# American Woodturner

*The Journal* of The American Association of Woodturners Volume 2 Number 2 December 1987 $5.00

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

# American Woodturner

*The Journal* of The American Association of Woodturners

Volume 2 Number 2
December 1987

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.

*American Woodturner* is published quarterly by the American Association of Woodturners. Regular membership rates are $20 for individuals and $50 for businesses. Supporting memberships are $100 and $250, respectively. Patron memberships are $1000 and $1,500 respectively. Of any membership, $6 is allocated for an *American Woodturner* subscription. Single copy price is $5. Known office of publication and sales office is The Smitherman Corporation, 9390 Research Blvd., Austin, Texas 78759. Telephone (512) 345-3827. Second class postage is pending at Austin, Texas.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The American Association of Woodturners, P.O. Box 982, San Marcos, Texas 78667.




# Contents



## On The Cover

*"Gold-N-Lace" by Frank Cummings, 1986, avocado wood and 24-karat gold leaf, 6 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches.*

# President's Page

## The Passionate Woodturner
### Part III

One of the problems with trying to write about the subject of marketing is that the greatest percentage of woodturners today are hobbyists and serious amateurs with no specific desire of becoming self-supporting professional woodturners.

On the other hand, the field of woodturning is currently experiencing such tremendous internal growth that a huge number of these "serious amateurs" are now out there with a firm grip on the reins, but still shouting, "Where the hell is this horse going, anyway!"

Most likely, our individual directions are less important than the collective movement that is taking place within the field. Today, most woodturners are selling their works to some extent, because the incentive to do so is there. But putting a price tag on our work is very different than just making it. The concept of marketing is new to some. It is also unusually complicated, surrounded by imagery, and a very personal experience for us all.

One very intelligent approach to this subject came from a retired gentleman attending one of my workshops. He said, "My goal is to turn better and better bowls, and if I can sell enough to pay for my raw materials, I'm happy." This approach may not seem to represent great ambition for the up-and-coming woodturner, but hidden within that statement is a world of knowledge.

This man's "be here now" concept is very healthy. It demonstrates clear and realistic goals — one of the most important initial steps in successfully selling our work. It also implies that there will be time for personal growth, both technically and in the market place. In other words, when it comes to developing a broader knowledge of personal skills, the "ladder of learning" can be very long, indeed. Part of this man's wisdom is in climbing that ladder one rung at a time.

**Object identity.**

Every object known to Mankind carries with it some kind of an image. And as we know, images can be very powerful, especially when they are associated with some kind of a value — such as a dollar value. Because marketing involves both image and communication, it is most important to give the object a clear identity before we can ever hope to sell it.

Example: I once saw two candle holders in a woodturners craft booth. One was made of walnut ($50), and the other was manzanita burl with a natural bark top ($250). I asked about the difference in prices and the man said, "The walnut piece is Craft, the manzanita is Art." To me, this turner's image of himself had overpowered the true identity of the object he was presenting. What I thought I was seeing was a finely hand-crafted candle holder. What he saw was an "art holder." Communication breakdown — no sale.

**Perception of value.**

Ideally, a sale is made when an object's perceived value is either equal to or greater than its offered (dollar) value. Sounds pretty good, especially if both the craftsperson and the customer perceive the object with the same amount of understanding. Unfortunately, this is not always a good assumption because the buyer can hardly be expected to know everything that went into making the object (time involved, technical difficulty, materials used, and so forth).

My point is that most people won't buy *anything* unless they first understand what it is — regardless of the price. Consider this: it's easy to sell a toaster because we already understand what that object is. We also have a relative understanding of what it should cost. On the other hand, with hand-crafted objects, the customer must first learn WHAT the object is; only then can he or she establish some perception of its value.

So: education is the foundation of salesmanship. And for the emerging craftsperson, the craft fair is a perfect sales arena where teaching — the prelude to selling — works in one of its purist forms. But the craft fair is not just a classroom for our customers; as well, it is the most complete source of on-the-job-training available to the craftsperson. Among the things that we learn: designing a sales booth for displaying our work, pricing our work, meeting gallery owners and taking orders, meeting our competition, learning how to talk to potential customers, writing sales receipts and, what may be most important, meeting our peers — the support group who are in the same boat that we are.

This concept of education holds true as well for craft galleries. Those galleries that have been the most consistant at making sales are the same ones who have taken the time to teach their clients about the objects they exhibit. A client always feels better about making an intelligent decision. When given this chance, everybody wins.

**The Long Haul.**

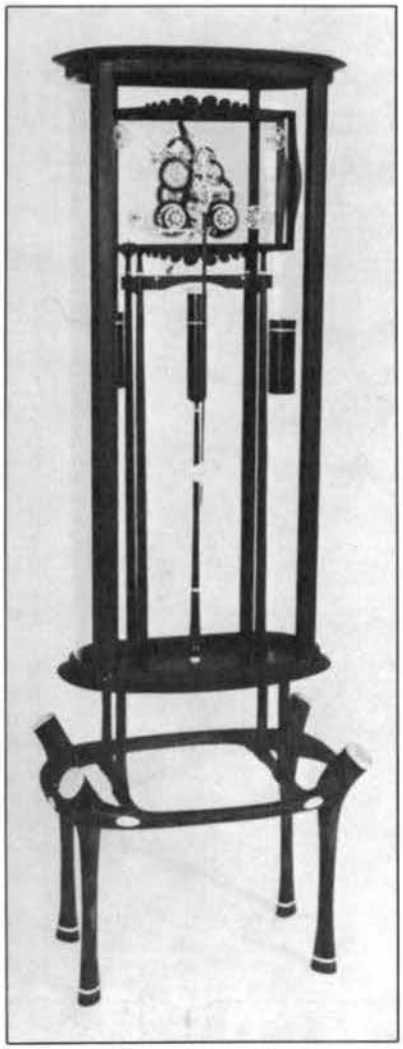
How long does this process take once we've removed our "product" from our workshops, placed it into the sales arena, and discovered whether the *IMAGE* of making a living with our hands is anything close to the *REALITY* of actually doing it? For those who have done it, five years would be a very conservative estimate. Ten would be more realistic. If that sounds a bit discouraging, consider how long it takes to become established in ANY field, inside or outside the field of the Arts and Crafts.

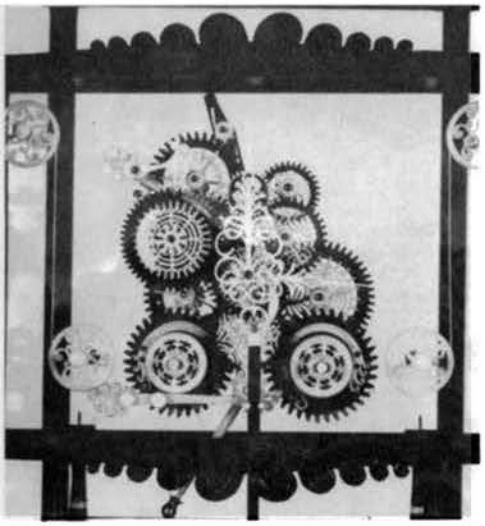
**Understanding Our Past.**

Throughout history, and in all cultures including our own, the term "craft" has been synonymous with the term "function." The value of one's craft depended solely upon whether or not the object performed a useful task *and* if it could be made available and affordable to the the local citizens. These are the roots from which we have all grown. But times have changed, at least in part. Today, the meaning of the term "craft" has

continued on p. 22

# On the Why's and Wherefor's





*Made from African blackwood and ivory gears and pinions, each shaft is capped with a star saphire and 18k gold. Note the three springs each created from a single piece of ivory. This piece exemplifies "creative expression."*

It seems that for many years now we have been talking about the "how" of turning on the lathe. Very little is said about "what" to turn and almost nothing about "why." As we continue to develop our lathe-turning skills perhaps it is time for us to consider these and other issues.

