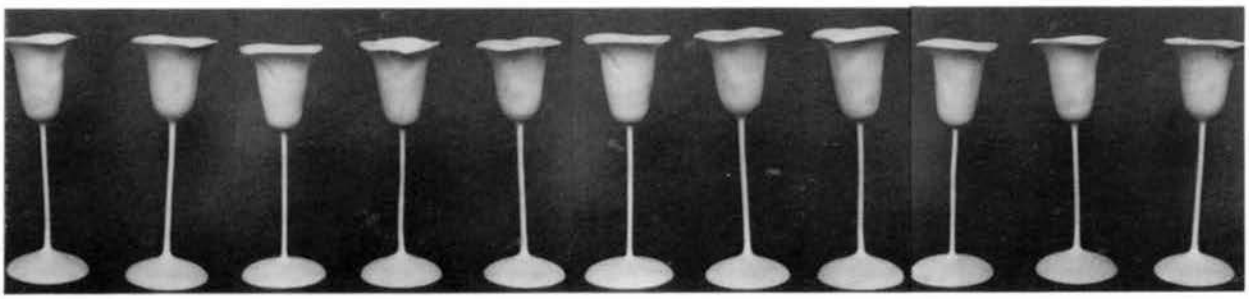
American Woodturner

The Journal of the American Association of Woodturners June 1992 $5.00 Vol. 7, No. 2



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

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Alan Lacer, AAW President

Turning organizations, who needs them? This concern is sometimes strongly voiced, and at other times there is a silent concern that becomes eventful. This question has hounded national organizations worldwide and is also active on a local level with turning chapters and clubs. The words and deeds that answer this question determine the life expectancy of these organizations.

Even though turning organizations, national or local, are relatively new (at least in being different from a trade organization), there have already been a surprising number of failures. Sometimes the way to understand something is to look at its opposite: *what caused these groups to fail?* This may be a better question to start with than asking how to build a strong organization that fills a niche. If I can enlarge a bit from just woodturning groups to woodworking organizations in general, here is what I have encountered in groups that were seriously struggling or that folded: one person did too much (either by choice or default); the group never gained an identity of purpose (what it was clearly in the business of doing and where it was going); internal rifts, backbiting, and bickering (such as between "professionals" and "hobbyists"); becoming more social in nature than focused on specific events and tasks that aid members in pursuit of their interest; too much time and energy given to the business of the organization and not enough to the craft; stagnation—failure to grow, mature, become richer over time, blossom, or remain fresh; lack of follow-through by members or officers. Sure, there are also the familiar bugaboos that haunt any organization like poor communication, weak leadership, and disorganization, but in a volunteer organization we will be a bit more tolerant of these transgressions if fundamental needs are being met. It is when members' basic needs are thwarted that we see a floundering organization. Not all organizations disappear because of this, some just diesel along at a very low level of effectiveness.

Why do individuals support or get involved in organizations in the first place? I think it is for one or both of these reasons: they directly benefit from supporting that organization and/or they believe in what the organization is doing. The first reason is rather egocentric and a bit selfish—but, then, that is a component of every person's "self." The problem with it is that it is always a moving target: the status quo soon becomes insufficient, and members ask the organization, "what have you done for me lately?" The other reason, belief in what the organization is doing, is far less egocentric in terms of direct benefits, but may be at least as powerful. Many of us donate money, time, household goods, and turned pieces to causes we believe in, even though we may not directly benefit. For instance, donating $50 to cancer research or to rainforest protection or to assist victims of an earthquake in Kashmir are examples of this low-level selfishness.

Interesting points, but what do they have to do with woodturning organizations and their life expectancy and whether or not they are really necessary? I think that most of the reason why groups fail, why individuals get involved or why they support the organization ultimately comes down to the question: *what does the organization do?* This is not what the organization says it stands for or plans to do, but always, what it has done. I remember from an old poem, "the house of the planter is known by its fine trees." We are more products of the decisions we have made and the acts we have completed than we are products of our intentions, hopes, and aspirations. Are the things we have done always fresh, alive, and maturing? Are there new developments that will hold the interest of members into the future—activities that the group is actively working on and not just contemplating? What we do and intend to implement holds the key to the life of any organization.

