss Spence, conveys an error in her notice regarding mazers. This is not to say that mead was never drunk from mazers, but it is misleading to indicate that they were specifically intended for this purpose. In fact mead as a common drink was of the pre-Roman times, the common drink in medieval times was ale, that is a fermented malt liquor made without hops, and therefore also sweetish.

The specific term Mazer came from the German "mesa", a spot, and arose from the fact that they were made from burrs (American: burls) particularly of maple, which show a spotted figure. This was so because the burrs with their twisted grain were both stable and more impervious to liquid that bowls made from slices of strait grained trunk. May I draw her attention to Pinto's "Treen & other Wooden Bygones" which is still in print and I am sure available Stateside where the matter is discussed in detail. Miss Carole Morris of York, England had conducted research and reconstruction which shows that the Viking settlement of York contained Pole lathe turners of bowls, some of which were of mazer form and this is the earliest record of mazers we have. Around AD 1100. They were used in large numbers in monasteries, where the main drink was "small-ale", a rather thin version made from the decanted wort from the main brew. Don't want to be down-putting but hope this is helpful.

Sincerely,
Roger Davies

AAW Replies: Thanks for clarifying, Roger. We sent your note directly to Miss Spence when it came in.

Reviews

Peter Hutchinson, Page Editor

Wood Turning with Richard Raffan.
The Taunton Press,
Connecticut, 1986,
videotape, 117 min., $39.95.

The Taunton Press has done a wonderful job of capturing and presenting the skill and techniques of Raffan in the videotape, *Wood Turning with Richard Raffan*. The tape is instructive and entertaining. Raffan's pleasing topics, accent, with the Bach Cello Suite as an interlude between topics, provides a very relaxed background for the presentation of a whole gamut of operations performed on a wood lathe.

The tape begins with an explanation of sharpening techniques for the gouge, skew chisel, scraper, and parting tool. The remainder of the tape contains demonstrations of the use of the various tools on a number of small projects. Examples of both centerwork and facework are included. Early in the tape Raffan turns beads and grooves and then proceeds to more interesting projects, including a tool handle, light-pull knob, scoop, and box. Finally, he turns a breadboard and a bowl. During all the demonstrations the emphasis is on technique; from proper body stance, to use of the hands and tool rest, to correctly positioning the tools.

The tape is enjoyable on the first viewing and is a useful reference as skills are acquired. It effectively uses the videotape medium to convey information that would be difficult or impossible with a book and would be helpful even after attending a class, since critical sequences can be viewed repeatedly. This tape is a valuable source of information and instruction for any amateur or semi-professional. (Reviewed by Ed Preston).

The Practical Wood Turner.
By Frank Pain,
Sterling Publications Co., New York, 1979
(166 pages) $6.95.

The Practical Wood Turner was first written in 1956 by Frank Pain a woodturner with 50 years of turning experience. In 1979, the book was re-published again and to this date remains one of the finest training manuals for the woodturning craft. Pain maintains that wood should by "cut as it prefers to be cut," a simple but enlightening phrase for the the beginner. The author utilizes the "clock" approach to cutting wood, which enables the student to orient the cutting tool in the correct positions for the bevel to rub and the wood to be cut.

Sharpening tools is often a frustrating experience for the novice but, as Pain remonstrates, "it is not what you grind away, but what you leave," (p. 51). Once tools are sharpened, the text guides the student through many simple but elegant turning exercises such as the Ming vase, egg cup, bowl, and chair spindle. More complicated projects are also explored: the ball, pendant, built-up bowl, and cabriole leg.

Several years ago, my first attempt at the lathe was a disaster, however after reading this text I began to develop some wood cutting techniques. Unfortunately, this book is roughly edited with some syntax and punctuation errors, unlabeled figures and spelling mistakes. Also, the last page of the book is continued at the bottom of an earlier page. Pain has written the text with vernacular and speech patterns of his native High Wycombe (England) locale. At times, this dialect can be frustrating as it does not translate well. These are nuisances but not problems. I learned to cut wood as it prefers to be cut and you can too. Your library would be empty without a copy. (Review by Peter Hutchinson).