Much of our time and energy is spent on the "how" of turning; this includes developing our skills, tools, and technology. Our lathes and tools are constantly changing, improving in order to make our objects bigger or smaller, taller or thinner, slicker or faster. Countless hours are devoted to learning what gouge or skew is appropriate, what speed to turn, what angle to sharpen that tool, what finish is best, and the secret to this or that process, etc., etc. All of this for the sake of the objects resulting from lathe turnings, be they spindles or bowls, functional or conceptual.

Whether "what" we produce is considered crafts or art, it is certain that awareness of skill, technique, and imagination are all necessary for the continued growth of the "art" of lathe turning. I realize that the word ART may offend some of you. People have been trying to define Art from the time of Plato to today. For the sake of this discussion, I prefer Paul Klee's definition, "Art makes the invisible visible."

Although I risk being presumptuous in propounding a typology for our artform, it has for some time appeared to me that whether we consider ourselves craftspeople or artists, the objects that we produce from our lathes fall into one or more of the following three categories.

### Gifts From Nature

This first category is primarily concerned with the quality and appearance of the media. It involves the search for the most exciting, dynamic pieces of wood available. This process often involves a great deal of searching and often calls for spending quite a bit of money.

### Technical Prowess

This second category requires pushing techniques and media for all they are worth. This, of course, requires great patience, time and control (see cover photo for example.)

### Creative Expression

This third category is much more difficult to describe. It can be created from the most mundane to exotic material. It can require the most advanced technology or the simplest tool. It can take years to create or only a moment. It can move us to tears or fill us with rage. Some of us are driven to possess it and others of us dare not touch it.

As we strive to create or to perform to the best of our abilities, we continue to struggle to define "what" we do and "why" we do it. To begin to bring things into focus, for whatever purpose we may have for creating, one thing seems clear; if we do not control our medium we relinquish any control both over what

# of Woodturning

*By Frank Cummings*

the object can do for us and over the effect the object has on others.

Questions concerning motives behind objects we produce seem never to have been more important then they are today. We seem frequently to be asking the questions, "Why." To do so is neither good nor bad, but in our complex society it is often difficult to arrive at a useful answer.

Most of us find ourselves wearing many hats. Although each role has different objectives, the same feeling and values apply. When teaching a class or conducting a workshop, it is vital to be able to justify what one says or does simply because, when asked why, we are obligated to provide an answer. As an artist, craftsperson, turner, etc., we invariably ask ourselves the same kind of questions and attempt (with varying degrees of success) to provide the answers.

Personalizing this theme, somewhat, I recently completed a piece created from the roots of an olive tree. This root structure had been set out for trash collection but was too large and heavy. That evening, on my way home, it was still sitting there on the curb. I felt that there was something interesting inside the roots, but because of the dirt, rocks and other debris it would be risky to put the piece on the lathe. I dragged it to the studio anyway. Some three or four years later I created the piece I call a Gift From Nature #2. I said of this piece that, "This was a gift from nature and I can take no credit for it." I now realize that if I hadn't known how to bring out the aesthetic pleasure of such a piece of wood, this object would not exist. To do this, one must know (or sense) the inherent structure and quality of the media and one must possess the skills and technology necessary to execute the work.

I realize that those of us who consider ourselves artists, craftspersons, etc., rarely understand why we struggle to create. Some do it for recognition and fame. (Wasn't it Andy Warhol who said that everyone should be famous for at least 15 minutes.) Some do it because they feel it is a way of making a good living. Some do it because they think it is the "in" thing to do. Some do it because of an inner desire to express themselves, to gain attention, or to convey an emotion in some kind of tangible form. For some it may be a step toward immortality, a search for recognition that may in some cases live beyond them.

Describing my work and its purposes with words is difficult. The words are worn out and inadequate. My works are my substitute for words, they interpret my reasons and rationale. Through my work, my views reach people. I want people to ponder, to think, to explore, and to react.

My art satisfies inner feelings. I create out of a curiosity for my existence. My work helps me to explain to myself and to others who I am and why I exist. One could say that I have an insatiable urge to express myself in this fashion. The rationale that seem to me to be the closest to the truth are that I love it and that I just can't help it. Perhaps there need not be any further explanation.

*This olive wood vessel, 7¾" x 7¼", exemplifies "gifts from nature."*

*Frank Cummings assembling part of the clock.*

# The Congratulations Corner

## Gallery B Rates An 'A'

So says the bold headlines in Arkansas' newspaper *High Profile* on July 12 as it reviewed TONY BILELLO's recently opened gallery. Tony, a Founding Member of AAW, received raves for the selection of works by local artists using a wide range of materials and media. There is a woodworking and woodturning studio in the back of the gallery, and it is there that Tony now works during the day filling custom orders. Congratulations for taking the plunge after 17 years with the Bell Telephone Co. We're glad to hear that you are having a good time.

## Clay's Work Gets Bigger

Judging from the photo of the piece that AAW Founding Member CLAY FOSTER is turning, his work has just taken a tremendous leap in scale. In an article in Sunday, July 12th's *Express-News* from San Antonio, TX, Clay describes how he gravitated to woodturning, noting that "In furniture design, the creative part is designing and the creative part is over when you start making it. Woodturning is creative all the while you're doing it." Well said and worth noting. Keep up the fine work, Clay.



## Now *That's* Publicity

How about that: six full pages in the August issue of Texas Highways — seven color photographs! The article describes the "compound" near Reagan Wells (Uvalde) where the whole Lee family, Jim and Beverly and Wendy, 15 and Joel, 17 create about 56 woodturning items from local woods. The article stresses the calm, contemplative side of their lives, noting that they call themselves the Hummers, and that "We hope to remain here in peace quietly going about the master's work, softly humming the eternal tune..." The Hummers welcome visitors, so if you're in the south-central part of Texas, look them up. Our AAW office can help with directions.

## Nice Quote

"I do have some pieces I call 'Look at me' pieces. Other people call them art. And that's just about all they're good for." So said AAW Founding Member Bill Ramsey in one of his more "tongue-in-cheek" comments quoted in a large spread in the *Northwest Mississippi Daily Journal* last April. Bill rated three color photos; a detail of him turning a bowl, a nice shot of him on the lathe, and one of a number of his pieces. The interview with Bill brought out a number of good points: he was able to give a capsule history of the lathe, describe the current schism between Art and Craft, and the problems encountered when you begin to think about earning a living at it. Congratulations on putting yourself out there, Bill.

## Way To Go, Dick!

The Directors of the Center for Creative Arts, and the Directors of the Herrin School of Art, Indianapolis IN, presented their Merit Award to AAW Board Member Dick Gerard for his woodturned piece "Salute to the Pan American Games." Dick's large turning incorporated 13 North, Central, and South American woods, using both spindle and faceplate techniques.

Also, on September 27, the Director of the Elkhart Museum of Modern Art presented the Judge's Showcase Award and $500 to Dick for his artistic woodturning displayed and sold at the Elkhart Showcase for Art.