So, at the local-club level, what are your meetings like—what do you do? Is half of the time spent on business activities and the other half on socializing? Or do you have interesting demonstrations, discussions, critiques, hands-on activities that relate to the craft and that dominate the meeting? Do you hold field trips to production shops, mills, museums, galleries, and studios? Do you have collective lumbering outings or perform public demonstrations or demonstrations in area schools? What about collective exhibitions in the community? Maybe have "open shop" days targeted to members new to turning? And several times a year do you bring in outside turners to demonstrate or talk to the group—both the known and not-so-well known? Or how about establishing small conferences in your area every few years? Do you do collective buying in bulk to reduce costs to members? Do you organize trips to other chapters, regional or national conferences? Does your newsletter have any meat between the pages—do you even have a newsletter? Do you have a large treasury but tend not to spend it? Do you have a library of books and tapes that can be checked out by members? If your chapter or club does not do any of these things, why in the hell do you even have an organization? If I were a gambler, I would place a sizable bet that you won't long be a viable group. I suggest a healthy exercise: review what your group has done for the last year.

National organizations have had many of the same problems. I have heard it asked in other countries that have local and national groups: why join a national, especially if the local meets most of my needs? We certainly have had that problem here, with some active chapters having less than 20 percent of their members belonging to the national. So, what does a national organization provide or do? We have learned that to just exist is not enough—neither is just having a journal or conducting a national conference each year enough. The decision was made early on in the AAW to have a journal format to the organization rather than a newsletter—good decision! What's more important though, is that the journal has evolved, grown, improved, matured. If you have been with us for a few years, look back to your first issue and notice the developments over time—each editor made real strides over what had gone before, and each editor developed the journal the longer he or she worked

(Continued on page 37)

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Vol. 7, No. 2 June 1992

AMERICAN WOODTURNER is published quarterly by the American Association of Woodturners, 667 Harriet Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55126. Second-class postage paid at St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to AMERICAN WOODTURNERS, 667 Harriet Avenue, Shoreview, MN 55126

NOTE: AAW does not endorse any product featured or advertised in this journal.

Contents

ON THE COVER

Alan Lacer using a skew to turn a goblet and photos of finished goblets. See page four for Alan's article on the skew.

American Woodturner is published quarterly, March, June, September, and December, by the American Association of Woodturners. Yearly membership in the American Association of Woodturners is $25 U.S.A., $30 Canada, and $40 overseas and includes a subscription to *American Woodturner*. Send dues to Mary Redig, AAW Administrator, 667 Harriet Avenue, Shoreview, MN 55126, U.S.A. Send articles and advertising to the Editor.

STARTING WOODTURNING ON A BUDGET

Ian Hamilton Wilkie

There are many people who, inspired by the work of professional woodturners, would like to "have a go," but are put off by the apparent high cost of lathes, tools, and the many accessories that are featured in glossy advertisements. I am sure that this is as true in the U.S. as it is in the United Kingdom. I teach woodturning, and my aim is to show beginners what they can accomplish with a simple, low-cost lathe, a faceplate, and a few basic tools.

I selected a Record Power Tool DML 24 Lathe (photo 1) because it is well made, solid, very quite, relatively inexpensive, and has the same headstock thread as a number of larger machines, which means that should beginners wish to graduate to a bigger lathe, they can keep the accessories. Moreover, the smaller lathe will always be in demand on the second-hand market. Its two disadvantages are its limited bowl-turning capacity (9 inches) and the fact that to adjust the toolrest and headstock, spanners, rather than levers, are used; this slows down the turner, but this is no problem for a beginner. The motor is 1/3 hp and it has three speed options, 2000, 950, and 450 rpm. The distance between centers is 24 inches. This lathe is supplied with a 4-prong drive, a solid-cone center, and a 10-inch toolrest.

There is a great deal to be learned about the selection of chisels and about carbon steel versus high-speed steel (HSS). For my students' basic turning needs, I recommend the following (photo 2):

3/4" roughing-out gouge
1/2" to 3/4" skew chisel with an oval section
3/8" spindle gouge
1/8" diamond parting tool

As for scrapers, the first choice is usually a 1/2" round-nose tool that can always be ground to shape as required. Many students opt for carbon steel because it is less expensive than HSS.