Editors note: *This month, we have a review of an important new videotape. Several other reviews are ready and will be in upcoming issues. I would like to thank Ed Preston, a computer specialist form Houston, who volunteered to review the tape. He has no woodturning experience so I thought it would be a unique opportunity for the novice to express his opinion on the material. I was also very impressed with the tape and highly recommended it.*

Sculpting Wood.
By Mark Lindquist,
Davis Publications, Inc.,
Worcester, Massachusetts;
1986 (292 pages). $32.95.

Michelangelo envisioned that forms are imprisoned in the sculptor's medium. The released forms command and define the space around them. Voids in the sculptures, or negative space, refine the relationship of form with space much as rests in music define and shape the harmony. These forms, then, must come from within the sculptor. Although the tree is felled, dead, the wood is reborn through the sculptor's mind and hands. Mark Lindquist creates this opportunity for woodworkers in the impending publication of *Sculpting Wood*. Although the book consists of 18 chapters organized into 5 sections, the text principally relates 2 points: techniques available to the sculptor and the forms necessitated by these techniques.

The form evolves from the sculptor's mind using the proper tools. Mr. Lindquist details the use and purpose of standard woodworking machinery, chainsaws, and an Alaskan saw mill. He investigates the harvesting of wood for sculpting. This information is presented with precision and detail and affords the sculptor safe insights into woodworking tools. Exercises are utilized to explore form and to train the sculptor in the use of tools. The projects include a puzzle, a spoon, band saw boxes, and hand-carved, chain-sawed, and lathe-turned bowls. Mark and his father, Melvin, have perfected a unique oil and Tripoli wax finish which they refer to as the "fine-art" finish.

Design is innate. Elements of basic design can be learned, but the form grows and develops within the mind of the artist. The salient point of this work is to present the elements of design and to develop the creative attitude for the novice sculptor. For example, a large-based bowl appears quite ponderous and well-attached to its resting place, but a smaller base adds an ethereal feeling to the piece, elevating it from what is below. The sculpture is "...a mirror of form and ideas. It reflects what is put into it..." (p. 178). Creativity must work with the medium and not fight it. The Japanese call this *sabi*, or imperfect simplicity. James Prestini is another American visionary with this type of creative attitude; an artist whose forms are simple yet pure. Mr. Lindquist maintains that the proper attitude — or mode — is achieved through the study of the works of artists, natural elements, and internal visions. The philosopher Henry James wrote, "We work in the dark, we do what we can, we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and out passion our task. The rest is the madness of art."

Sculpting Wood contains many useful and ingenious techniques for artistic expression. Hollow vases can be achieved by blind boring, horizontal or longitudinal parting, or reverse boring. Cracks and checks can be accentuated by carving and sanding to make a statement. Rapid hollowing of bowls is accomplished through the cone-separation technique. Shaping short cuts result from the use of auto body sanders an die grinders. These and other techniques are clearly and precisely depicted, although it would have been nice if there had been more figure captions for better text-figure agreement.

The lathe is the primary sculpting tool of Mark Lindquist, but he is not hindered by it. He employs all the woodworking tools necessary to create his forms. His bowls, for example, are meant to be appreciated, not used as everyday vessels. In Mark's own words, "My main purpose is to create a work that commands the space of a room, that lights its environment. It is intended to display the beauty of nature and to reflect the harmony of humanity. The bowl is already full..." (pp.233-234). In much the same fashion, your mind is full of ideas, but the embodiment is only achieved through training. Expect this and more from Sculpting Wood. (Reviewed by Peter Hutchinson.)

Questions & Answers

Cliff Schroeder, Page Editor

We welcome your questions. Send them to Cliff at 763 South St., Owatonna, MN 55060 and he will see that they are routed to our panel of experts for a response that will then be printed in the Journal.

Question: Some woodturners grind their skew chisels with a curved blade rather than straight across. What are the advantages of this configuration? Why aren't more turners using one or another grind?