## And From Hawaii...

Mark Lebuse was photographed holding his work "The Kiss by El Gecko" in the September 3 issue of the *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*. He was exhibiting at The Big Island Wood Show, and this piece, made form pak lam (Chinese olive) must have stood out in the show. Seeing the photo, I can understand that, for the lid of the turned bowl features two gentle-looking reptiles (I hesitate to say iguanas or dinosaurs or ...) holding each other in a gentle embrace and kissing. Mark is a woodcarver AND woodturner. Nice blend, and a fine tribute to him. Our hat's off.

# Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

As a self-taught woodturner attempting to build up a small business selling my turnings, your organization, and the Journal, have had a very positive impact on my work. As a recipient of one of the woodturning scholarships I wish to thank all those responsible for giving me the opportunities to learn from a master woodturner, Dale Nish.

I participated in an intermediate/advanced workshop at Craft Supplies, USA in Provo, Utah, a five-day class with 10 students from all over the country. The class was fairly informal, with everyone involved in deciding the direction that our instruction would take (most of us were interested in green turned bowls, natural edge bowls, sharpening, wood selection and layout, and turning boxes). Dale demonstrated 1 or 2 times a day, we watched and discussed slides of other woodturners with different styles, but hands-on turning occupied most of the day. After five intensive days my mind was reeling with information, new ideas, and most of all, the inspiration to excel in my craft as I hadn't previously thought possible.

Without your scholarship I may never have been able to attend such an excellent workshop — all the folks at Craft Supplies deserve the highest recommendation for their wonderful service and programs. I hope that the program can continue so that many more turners working in isolation can "see the light".

Special thanks to Dale Nish and all the other workshop participants for a fantastic week.

Sincerely,
Tami Wagner

(Editor's Note: the following letter was addressed to Bill Hunter, AAW Board Member and chairman of the Special Funds Committee that oversaw these scholarships.)

Dear Bill:

I would like to thank the AAW and members of the Special Funds Committee for the scholarship to attend Russ Zimmerman's two-day woodturning course. The process of prompt notification by the selection committee and Russ's follow-up invitation and accommodation arrangements for my wife and me showed a lot of flair and excellent customer service. This is commendable. I attended the course on the 18th and 19th of July.

I went to Westminister West with an open mind and left with a tremendous amount of information that will be of great help to me as I cultivate the craft of woodturning. During the course of the two days of instructions, we (co-student from New Hampshire) covered the following areas:

1) Tool sharpening on the bench grinder and honing skills. How to discriminate the sound and shavings produced to indicate the sharpness or dullness of the tool used.

2) Proper hand grip and the synchronization of the body and the tool while turning.

3) Proper use of the skew to shape beads and to plane cylinders (a first for me) and the various gouges (spindle and deep bowl gouges) for in-board and out-board turning.

4) Using scrapers to make the slicing scrape.

5) Green wood turning (apple wood, presently drying nicely in my basement).

6) Projects: Turning tool handles and a lidded jewelry box. How to turn an egg. A six inch cherry bowl using double sided tape.

7) Sanding and finishing. (I used to spend an equal ratio of turning and sanding time). At Russ's the time spent sanding was 5%.

8) The right cutting angles and the direction the flute is pointing. Watching the form (shadow) instead of the point where the tool cuts.

These, of course, were but the major areas we covered. Russ has a tremendous reservoir of woodturning skills and knowledge which he lavished upon us poor students. I could easily spend a whole week just listening, watching, and being coached at the lathe by Russ. Although the amount of information presented by him was tremendous, I hardly felt his presence. It was a relaxing atmosphere, and he would suddenly materialize when he sensed that a student was experiencing some difficulties. That's a mark of an excellent teacher. The course encompassed basic theory and lots of hands-on guidance to execute proper tool handling. The two days were exhausting and rich in experiences for me. Russ and Ellen were great hosts and I enjoyed their company greatly.

Although I have no yardstick to compare this school to others offered in the country, I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed my stay there. Great atmosphere, excellent woodturning instructions, and great friendship extended by the Zimmerman family. I have no qualms in recommending others to attend the school.

I would like to thank AAW for the opportunity to visit Westminister West. I can't see any areas within the scholarship program that may require revision. You are doing an excellent job and please expand the program so others will have the same opportunity granted to me. Since my return, I have been reviewing and practicing the skills that I acquired at Russ's.

Yours sincerely,
Shuan S. Boo

(The following letter was addressed to Bob Rubel, AAW's Administrator.)

Dear Mr. Rubel:

It was my pleasure as a Founding Member of the AAW to be able to put on a successful show of turned objects by AAW members during July and August.

I thought that you might be interested in some of the "stats:" 14 turners participated showing 46 pieces for sale, of which 10 pieces were sold (22%), representing the work of 7 turners. Of the 46 pieces, 11 were over $500 retail price, 18 in the $100-$500 range, and the rest under $100.

A total of $3,161 was realized from sales, the most expensive piece selling at $1,400, the average being $316. The purchasers included 4 collectors (of whom 3 were AAW Founding Members) and an interior designer. Twenty-seven species of trees were represented in the show. While most pieces were pure turnings of vessels, there were several highly imaginative pieces such as turned sculptures.

This was the first successful woodturning show in Baltimore. Considering that Baltimore does not particularly understand woodturning (although publicity of the show received in the Baltimore Sun may help remedy that situation) and considering that we are a brand new gallery, my partner and I were pleased with the results.

We are planning on making the show an annual event, with the next show scheduled for May, 1988. Soon I'll be calling on you for help again.

It was a pleasure working with you, and the enthusiasm of the turners in the show was contagious. As a gallery owner it was a pleasure to deal with people who are so conscientious and considerate in their

# Letters To The Editor

business relations.

I want to thank you for all the help you gave me and for making the show possible.

Sincerely,
John Bacon

(Editor's Note: AAW members may want to start thinking of works that they would like to exhibit next may in Mr. Bacon's exhibition. Look for the formal announcement in the CLASSIFIED section of this issue.)

Dear Editor:

Nice issue (September) and especially helpful stuff on sanding inside of bowls in "Tips and Techniques."

Perhaps of some interest to the readership: I found a variety of sizes of flexible rubber discs with shafts and the sanding circles, too — the peel and stick type — very inexpensive in the Feb 20, 1987 ENCO Wood and Metal Working catalog. Address: 5000 West Bloomingdale, Chicago, IL 60639 (800) 621-4145.

It's page 103 in their Winter '87 catalog. The rubber discs are called "Enco New Flexible Rubber Holders" and come in sizes from 1/2 to 5" in diameter and cost from $1.12 to $5 each! The sanding circles (are the same sizes) on up to 20"....

Jerry Burt
Plainfield, NH

(Editor's Note to Jerry: good luck with that 1-ton maple burl you just harvested. How about writing up your experiences with it?)

Dear Editor:

I would like to see the Journal come out monthly or bi-monthly. What are the chances?

Tom Conley
Downey, CA

(Editor's Note: We'd love to but our *Journal's* quarterly publication schedule taxes the volunteers who write and edit it pretty heavily as it is. We can't imagine increasing the publication frequency until we have closer to 8,000 members and something of a paid staff. Now, if all 2,500 of our members each went out and recruited three people...)

Dear Editor:

On July 7, my wife and I attended the Craft Alliance Exposition in St. Louis, MO. This was our first visit to a woodturners craft exposition and (I) was excited about the artistic workmanship that was exhibited. Until this time my wife was not too excited about woodturning.

I started turning at age 65 and am still 65, so you can see I am still in the spindle and small bowl areas. It amazed me to see such intricate techniques made from various types of wood.