Many potential woodturners armed with a lathe and chisels face disappointment unless they are willing to invest some hard earned money in instruction. Their reluctance to do this often results in yet another second-hand, slightly used lathe and set of blunt chisels for sale. Moreover, a lathe, blunt tools, and little woodturning experience can be dangerous!

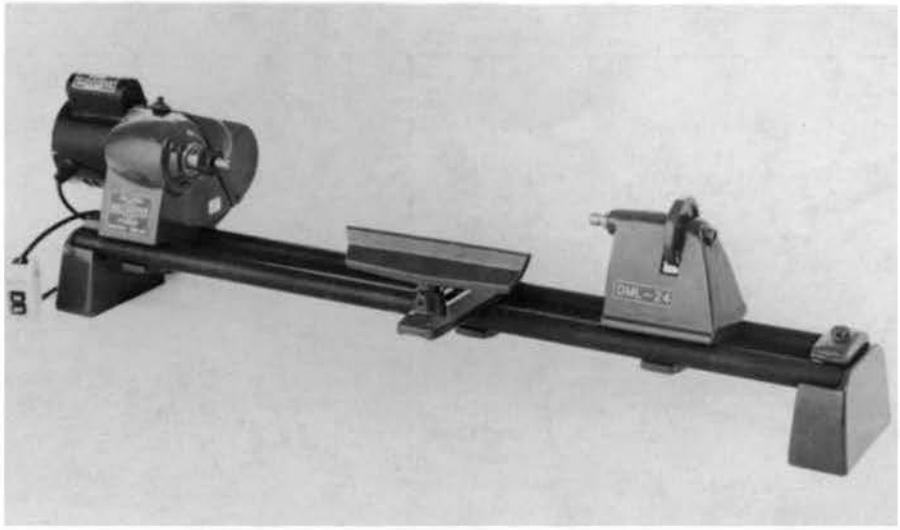


Photo 1 The Record Lathe is an example of an excellent starter lathe.

I will describe the one-to-one basic course that I teach in my own workshop so that you will have some idea of what to look for when you go shopping for woodturning instruction. This course lasts for two days; the first day concentrates on between-center turning, the second day faceplate turning. Safety is emphasized at all times.

The first twenty minutes of day one are spent explaining the parts of the lathe and safety rules; most students commence turning within twenty minutes of arriving. All wear goggles or a face shield and a dust mask with barier cream to protect their skin.

The first tool students use is a roughing-out gouge to turn square to round spindles between centers. I fit a solid-ring center in the headstock which is more forgiving than a 4-prong drive center should the student dig-in. The tailstock center is well lubricated because at this stage the student has not been introduced to a live center. The ring center demands a light touch which is no bad thing. The student repeats the exercise several times until the significance of the bevel is fully appreciated. After a coffee break, not, I hasten to add, in the dusty workshop, the student is introduced to a spindle gouge and learns to cut "V" and curved sections. By lunch time they have usually completed exercise number one which consists of making a garden dibber or tool handle, suitably sanded if necessary, and oiled.

Photo 2, starter set of turning tools

After lunch, forty minutes are spent on sharpening a gouge on a bench grinder and a skew chisel on an oilstone. For this exercise, I have a number of chisels specifically set aside for the task. Some students, who have already purchased their own tools, sharpen them and thereafter use their own tools. Many students find it difficult to see how evenly the metal has been ground off; to make the task easier, I have them paint the bevels with a broad red spirit pen before grinding.

The next exercise involves the use of the skew chisel, which some find difficult, but the main principles are usually understood, and practice will certainly improve their skills with this tool. The final exercise of the day

Photo 3, bud vase project

involves making a small bud vase (photo 3). Because the student has not been introduced to a tailstock drill chuck or to a screw chuck, the vase is turned between centers. I usually pre-drill the blank 5/8 inch to take a glass tube and plug the hole temporarily for turning rather than attempt to drill the completed vase in a drill press or by hand. During the exercise the students learn to develop a shape, but they are given a plan to aid them. In general, most students produce an acceptable vase; some have time to spare to make a second of their own design.