Answer from Palmer Sharpless: Grinding tools is always the prerogative of the craftsman. I have seen the curved edge suggested. I have used it myself, and feel that it makes very little difference in the final results. There is a slight improvement to the slicing action as the wood strikes a curved rather than a straight edge, however it is harder to maintain the position of a curved tool on the wood as it tends to slip up the piece. I prefer the simplest way: a straight edge with a moderate angle. I also find that after a little honing to bring back the edge after use, I have less trouble than with a freshly ground tool.

Question: Which is the best power carving tool for a woodturner to purchase?

Answer by Al Stirt: I have used only one model and I'm pleased with it. I use the "Rakuda Flexible Shaft Assembly and Carving Bits" Order #14.100.1..... Price $240.00 Postpaid. From: Woodline The Japan Woodworker, 1731 Clement Ave., Alameda, CA 94501. This unit is made to be used with the purchaser's own motor and chuck. I use it with a 3450 RPM ⅓ HP motor with a ½" Jacobs chuck on the shaft. (I use this for various other purposes also.) I control the motor with a foot switch, enabling me to have both hands available for carving.

I bought this, rather than the one that comes with a motor because of the price. (The Rakuda with motor is $495.00).

What I like about it: First, the flexible shaft unit is rugged and holds up under hard usage. Second, the reciprocating action begins only when pressure is put on the cut (I saw someone using a different tool once where the gouge was moving all the time the motor was on, making it difficult to start a cut with any real precision.) Third, the laminated steel gouges make an exceptionally clean cut and the edge stays sharp a long time.

What I don't like about it: The cutting action, which consists of thousands of impacts of the tool against the wood per minute, is noisy.

I hope this helps. It might be good to locate someone who has experience with another brand. I don't know anyone else who uses this type of tool.

Question: I've heard about square-headed (recessed) case-hardened screws. What use are they and where can I get them?

Answer by Russ Zimmerman: If you have never heard of the Robertson head screw from Canada, you now have no excuse. It has a square recess head and a double pitch thread. The square recess means the special screwdriver never twists out of position and the head never gets chewed up by the screwdriver. The double pitch thread (meaning two parallel threads) means that the screw goes in twice as fast and holds much better than the standard screw. They are great for attaching bowl blanks to faceplates and can be used over and over. Also wonderful for general woodworking.

They are not much more expensive than slot-head or Phillips-head screws and well worth a visit to Canada. Anyway, you can get them in a variety of sizes from Trendline in Chelsea, MA, or local RV sales agencies.

My Canadian friends tell me that they have known of these screws since the 40s, yet they are only just now being introduced to the United States public at the retail level. This says something about the slot-head screw lobby. As a final note, Mr. Robertson just died last year.

Need Some Wood?

Clay Foster from Krum, Texas writes: With special permission from the National Forest Service, craftsmen and artists may obtain small quantities of logs, stumps, and burls from the National Forests throughout the country. A free brochure containing a map of the National Forests and a list of address for the nine regional headquarters is available from:

Dir. of Recreational Mgmnt.
U.S. Dept of Agriculture Forest Service
P.O. Box 2417
Washington, D.C. 20013

These regional headquarter offices can direct you to the District Ranger in the area of your interest. Removing the wood requires a permit, issued by the ranger. There may be a nominal fee, and the permit may contain stipulations, such as "dead and down" timber only, or that certain areas are off-limits. These conditions are determined only by the local ranger. The ranger can also offer advice about the kinds of woods you will find in specific locations.

Turnswap...Get Free Wood In Exchange For A Turning

By Kent Courtney

During the last three years I have made an offer to woodturners to send three pieces of Water Tupelo to those who request it. In return the turner agrees to send me one of these pieces which he has turned. To date I have collected some 53 different pieces that range from a thimble to a bowl which is six inches high and 12 inches in diameter. In addition I have a nest full of some 30 different eggs. Sitting on the eggs is a banty rooster who is being doubly deceived!

This mini-museum is diplayed in a corner cupboard in our art gallery. Another portion of the collection is in a glassed table display case. The collection includes several plates, vases, saucers and bowls that have been carved as well as turned. Here you will also find cups, chalices, round boxes, a round bread board with a carved motto, and several pairs of candle holders.

Water Tupelo grows only in standing fresh water and is usually found in Cypress swamps in the Southern and Gulf States.