There was one area that I noticed and I won't name the new or old faces, but some of the hollow vessels were well finished on the outside but the inside — when felt — revealed rough ridges and little or no finishing. When the price tag is $2,000 or more for a vessel, I myself would desire that the inside be finished as well as the outside.

Overall the exhibition should have been a success, with all the creative work that went into the turnings. This opened up a new area to me and my wife, as she was as excited as I was. Prior to this show, she showed very little interest in woodturning. Now when she calls her friends I hear her telling the callers about what she had experienced.

Thanks to all those woodturners who made our visit to St. Louis and the Craft show a pleasant experience.

By the way, is there some reason why some do not finish the inside of vessels?

Warren Leiper
Elgin, IL

(Reply to Warren Leiper from David Ellsworth): I certainly don't mind my name being mentioned as one turner who doesn't sand the interior of hollow vessels. True, I began by sanding the inside when I could get my hand into the hole. But around 1977, the holes got so small that internal sanding became impossible; to have done so would have overpowered the objects with too much technique and limited my freedom to explore design.

Today, I find the contrast of the unsanded interior quite refreshing to the sanded and polished exterior. In fact, the quality of my tool control on the interior is extremely important — in itself a personal signature of my work. Also, because I studied first as a potter, I have never feared exposing these elements of the "process of making" as an important factor of the objects that I make.

I am not a woodworker in the traditional sense — a furniture maker. So I'm not restricted by the belief that, "If you can see it, sand it." Obviously, it's a matter of personal choice.

Dear AAW:

In reply to Palmer Sharpless' "The Hustler" (September, 1987 issue, page 13):
A friend of mine gave me one of those "hustler" tools you talk about. I think it must be for keepin' the points sharp on the corners of a spindle, right next to the round part. I wouldn't use it on a pool cue — it ain't "user friendly" as they say.

Colorado Slim

Dear Editor:

RE: Questions and Answers from Vol. 1, No. 1 (September, 1986) page 13.

In reply to a question concerning the "dancing" of a fluted gouge on split or wormeaten wood, Alan Stirt made some suggestions, all of which have merit.

It would be my suggestion that the questioner try one of Dennis Stewart's spear- or lance-like turning tools. These tools, with a very small carbide tip, cut very smoothly in a narrow kerf. By rubbing the edge and backing off to a point prior to the "dance" a smooth cut can be obtained.

Robert J. McNeil
Cambria, CA

# Reminiscences: Michelle Holzapfel

I grew up among accomplished do-it-yourselfers; I had lots of exposure to tools and their uses. In high school art class, I was first exposed to the method of printing that involved carving wooden blocks. Even then, I was more interested in the carving than the printing. That led me to try my hand at sign carving, which proved to be quite a lucrative summer employment. Years later, my husband worked for a gentleman making burl-topped tables, a business that we eventually bought. I slowly re-acquainted myself with woodworking, even while raising two small boys.

I began woodturning on a small Sears lathe. It was love at first feel. Through my father I acquired a large machinist's lathe, that I've used ever since. I've found the compound tool holder to be ideal for turning eccentric rough stock with a minimum of physical trauma.

As I have a natural interest in, and appreciation for, geometric shapes and forms, I was captivated and inspired by the endless possibilities of the lathe as a means of generating such forms. The ability to play with variations of favorite shapes, the intersection of curves and planes, and endless experimentation with off-center and multiple-axis turning; all these are made available with the lathe. I consider it my most useful carving tool.

When I began turning, the best shapes were the simple, classical ones. They let the wood's character occupy the center stage. People loved this form of theater, and I'd often hear the comment, "What a gorgeous piece of wood." It began to irritate me, and I felt a bit lazy, exploiting the wood for its own beauty.

Eventually, I began to find my way through this problem. I wanted to say something more than, "Isn't wood beautiful?" but first, I had to figure out what to say and how to say it. First, I tried to find different shapes. This led me, next, to multiple-axis turning. Third, I experimented with cutting up and re-assembling turned forms. This led to many of the fruit, vegetable, and still-life pieces. These demanded a certain amount of surface detail, so I began to experiment with carving on the surface of a turned form.

It is thus that my work has come to be an ongoing experiment with form. Now, the grain or figure of the wood has become secondary in importance. My feeling for the organic beauty of wood is part of a larger empathy for all natural forms, rocks, shells, plants, and animals. All these forms are in my visual vocabulary, waiting to be used.

Recently I've sought to express more abstract ideas, ideas not completely within the natural realm. A lifetime of personal experiences can be a vast source of inspiration, but these are very tricky to convey; they tend to become remote or obscure. Putting an edge of dissonance on an otherwise harmonious form, or embodying both control and abandon in a single piece can yield something more powerful than the safer forms can. To mix a Pre-Columbian shape with high-tech details could successfully communicate some of the contradictions and tensions that are inherent in life.

To work in this way involves risk, but to me risk should be one's most precious tool. I think that everyone goes through a

self-imposed apprenticeship, emulating the work of people they admire. The richest source of information is that which has been amassed by generations of carvers, turners, potters, and weavers; the artists and artisans preceding us. I feel deeply indebted to them. If I speak through my work, it's not just with my voice, but also with "our" voices.

And yet we are behooved to move on. Everyone has the power to put their unique mark on their works, and their awareness of this can bring great freedom to their compositions. This process of inner development transcends the failure or success of any particular finished object. For me, self-discovery is both the impetus and the reward for my work.

# Commodity, Firmness and Delight

*By Wallace Macfarlane*

*NOTE: The following article first appeared in Wood News. It is reprinted here with Wallace Macfarlane's permission. Mr. Macfarlane is an AAW member who, in addition to turning wood in his Santa Ysabel, California shop, is a published science fiction author. Our thanks for the reprint permission.*

A pleasant man from New Mexico phoned one day and came by my shop. He subscribes to Wood News and knew me from having read a past article. We talked about wood, and I showed him how I make sawdust. He was twice as smart as I about collet, three-jaw, jam fit, cup and spigot chucks. He was informed about turning tools and sophisticated in their sharpening. As usual, when confronted by a dedicated engineer, I felt like a klutz. Until...

He asked if I'd like to see a sample of his work. He just happened to have one in his car. Of course I would. He brought back an object like an old-fashioned nut bowl with bark on the outside, a pedestal in the middle to put a nut on, and a little gavel for whacking it.

Oh dear me, it was a real dog. Everything was disproportionate, each part in uneasy relationship with the next. What was supposed to be smooth was not smooth. The pedestal was the wrong size. The decoration on the mallet was painful. The whole was vaguely offensive and unhumorously funny, like a stomach rumble during silent prayer.

A long time ago friends showed us their new offspring with an upper lip from chimpanzee genes not too far down the line. My smart wife cooed "What an interesting face." Then she gave the full measure of praise, "That's a baby!"

I said "How interesting" to the man from New Mexico. Happily unklutzed, I learned things from him about lathe speeds and S-curve tool rests. He was bright and able and ept. The only trouble was, he did not have the eye for the work. He could not "see." You might say he had a glass eye. Still, the challenge of turning wood was technically fascinating to him. I suggested bowls. How can an engineer screw up a bowl? He wasn't much interested. What he had in mind — I think — was to make complicated artistic creations for friends to admire. I look forward with some trepidation to the pepper grinders and candlesticks he might just happen to have in his car next time. Poor New Mexico.

You can dry out drunks and wire bedwetters for a shock and doctors can cure most anything but the common cold; there are still no "eye" transplants I ever heard of. A glass eye is like a tin ear. Except under the law, men are in no way created equal. The handicapped can usually be helped, but the guy with the glass eye has got to want to see.