Day two involves turning a bowl on the 4-inch faceplate and starts with an explanation plus examples of the various uses and home-made jigs for a faceplate. In the morning they make a small bowl out of 5- to 6-inch diameter wood such as lime or sycamore. They mount a block directly to the faceplate and true up the base and turn, sand, and polish the outside. Before removing the half-completed bowl, they poke a *small* hole in the center of the base. This center hole will match up with a center pin attached to a glue chuck. The student turns the glue chuck from a thick piece of oak and inserts a center pin made from a small nail with its head removed (photo 4). I used to use "super glue" with an activator to stick the bowl to the chuck but I did not like the smell and it tended to be rather too quick for students. Now I use a 100-second hot-melt glue stick in a glue gun and find this excellent. The student now turns the inside, sands, and polishes and by lunch has produced a bowl. Technique rather than form is the priority at this stage, but some students do produce splendid bowls.

Photo 4, glue chuck with centering pin

Photo 5, lidded box project

After lunch the student is introduced to the parting tool and scrapers. The last exercise is then tackled, which is to produce a small box and lid (photo 5). This task introduces the student to working inside a restricted area in order to emphasize the need for accuracy.

* * *

Although safety is paramount during all stages of the instruction, I endeavor to ensure that the students enjoy themselves. Turning as a hobby should be fun, and once the basic techniques have been explained, demonstrated, and tried, students will be able to develop their skills safely in their own workshops.

I end the course with some recommendations on machines, tools, and accessories to meet each student's needs and pockets.

I know it's a long way to come, but should you be passing . . . !

Ian Wilkie ready to turn wood

Ian Hamilton Wilkie, aged 54, retired from the Royal Air Force four years ago, and after completing a furniture- restoration course, set up a one-man workshop in the beautiful rural county of Herefordshire, England, known for its famous cattle and cider. He makes and restores model ships, carries out restoration projects mainly involving turned items, and teaches woodturning. He describes himself as a full-time amateur woodworker who enjoys talking and writing about his subject.

A TRUCE WITH THE SKEW

Alan Lacer

This is not an article about technique. If you are a "results only" turner I hope you will stay with me. This is really about self-worth, intelligence level, and sanity. All of this is based upon the following question: How can such an innocent-looking piece of flat steel do so much to frustrate, modify designs, reduce planned sizes, and destroy one's nerves?

I first encountered problems with this tool while teaching bowl-turning classes a number of years ago. Students would quietly ask me about the skew, and when trying to explain or demonstrate its use, I quickly discovered that I was quite inept. Strange tool. It didn't seem to respond to being horsed through the wood and certainly caused serious problems if it was not properly ground and sharpened. I took it upon myself not to let an inanimate object win. It does win if it is relegated to non-use in a dark corner of a tool box; and the ultimate victory of the skew is to be ground into a round-nose scraper—unconditional surrender by the turner!

Over the years I have tried to tackle any turning job that came my way, trying not only to be concerned with bowl turning, but also with doing a broad spectrum of turning activities including between-center jobs. In that arena one quickly finds that the skew is a worthy companion for particular cuts and detail—even far better than the noble gouge. And there are cuts and wood that using scraping tools for would be a joke of the highest order—unless you don't mind: eliminating crispness in your work or torn end grain or if detail is not a signature of your work or if you plan to paint everything with six coats of enamel.

To start our foray into mastering the skew, we have to take a hard look at safety. You *will* get catches, have massive dig-ins, and cut deep slashes in your work when learning and using this tool. If these events don't happen, please donate your body to science after you go so that we may study your composition! These mishaps have both a safety concern as well as a fear factor—unless you can be comfortable and secure in dealing with these problems you will probably never progress with the skew. Fortunately there is plenty we can do to help.