If you are hip deep in the swamp and are looking at a tree that has a large swelling of the butt and has a trunk rising fifty or more feet without any branches, with broad leaves and a canopy top, that is probably a *Nyssa aquatica*. The seed is about as big as the first joint of your thumb and is enjoyed by the squirrels in the fall.

It differs from the Bald Cypress in a number of ways: the bottom of the butt is almost circular; it has leaves instead of needles; and has bark like a gum tree. The Cypress on the other hand has irregular and straggling branches; needles that turn brown and fall in the winter; and the base where it enters the water is very irregular in shape.

The wood within the Tupelo butt is hard toward the center, but quite corky toward the outside of the butt. I harvest the stump after the tree has been cut for timber. The stump is fine and light with very little grain. This is the part that is used by decoy carvers throughout the USA. But toward the center of the stump we come across the very hard and fine section which is not for carvers (too hard). This hard and fine section has a more visible grain and is dense enough for turning.

The wood is white, has less grain than basswood. As you work it you will find that it cuts easily and sands quickly. There is little odor and no resin. There are a few complaints of irritation from the dust. The carver finds that he can cut across, with, or against the grain and still maintain control. It does not split easily. It is easy to wood burn and accepts oils, acrylic paints and stains easily. The portion of the wood which comes from near the center is hard, has some color in the grain, and is sometimes stained from minerals in the soil and the swamp.

This is the wood that I will send to you if you agree to this swap. The piece you send me will be placed here in my mini-museum in the Courtney Gallery of Art. If you are interested, please tell me the size of wood you desire and I will send you three pieces.

Editor's note: Kent Courtney is a professional writer and decoy carver. His articles have appeared in many of the leading wood carving magazines in the country. He may be reached by writing Kent Courtney's Woodshed, 625 West Main Street, Broussard, Louisiana, 70518.

An Update on the Renwick— Letter Writing Pays Off

In our June Newsletter, David Ellsworth wrote an appeal to all AAW members to write letters in support of the Renwick's crafts museum. Many members have asked us what ever happened. This is the answer.

Dear Mr. Ellsworth:

Last May we wrote to alert you to the fact that the future of the Renwick Gallery as the Smithsonian's craft museum was in doubt, and we suggested that you write your views to Tom Freudunheim, the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary for Museums. The response to our appeal was overwhelming, reaffirming the vital importance of the Renwick as the Nation's showcase for craft. We have just been informed by Mr. Freudenheim that, while many important details remain to be worked out, craft will stay at the Renwick — and indeed, be strengthened.

We are elated, of course, and gratified that we were able to play a role in solving this crisis — and we thank all of you who wrote letters, thoughtful and passionate — in Renwick's behalf.

The Alliance now intends to redouble its efforts in support of the Renwick. We will expand our membership and offer new benefits to contributors. Our Board is exploring exciting new projects for the future. We would like to hear from you if you wish to be kept informed of our activities.

We would also like to invite you to become a member of the Alliance if you are not one already. The enclosed brochure describes our program, although as I have said, we plan some major expansion. The Alliance will continue to be the principal source of public support for the Renwick Gallery, funding important acquisitions and most of its public education activities.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,
Roger Kuhn
President, James Renwick Collectors Alliance

Second National Meeting Of Leaders In American Crafts

Summary Review prepared by Lennie Dowhie, former head of NCECA

Representatives of 10 national media organizations convened during the American Craft Council's 1986 National Conference in Oakland, CA. The meeting, organized under the auspices of the ACC, brought together representatives form the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, American Craft Council, the Glass Arts Society, the Society of North American Goldsmiths, Surface Design Association, the Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America, the Handweavers Guild, and Society of Furniture Artists, the American Tapestry Alliance, and the American Association of Woodturners.

The focus of this meeting was on interorganization cooperation — how the various media groups can work/share resources with each other. As in any meeting of this type, numerous issues arose. However, the group chose to focus on communication, advocacy, support networking and the need for additional sessions. The following represent the agreements concluded during this meeting regarding the aforementioned topics:

A) Citing the need for increased communication and awareness of each organization's activites, it was decided that each organization would automatically become a permanent member of all the represented organizations.