Young friends tell me I have a tin ear when it comes to contemporary music, and that's why I like it. Most people with glass eyes like it their own way. They are the folks to assemble pre-cut grandfather clocks. They can do wonderful stuff as long as they have plans. They are often fine parents and model citizens and a force for good in their communities, but if you turn your back, in all innocence they are apt to make something on a lathe that will stink up the years.

What is this "eye" stuff? It has to do with "art", and there are not a lot of good definitions here. The Golden Rule the Greeks discovered as the proportions of the most agreeable rectangle for the human eye to rest upon seems to hold up. Sir Henry Wooton — in the time of the first Elizabeth — listed the desiderata of architecture as Commodity, Firmness, and Delight.

Commodity means designing to a function: don't make a small box if you want to put a gallon in it. Firmness means that a translucent bowl is no the place to store old plumb bobs. And without the last essential item, all food in the world is cold oatmeal, barracks are the only efficient housing, and a masher is not better than a rock, instead of having the potential of an elegant shape to ravish the senses (as well as mash potatoes).

In real life, the best thing is to point at something and say, "That's art." Imperial declarations aside, this is where disputation has occurred from the caveman on. At the lowest common agreement, every artifact is art, and after that the bloody war begins. "Arts and Crafts" is a division responsible for as much trouble as the War Between the States. People will draw swords and stick each other in the gizzard over "fine" and "utilitarian" art. Some claim that anything tainted by the mechanical is not art, and they will want to punch you in the nose when you ask where brushes and paint and canvas come from.

All this sort of discussion is flapdoodle. People who talk most fluently about art rarely commit it. The artist can be full of opinion not much better than the next guy's, but one of the indicators of an artist is that he gets some work done. Too often he also talks a lot, usually through his hat. Artists are better at doing it than defining it.

Before the Second World War, I saw a woodturner on a sidewalk in Port-au-Prince. He had a kid working the pedals of a bicycle frame by hand to power his homemade lathe. He had a chisel made from an old file. The work he turned from lignum vitae and mahogany was handsomely conceived and delicately executed. I still have a box he made. I have looked at it with pleasure for 40 some-odd years. If the "role model" psychologists talk about makes sense, mine is that skinny black man in rags in the summer of 1938 in Haiti.

Maybe he would have done better with a fancy lathe and five different kinds of chucks. I don't think so. By the magic of the spinning shaft and cunning hand, the wild and inexplicable mystique of woodturning generated an artifact which has given me pleasure for nearly a half century. It is the same mystery

involved in any endeavor when all preoccupation narrows to NOW, and later on you wonder where the time has gone.

At that, my Haitian woodturner had an advanced sort of lathe. Some folks power a lathe with a cord pulled by a big toe. Complex or simple really doesn't matter, the toe lathe or a Hegner. What is of consequence is, *does the turner have an eye*?

I've never found a better term than "eye" to describe this attribute, talent, function, ability. Some people are cooks, others are poets or mathematicians, some have the eye and others do not. I disagree heartily with the philosophy of an extraordinarily creative neighboring artist, but he has the eye. All the writhings and convolutions of his glass and bronzes are right in relation to themselves; they belong. An object at home with itself and integral, is one of the places where art begins. An automotive example of dissonance is the 1955 Nash Ambassador, or the pregnant white Buick of the same era. The executives responsible for those designs had eyes like dead codfish.

The National Geographic once made a TV program called "The Living Treasures of Japan." What the treasures turned out to be were the individuals who hand-made paper or dolls or whatever. Intentionally or not the common shot in all the sequences was the artist looking at what he had done. This is how you get the eye. You look around a lot. You look at what you're doing and cut a little here and a little there and when it's done you look some more.

There is no handy-dandy book called "How to Get an Eye," but it's possible to approach the subject and look at it a little: all things have a proper size. If you are not a midget or a basketball player you are the right size. I once worked at a desk next to the second tallest man in the United States. He was the wrong size.

From past experience, here are some ranges for "the right size" for a few turned objects:

A rolling pin including the handles can run form 10 to 18 inches long and should be about 3 inches thick. I made one 24 inches long and 6 inches in diameter. It was much admired but nobody bought it, so I gave it to my son, who needed a house gift for people who like too-big things. French rolling pins — those tapered ones — are about an inch in diameter and I've never made one; the kind I make are plus-or-minus 3 inches thick at the midpoint and up to 20 inches long. A pastry cook bought four, one after another for his friends.

Foot rollers are from 9 to 12 inches long and 2 inches-plus thick. Anything less is skimpy and anything longer is too much.

Culinary mashers can run from 6 to 24 inches, with either end of the scale a little specialized.

An ostrich egg is too big, but hen and goose and turkey size eggs are acceptable for darning eggs or as elegant ornaments. I sent away for a catalog from people who make wooden eggs, and after that I could tell my hostess the koa egg I'd bought her meant she could put a dollar value on my pleasure ($14.50 retail, not counting sales tax and postage).

A bowl can be a salad bowl for two people or a church social size, for holding chips or chocolates, or contact lenses. Bowls are as variable in size as the needs they meet.

Boxes are the same. I ask people what they're going to put in them and some people know: jelly beans and keys and cotton balls and matches and coins. An extraordinarily nice anthropologist told me she coiled her harp strings in one, so boxes are for whatever they're used for.

A 30-inch Lazy Susan is a dumb thing to make out of redwood for the hell of it — does anybody need one? Twelve to fourteen inches in diameter seems to be right for most purposes.

A champignon, for mashing stuff through a sieve, has a handle of handle size but the working surface can be from 2 to 6 inches in diameter depending on what you want to push through the interstices. They're an elegant tool, but the demand for them is underwhelming.

To close in on this subject of what-is-right from another direction: the wood should feel good. A friend with a store wanted to sell my things. He put some in a case and sold hardly any. While I try to make shapes as seductive as possible, there are a lot of folks not seducible by shape. The Coca-Cola bottle is not attractive to Pepsi fanciers. When my buddy put my treen in the open where you could cop a feel, he sold a bunch.

It took a while to find out how to finish. A lot of it is personal preference. Smooth, bare wood feels great, but is subject to affliction in everyday life. It attracts dirt like buzzards to a flat rabbit. Blackberry jam and ink jump at it. So I tried salad oil first. It wasn't nice. I rubbed in Danish oil and a lot of proprietary embrocations. Tried tung. All the oils were labor-intensive dust magnets. High maintenance besides. You had to oil and buff the stuff all the time.

Whatever you put on bare wood, including water, is going to change the color and feel. Because I live in an area where the air sucks water from kiln-dried wood from the coast, I had to have a finish to deter wood movement, to retard the moisture exchange between wood and atmosphere. Shellac didn't make it. Varnish was nasty bright — if you want to disguise wood as plastic try spar varnish — but satin polyurethane came close, especially after I found out how to avoid drips and sags and brush marks. How I learned was cleaning up my mistakes. Every once in a while, as Eve was tempted by the serpent, I think about a baby spray paint outfit. So far the idea of cleaning up the equipment has saved me.

I read an expert who deplored satin finishes because of the sludge in the product to make it less bright. He said to use gloss and hit it with steel wool to blur the sparkle. Uh-huh. I used the rest of the gloss on the concrete floor to make sweeping easier. I worked a long time to cut the glare on my treen.