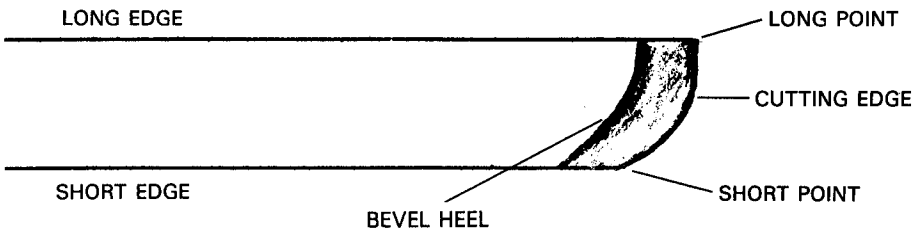
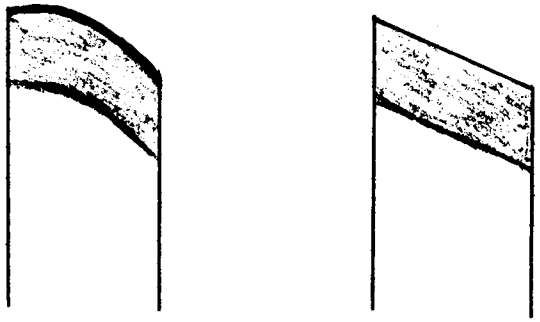


Diagram 1



PROFILE VARIATION: ON BOTH TOOLS THE SUGGESTED ANGLE FROM LONG TO SHORT POINT IS 65-70 DEGREES

Diagram 2

Buy yourself a full faceshield. Get a good one that wraps around your face and is made of a quality material such as Lexan. Goggles and safety glasses are not enough protection—with some of the accidents that have happened in turning, you might as well be wearing safety contact lenses. And it certainly does not provide protection if you leave the faceshield hanging on the wall—unless, of course, you have an area of designer wallpaper that you are protecting. Wear the damn faceshield! When learning how to use the skew, you have to get your face rather close to the action—you won't want to unless you are wearing a faceshield.

Next, position a swing-arm lamp so that it throws light onto the area of wood being turned. I do not like florescent lights in my shop, so my lathe is under a window and an overhead sky light, and my incandescent light shines behind the work. When cutting with a skew, you are sometimes a micro millimeter from total disaster. If you can't see the area clearly, you will have numerous surprises and be stumped as to why. The solution may be as simple as adding more light. (And as many of us know, the older a person gets, the more light their eyes require.)

Perhaps one of the best ideas I have come across in years has to do with how the wood is driven by the lathe. I guess we have all been bottle fed into believing that we should use a prong center in the headstock to drive the wood and either a dead center or live center in the tailstock end. It's time to rethink that. Most lathes come with a dead center that we all quickly find burns, drills, or excavates a piece if you don't use beeswax, oil, lard, or b'ar grease in the cup area to calm it down. So most of us throw it away in time and obtain a live center. This is only half right. Do obtain a live center for the tailstock, but keep that dead center as it may be the best way to drive the work piece from the headstock side. That's right, to drive the wood. The "better ones" have a removable center pin. This is important for making a few modifications that improve its use. First, put the dead center in the headstock, minus its center pin if possible. Next, place a drill bit (just undersize of the cup's recess) in a Jacobs chuck in the tailstock and drill into the dead center in order to

increase the depth of the recess by about 25 to 50 percent. Then take a fine-cut file and file the outside rim of the dead center in order to increase the sharpness of the rim. Both procedures are to allow the center to get a good bite into the wood. I will then use a deadblow mallet to drive the center into the end of the piece to be turned before mounting it onto the lathe.

There are a number of advantages to using a dead center: you can vary the pressure on the piece to allow slippage if a catch occurs; it gives a bit more clearance to get in close to the end of a piece without contending with the wing on a spur center; work can be put on or taken off the lathe without losing the center; the ends of long pieces can be reversed to either gain more support from the headstock or in order to work more comfortably; and it dramatically reduces the chance of throwing a piece off the lathe. This feature of the center—to purposely slip when a minor dig-in or a major catch occurs—is both a safety measure as well as a fear-reduction system, to say nothing about saving a piece from total destruction. In demonstrations I often show its effectiveness by jabbing a tool into the wood in a careless way to illustrate that the wood simply stops spinning. (Note: you control the amount of desired slippage by the amount of pressure from the tailstock.) If you know that the wood will not explode when something goes awry, you will be more confident in learning how to use the tool. This technique must have been created for the skew.