B) In addition to recognizing the need to support each other at this time, it was acknowledged that the ACC needed special support during the move to the new Museum; therefore it was decided that each organization would become either a sustaining member or contributor to ACC. each membership/contribution will be in the form of a restricted gift designated to the support of the advocacy attempt by ACC on behalf of the Renwick Museum or in support of the Aileen Webb Educational Fund as part of the match/challenge grant to ACC on behalf of educational issues relating to crafts.

C) Citing the need for a highly recognizable address with national connections, it was recommended that ACC become a collector/clearning-house/distributor of relevant interorganizational documents: successful grants, constitutions and by-laws and conference outlines/guidelines as examples.

D) Lastly, expressing the need to continue the effort to define the needs/relationships between organizations, it was decided that:

1) a survey would be devised and sent to all the representatives at the meeting asking them to analyze, in greater depth, their needs and relationships with the other organizations represented and in particular with ACC; and

2) to attempt to reconvene a third meeting of Leaders in American Craft during the Chicago International Exposition of New Art Forms this September.

About Wood

Casimer Grabowski, Page Editor

Burt Dall of Smithville, Tenn. wrote and asked two questions. First, whether it would be possible to put something in this column of the Journal about identifying fallen wood, as tree identification books only cover live trees; and second, whether I could ask our members to share their secrets about finding interesting burls, roots, crotchwood, and so forth when roaming through a forest?

These are good questions, and somewhat difficult to answer in the short space we have in the *Journal*.

First, keys for identifying living trees depend heavily on leaves and these are usually missing on fallen logs. The best way to accurately identify wood specimens is to examine thin sections with a microscope. This takes special equipment and special expertise. However, R. Bruce Hoadley, in his book, *Understanding Wood* (Taunton Press,1980), gives instructions on how to get started in this manner of wood identification using just a 10 power hand lens and a razor blade. If this method doesn't work for you, and you feel you must identify a certain sample, the USDA Forest Products Laboratory (P.O. Box 5130, Madison, Wisc.,53705) will do it for you. This service is free if you don't overdo it. Just send them a small sample (a toothpick-size sliver is sometimes adequate, but they prefer a bit more) along with as much information as you have, especially about the place of origin of the wood. They will send an identification within 10 to 14 days. Identification is usually possible at the genus level, but not always at the species level.

With respect to Burt's second question, perhaps our readers (shall we call them wood-hounds?) will share their experiences on field identification of wood with particularly interesting configurations.

Send your comments and stories to me at:
19705 SW 134 Ave.
Miami, FL 33177.

Grow Your Own

by Jim Thompson, Greenville SC

No this is not the stuff you smoke to try to get a better look at the world. This is the stuff that takes a piece of nice white maple and turns it into a giant marble with all sorts of colors.

I first saw the word "spalted" in an early issue of Fine Woodworking. Mark Lindquist coined it and showed the world what it was all about. This is the way I grow it down South; it works anywhere. Try it.

First of all, spalting is the natural process by which wood is changed into dirt again. It is caused by the growth and spread of fungi. What we want is the wood to spalt right after it is cut so that it will still be sound. I do this by stand ing the freshly cut piece on end on the ground just like it grows. I *do not* put the wood in or on the sawdust or chip pile. I have found that the fungi that makes wood spalt will not get to the wood through the sawdust as fast as they will if the log is in direct contact with the ground. I cut the pieces about three feet long, so I will have plenty to cut off each end to see if it is spalted through. If you lay the wood down, the bark will protect it, and the fungi will have a tough time get ting into the wood. It will also spalt only on one side. Standing the wood up also gives the fungi a straight shot up (or down) the tubes of the wood.

I then cover the wood with black plastic. I do this for two reasons. First it keeps the moisture in the wood (I also wet it when it starts to dry out); and second, the black plastic helps keep out the ultra-violet sun rays that inhabit growth in some of the molds.

It usually takes about three months for soft maple, gum, and even white oak to be ready for the lathe.

About The Author: Jim Thompson makes the David Ellsworth swing tip tool; he also designed and built David's new lathe. Contact him at: Cox Saw Works, 101 Piney Mt. Rd., Greenville, SC 29609