What I ended up with as a finish was two coats of satin polyurethane, both steel wooled, and a coat of Johnson's paste wax to finish it off. It has a nice sheen, feels dandy and is durable. When you get people fondling the stuff with a far-away look in their eyes, kiddo, that's it.

Part of the game of wood is to work with as little effort as

# Commodity, Firmness and Delight

possible. I have power sanding tools, but I always seem to end up with sandpaper rolled around a roll of cloth. I keep trying new things that don't work for me, like grit on a sponge or a bar of bubbles blown in glass, and here I am, old efficient me, sitting on the bench with my feet on the old Shopsmith, wearing down medium steel wool, thinking there must be an easier way. None of this 4-aught stuff. I want action. Coarse steel wool scratches polyurethane and fine doesn't blur quickly enough. No question, I don't get the mirror finish so highly regarded by piano top makers. What my finish does is protect the wood, enhance the patterns and slow the attrition of time.

There are devoted people who want positive air pressure in a sterile room for finishing. I paint polyurethane at an outside bench under shade. The wind sometimes blows sawdust. 100-grit sandpaper and medium steel wool solve that problem. Finish affecionados who swap notes about rottenstone and oils from exotic places often make wonderful things to use with reverence or keep in a glass case. What I make is treen for everyday use. You also get feelies as part of the package.

Delight, Sir Henry Wooton's last item, is the one for which you need the eye. A good solution for the glass-eyed is to borrow Mr. Chippendales' eye. You can buy first-class plans lots of places. If you get your kicks in the production phase of woodwork, you very likely will make much better chairs than I.

Where it's at for me is in the shape of things. Bounded only by considerations of commodity and firmness, an unending world of delight is open. Always has been. Always will be. In Monte Alban out of Oaxaca, the museum is full of 600-year old pots and bowls in shapes you can buy from any potter today. Each is different. Some shapes are more shapely than others. As a test of that reality, set a dozen pots in a row. Or your own bowls. Arrange them in order of price or preference. You will find you have standards you never looked at before. Rearrange the bowls until they're right and come back after lunch and check again. If you mark numbers on the bottom and scramble the order, you can test your consistency a week later.

Delight is a matter of the first consequence. It is rarely discussed because it's hard to pin down important things. School boards may spend ten minutes on curriculum and two hours on the layout of the tool shed. It is much easier to approach the blueprintable, and avoid intangibles that squirm like quicksilver when you put a finger on them.

This is where the eye comes in.

This is where delight lives.

This is why I make treen.

I bust my gut trying. I've made ugly things, but it wasn't for want of good intentions. I turned an Art Deco box of silky Chinese elm with a deep groove in the edge of the lid and a couple more at the base and a cone-shaped knob to lift the top off. Nobody would touch it with a barge pole, nice finish and all, until a man came by and he bought it because he wanted it. Did he have all the discrimination and taste of a hungry dog? Was his discrimination frozen in time? Or was the design inherently good? I can't answer any of the above. However, I haven't made any more Art Deco stuff. That I can tell you.

Sometimes I get tired. I think I've made all the kinds of boxes there are. Treen is blah, and then mysteriously a new shape swims to the top of my head and I turn it three times dimensionally on the lathe. And walk out to the shop at bedtime to look — sometimes with delight — at how it turned out.

Anthropomorphism means ascribing human characteristics to things not human. I have made clever bowls and bland bowls and sexy bowls. I've done bowls that want to be cuddled and austere boxes and boxes that keep secrets. I once made a breadboard with button plugs —somebody gave them to me and I've since thrown the rest away — and that board did not like me. The feeling was mutual. Someone else had to sell it. I hope it found a compatible home — perhaps with the Addams family — or was burned.

There are woodturners who would no more sell one of their creations than they would sell a child. I am the proprietor of an orphan asylum — easy come, easy go — and am pleased to sell any child to a good home. Or a bad one. Maybe it will improve the environment.

The marketplace is the final checkpoint. Oh, I know about the One-Ear Van Gogh. Never sold a thing. I also know about Pablo Picasso who kept what he pleased and peddled the rest and ended up a millionaire.

Treen is different. To me, treen means objects of common household use, made of wood. If it doesn't find a common household, obviously I've done no good.

I still don't know what "art" means or what "creativity" is about. What I do know is that my incipient woodturner from New Mexico should take up some other line of work, because he has an eye like Raggedy Andy. I am obliged to him because his example has encouraged me to refurbish my old prejudices and hack my way through a wilderness of opinion to establish some fixed points and guideposts and trees to climb for a view of what's good and why.

The only beginning for a unified field theory about wood I've stumbled over is not awfully inspirational, but it comforts me and may comfort you: there is no end to it. Keep trying.

# Turning 9 to 5

*Shawn Christman, Page Editor*

## The Production Shop (Part 2 of a 2-part series)

*By David Behm*

### Time and Motion

The time it takes to produce a superior product by hand involves many factors, the most important of which is the conservation of motion. Make every movement count. I can usually turn simple staircase work or furniture parts with three tools; the big long-strong roughing gouge, a 1/2" square-nose chisel, and a fingernail gouge. Do all of the cutting you can with one tool before you stop and put that tool down and pick up another. The cutting steps should fall into place by the time you have the turning memorized, which should be by the second or third piece of a run. Once this memorization process takes place, a rhythm is developed which speeds the work up. Rhythm is important, and once you are caught up in it, quite a few pieces can be turned out before you even look at the clock. When you do finally look at that clock, and if things are going right, you will be amazed to say, "How did I turn that many pieces in two hours?"

Examples of economy of time and motion abound. Fancy Victorian turnings in red oak are a trial to many, especially those with tiny, delicate cuts on shoulders and coves. The layout should be made on as many sets of calipers as needed. The calipers should be set and locked and placed at hand in the order you will take to finish particular cuts; care should be taken not to mix up the sizes that are close. This eliminates the time it takes to read and set the calipers for complicated turnings. Every single movement saved is time saved without the sacrifice of quality. Never make two passes when one will suffice with enough pressure put on the piece.

Time spent sharpening tools is necessary non-productive labor. Eliminate sharpening time by procuring the best tools available. I prefer Sorby, Marples, Old Buck tools, and hand-made, high-speed, heat treated tools made for me by a local cutler who is, himself, a superior craftsman. For fast cutting on the harder woods such as curly maple, rosewood, etc., you can't beat high speed steel; it will turn blue, but the temper will not be drawn from the edge as much as with other tool steels. This saves grinding time. If a good edge on a carbon steel tool is blued by the heat of friction, it has to be ground back and sharpened. Furthermore, this edge will almost always roll over when applied to a cut. Cheap steel never made a dime for any craftsman. It pays in the long run to buy the very best available. Upon request, I will gladly supply the name and address of the craftsman who makes tools for me.

By the way, music helps production. I once worked in a chair shop producing Windsor chairs. The radio was nailed to a hard rock station which blasted constantly. I am no devotee of rock and roll, and when I complained, the owner stated that rock and roll was worth ten extra chairs per week, as it "charged up" the employees. I prefer other types of music, but he was right! I'm told that even cows produce more milk when music is played in the milking parlor.

### Tools, Equipment, and Setup

Everything in your shop must be geared towards its efficient operation. For example, over the years Colonial and Victorian restoration have shown themselves to be steady money-makers; this is a demand that must be met. To do this, your shop must be equipped with the proper tools and machinery to handle almost any job along these lines that shows up at the door, on the phone, or through the mail. Practically speaking, this means at least two lathes (one long-bed machine that will take up to a 9' column, and then a smaller high-speed machine for the rest of the work) and a range of stock-preparation tools (planer, jointer, table saw, band saw, drill press, and drum sander).

And those are only the bare-bones minimum bench tools that you need to get started in a production shop. As your business grows you will probably want to upgrade your tools and equipment in order to obtain more efficiency. Efficiency, of course, is time, is money. The best tools and machines in the hands of a skilled craftsman can produce more work with less effort.

When figuring shop time in dollars, every aspect must be taken into account. If you don't, you will have to pay someone to do it for you. It takes a few months of operation before this can even be appreciated. By the sixth month, you should have a good idea of how much it costs to turn that key in the lock every morning.

### The Bottom Line, Revisited

The bottom of the bottom line is to be able to pay the bills! If you cannot do that, the business fails and you are back on the road again looking for a job with someone else. The job market for hand turners is not that good. The Hillerich & Bradsby Co. of Louisville, Kentucky has only two hand turners turning bats for major league ball players who have provided individual specs. I am told that at one time they had 350 hand lathes in operation. Machines have taken over the bulk of the turning market, but there will always be a niche for superior quality, hand turned elements to serve the discerning customer.

# Our First Annual Symposium..

## Lexington, Kentucky 1987

| Symposium Stats | |
|---|---|
| Total Attendees | 243 |
| Spouses | 51 |
| Exhibitors | 10 |
| Total Revenue | $35,002.75 |
| Expenses | $34,821.65 |
| Net income for First Annual Symposium | $181.10 |

*Since pictures speak louder than words, here is our report:*

*Photo Credits: Hilbert Camp, Dan Kvitka, Bob Rubel*

# n...

## 87

Carl Rich actually went around to each turning displayed at our "instant gallery." He counted 213 pieces made from 57 species of wood. Of these:

48 were walnut

28 were maple

9 were cherry

6 each were box elder, cocobola, ebony, lilac, magnolia and oak.

92 were other woods that he also catalogued. Space prevents printing the entire list. If you want it, send SASE to our office.

# A Toolmaker/Designer at Work — Trial and Error

*By Jim Thompson*

It all started in 1974 with a "high quality name-brand" lathe. The lathe had been with me for only six months before I encountered some problems when turning bowls. At first I thought that the problem was with my turning tools. Later I realized that many of the problems were with the lathe, itself. But I am getting ahead of myself.

When I first began to have bowl-turning problems, I began to re-work my tools. This was pretty easy for me, because I am in the tool grinding business. My first home-made tool was a carbide tip, silver soldered to a piece of three-quarter inch steel. It worked well, but the carbide needs to be sharpened on a diamond wheel and these are too costly for a weekend turner. I was looking for a tool that anyone could afford to use, and that would last forever. The answer came sometime later when I was using my metal lathe. I saw that the tool holder had a replaceable bit that could be changed very easily. They were three-eights of an inch square, so I machined an appropriate-sized slot in a piece of steel, welded a thin plate over the top, tapped it for set-screws (to hold the bit in place) and now had a new tool.

This tool worked reasonably well, but it still had some problems. First, the handle was too short; filling it with lead shot helped. Second, the bit was too wide and would not swing from side to side. This second problem lead to the next generation of this tool. Now, I put a one-quarter inch bit in the three-eighth inch slot. This would let the bit sit at an angle to either side. This swinging tip would also enable me turn a bowl with a smaller mouth.

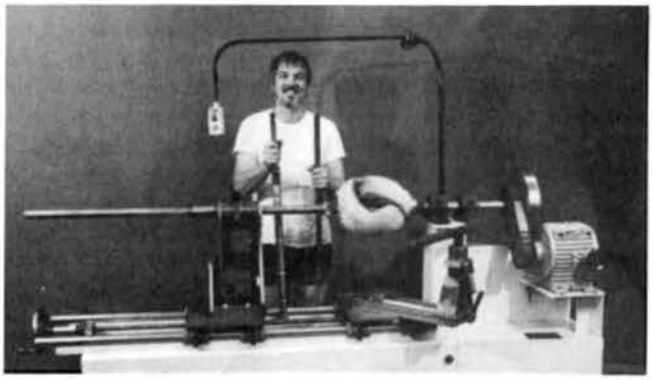
Even after these improvements, there was still some problem with the tip of this new turning tool. I felt that the problem lay with the square steel bit holder. The old saying about a square bit in a round bowl mouth is true; it will hang up easily and blow your work to pieces. So I made a round tool bit holder with a hole bored in the end to hold the bit.

The round shaft worked, but now the bit would not swing. Back to the drawing board. A slot in the round shaft came next. I rigged a way to pinch the bit. This worked. The revised tool that came from this set-up is what I use today. It is a round rod with a small flat cut on one side to "ride" the tool rest. This is a reference to find the tool bit when it is deep in a bowl and you can't see the tip. The bit itself is in a slot and will swing from left to right; this lets you change the angle so the bit can attack the wood at the proper angle. The shaft will extend inside the tubular handle and this gives you great leverage.

If this description seems long and involved, kindly have sympathy; the actual process took almost seven years and about forty tools to perfect.

But so much for working on the tool. NOW let me describe what I found out about the LATHE.

During the tool development process, the lathe I was using went through some changes as well. I started with a Powermatic-45. At first, it worked well, however, I soon had problems. The first problem was the motor. For some reason (probably cost), most lathe manufacturers seem to use a continuous-run electric motor. A continuous-run motor does not have a very large starting winding. If you are constantly turning your lathe on and off and on and off and on and off — you get the idea —



the continuous-run motor will not last. A farm-duty motor has large starting windings. So I changed out my motor.

The second problem was speed; the lathe was just too fast. As it had a variable pulley set up, but a pulley change was an easy way to reduce the speed.

The third problem was the tool rest. The one that came with the machine had to go, since the casting broke. I made a new and longer one, with a round tool rest.

The fourth problem was the swing over the bed. I wanted more, more, MORE — anyway a little more. So I installed one-inch spacers under the head stock and tail stock to make my machine a true twelve inch lathe.

Finally, I decided that I had had enough of modifying someone else's image of what a LATHE should be, so I built one myself.

My first homemade lathe was really set up for spindle turning. It is nine feet long and would swing twenty-six inches over the bed. I set this lathe up as a duplicating lathe. The ways were precision linear bearing so the tool rest would be free to move. This little guy has been with me for seven years, and I still use it. Sure, it has changed some — I can't resist modifying it even if it is my own design — but it is still working well.

Using the linear bearing lead to a discovery that has turned out to be a great time saver. The tailstock and tool rest run on the precision bearing. They can be cranked back and forth through a gearbox and rack gear. The tailstock shaft and crank can be removed and a new shaft put in their place. This shaft is thirty-six inches long and has interchangeable bits. You use the bit size that is close to the mouth size of the bowl that you intend to turn. Now you turn the lathe speed down nice and slow (thirty to fifty RPMs) and turn the tailstock infeed crank so that you bore a hole down the center of the piece. The tool rest can then be put down the hole and you can turn the inside with ease.

I have had some problems devising ways to adequately reduce the speed of the lathes that I have designed. I started out with plain vanilla — variable speed pulleys. The problem with variable speed pulleys is that the highest ratio that I could find was 8.5:1. This means that my low-end range will be 100 to 850 RPM when I use a 1725 RPM motor. This will work well on most lathes. However, I needed something that would give me 30 RPM, and unless I set up a counter shaft, I could not get it using any variable speed pulleys known to me.

So I looked for a while at a variety of drives. D.C. drives — I

blew one up — and all types of mechanical units. None had the right ratio for me. About two years after identifying my problem and launching my quest, I walked into a power transmission supplier and there was the drive of my dreams. It was a hydrostatic speed variator. It would let you turn clockwise or counter-clockwise, 0-1,800 RPM with high torque.

But as we all know about life's problems, once one problem is solved it simply makes room for another one.

The headstock bearings gave me fits from the very beginning. I used regular pillow block bearings, but it turned out that they have too much running clearance. They would chatter when doing a tall or deep piece. Thinking back to my college days, when I pulled second shift at a local mining equipment manufacturer, I found the answer. I remembered that when I used to build conveyors we used a crank shaft. The crank ran on bearings that could be adjusted for internal clearance. So I adapted that old technology to my new lathe and it worked like a charm. Once this bearing set-up was properly adjusted, it gave me a smooth running chatter-free headstock.

The last problem to be knocked off was that of the overall weight of the lathe. Initially, I had built it out of four-inch square tubes. The frame was strong enough, but if you turn a piece twenty inches in diameter even six or seven ounces out of balance, it still will bounce the lathe across the floor. The lathe weighs almost one thousand pounds and when it started to bounce about, I did the thing most folks do, weight it down. I bolted it to eight sheets of three-quarter inch plywood (incidentally, never bolt a lathe to the floor — it will either break the lathe or pull the bolts out of the floor). The plywood helped but next came six sacks of sand, all helped but didn't solve the problem. Next, I moved a 200-pound weight near the center-line of the headstock. This helped the most. I tried to install weight on the piece after I turned the outside. It was a pain to work around, but it worked. So I began to re-think the whole issue of weight and "walking" lathes.

And what came to mind was that the vibration reminded me of a car's wheel out of balance. So I made a disk similar to a cake pan and installed it on the outboard end of the lathe. I put magnets inside the disk to approximate the weight of the block of wood mounted on the faceplate and solved the problem where it starts, on the headstock shaft. My new lathe weighs almost fifteen hundred pounds, but four ounces of magnets bunched together swinging inside of a twelve inch disk (purposefully off-center) will cause it to dance across the floor. That is how critical balancing is.

These "final versions" of my lathe and tool have evolved from turning thousands of bowls. Some of the equipment I used and some of the solutions I have adopted may seem strange to some of you, but the tool and lathe lets me put all my energy and talent into the bowl and ends the fight with the equipment. With this set up, turning a piece end-grain that is twenty inches in diameter, twenty-four inches tall, with one-quarter inch wall thickness takes about four hours. After you've practiced some.

Epilogue: Solving my lathe and tool problems has evolved into my new line of work. I still sharpen some tools, but I expend most of my energies building these lathes and tools.

# *President's Page*

evolved to include a much broader range of objects than ever before; objects that often function on an aesthetic level rather than on a practical level — objects that maximize the use of technique and are therefore limited in their availability. These are objects whose beauty is unsurpassed, and they are appropriately expensive.

What has not changed are the basic principles of marketing: discover a need; create an object to fill that need; establish a price at which that object will sell. Question: What are we woodturners offering the general public — the "average" man, woman, and child — in terms of objects that are functional, well designed, and affordable? And, considering the current incentives to create decorative objects, isn't it true that a huge percentage of our real sales market is walking right by our craft booths and gallery shelves saying, "Very pretty, but even if I could afford it, what would I DO with it?"

**Balance.**

I am not questioning the validity of the decorative work that is currently being made. Obviously, the field of woodturning would hardly exist as we know it today without these objects and the public attention they have received. Instead, my concerns are for the younger turners entering the field today — turners who are quite capable of making beautiful objects WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE FUNCTIONAL. But in truth, only a fraction of the general public supports a fraction of today's woodturners — some of the time. How do we get the rest of the public to support the rest of us ALL OF THE TIME?

Personally, I believe that successful marketing is based on growth and, therefore, requires balance. I don't think that this balance will come by continuing to put price tags on the objects that we already make. But I do think that it can come by expanding our horizons and by focusing our design energies on the objects we have *yet* to make — both functional and non-functional objects. Achieving this balance may very well be the challenge of the next decade.

## Flash!!!

The "Art versus Craft" dilemma has been solved.

On the eve of July 23, 1987, millions of loyal fans of NBC's Wheel of Fortune, the most popular television program in America, witnessed a remarkable event.

The story unfolded as the leading contestant attempted to solve that day's "mystery phrase," the climax of the program. The grand prize: a Toyota 4WD "Four Runner." Tension built as Vanna White exposed five of the 13-letter phrase under the category THINGS. The answer came with only seconds remaining....ARTS AND CRAFTS! "That's right!" blurted the MC, old what's his name, and we all eased back into our seats.

And so, with great relief, artists and craftspersons can now return to their studios, confident that the objects we produce have attained a new identity in the hearts and minds of Americans. The Arts and Crafts dilemma is finally over: we make THINGS.

# Reviews

*Peter Hutchinson, Page Editor*

## Works Off the Lathe: Old and New Faces

By Robyn Horn

As a collector and a turner, I probably have a somewhat different view of a turning show than most. I will have to say that "Works Off the Lathe: Old and New Faces" was one of the most diverse turning shows I have ever seen.

Albert LeCoff, the curator, was proud of the fact that he had invited each of the exhibitors by challenging them to explore themselves and the use of the lathe with special emphasis on the "personal statement" each turner wanted to make.

There were a number of "best" pieces in the exhibit. For instance: David Ellsworth's incredible combination of shape, size and technique; Todd Hoyer's expert use of weight versus form; Bruce Mitchell's perfectly combined carved, graceful lines with grayed natural edge; Giles Gilson;s impeccable 29" high whitepearl vase with necklace; Al Stirt's big leaf maple ceremonial bowl that is carved with perfection.

There were also a number of "new faces" (maybe not totally new, but relatively) who were equally inspiring. Michael Mode's spalted lidded containers uniquely turned in a series from the same log; Don Kelly's innovative round red oak wall hanging; Michael Brolly's sinister "Luna Ray" with searing curly maple eyes.

In addition to the wood turned pieces there were metal turnings such as Lynne Hull's spun stacked aluminum work, several turned furniture pieces such as Thomas McGovern's cement and bronze work, and a mixed media piece including wood, bronze, silver, and aluminum by Dennis Stewart.

I think it is important to note the support the exhibitioners showed for Albert's promotional efforts first by coming up with such great work for the show, and second by some exhibitors attending the show. Present were Todd Hoyer, Ed Moulthrop, Mike Brolly, and Frank Cummings.

It was noticeable that during the preview of the show and during Albert's lecture things couldn't have run more smoothly, this due to the fine efforts of Craft Alliance's director Barbara Jedda and her staff.

There is a catalog of black and white photos and a folder of color slides available. Compared to the 1981 "Gallery of Turned Objects" catalog (also curated by Albert LeCoff), the "Works Off the Lathe: Old and New Faces" catalog is the only disappointment about the show. Instead of the work exhibited in the show, many of the artists sent photos of themselves which are nice, but not what you are spending your $10 for. The color slides were a little better, but more of an investment at $40.

I was impressed with Albert's dedication to turning that can be seen in the intensity and diversity of the show. He is certainly energetic about promoting turning in general. He says, "...even a carver carves on his work as he 'turns' it in his hand." I am much more of a purist when it comes to turning. You can't beat a beautiful wood burl, but it is always interesting to see artists who are continually redefining the applications of the lathe and exploring the never ending interpretations of lathe materials.

It was a good show.