It appears that the use of the dead center in the headstock has been around for eons, and it pops up in many corners of the world, often with some interesting variations. One version I came across was what Clay Compton out in Tennessee does. Clay has been turning for over fifty years and tells me that he has been using the dead center for about twenty years. His variation is to grind a sawtooth pattern into the rim of the center, with a slight angle against the direction of rotation. This gives more of a bite into the wood rather than relying upon friction. Another variation I've seen is to grind a scallop pattern into the rim, once again to add a biting action.

TOOL CONFIGURATION

The skew can be nothing more than a piece of flat steel with an edge ground on one end. But alas, such simplicity overlooks the subtlety of this tool. To begin with we must share a common language of the parts of the skew. In Diagram 1, the parts are identified.

The first issue to discuss has to do with the shape of the cutting edge. Most turners are familiar with the skew ground at an angle of approximately 65 to 70 degrees (you may have purchased a skew ground anywhere from 45 to 85 degrees, however, 65 to 70 degrees is a sound working angle for the cuts I'll be describing). A variation of the straight grind from point to point is to produce an edge with somewhat of a parabolic curve. This is not simply a curved edge that tends to eliminate those nasty corners that have given the skew such a bad reputation—quite the contrary. As you can see in Diagram 2, the points are still quite prominent, and the edge is not fully curved. Measured from point to point, there is still an angle of around 65 to 70 degrees; but there are important variations from the standard grind. Starting at the long point, the cutting edge is almost 90 degrees to the long point edge for about one-fifth or so of the length of the cutting edge. The remainder of the edge goes through a gentle curve, finalizing in the short point. Both of the points are to be treated as cutting edges and play critical roles in the cuts I'll be covering. As a matter of fact, I see the skew as having four cutting faces: the cutting edge itself with each side of the tool having its own bevel and relationship to that edge; the long point and its upper edge, which in several cuts acts as the secondary fulcrum (like a bevel); and the short point and its corresponding edge which behaves in the same manner.

The curved-edge skew is a source of debate among turners, as some see no reason for it and only view it as being more difficult to grind. Certainly my first attempts at grinding a skew in this shape had me convinced that this shape had no merit. It was not until I had some clearer grinding directions that I found the shape to be an advantage with many cuts. My early efforts at this grind had placed too severe a curve on the edge and had virtually eliminated the upper and lower points or they were so far pulled back that they became almost useless. Ground in the manner shown in Diagram 2, there are distinct advantages: with the planing and rolling cuts there is less surface contact with the wood at any one time, resulting in more control and more slicing action as the wood is cut progressively, much like angling a hand plane to make the cut. The straight portion of the cutting edge is handy for the "V" and shoulder cuts—not particularly any improvement over the traditional-skew grind, but a definite advantage over a fully curved edge. But I do find the straight section of the tool useful for a peeling cut as well as for detailing in tight spots. My suggestion is that you grind one skew in this manner, and see what you think. I found the curved-edge skew to be more responsive, so give it faithful effort before you pass judgment.

One more point: there are a number of variations that you may have some success with, such as a convex bevel; a longer or shorter bevel than I've recommended; more curve to the edge; no points; or a greater or lesser angle of skewness. Personally, I view most of these variations as attempts to overcome problems with particular cuts. My configuration suggestions allow you to have a couple of skews of different sizes that will do a wide range of cuts very well.

There is one more critical area to cover before discussing sharpening techniques. When you buy a tool, the corners along the entire steel may be sharp enough to cut flesh or at least find every flaw in your toolrest. Suggestion: on the long edge, break the sharp corners with a grinder or hand stone, but leave that edge flat. On the short edge, round over the edge to eliminate all flatness. We need the flatness of the long-point edge for several cuts; we want the respon-

siveness of the short-point edge in order to roll the tool in a fluid manner when needed. Several tool manufacturers have come out with an "oval skew" that essentially performs all of the work for you in terms of this profiling. Their tools are high-speed steel, which I highly recommend for the skew, as delicate points can be overheated in grinding and in use. Also, these oval skews have a lightness in weight that I find to be very responsive. You can, however, modify your existing tools to achieve most of the same effect.

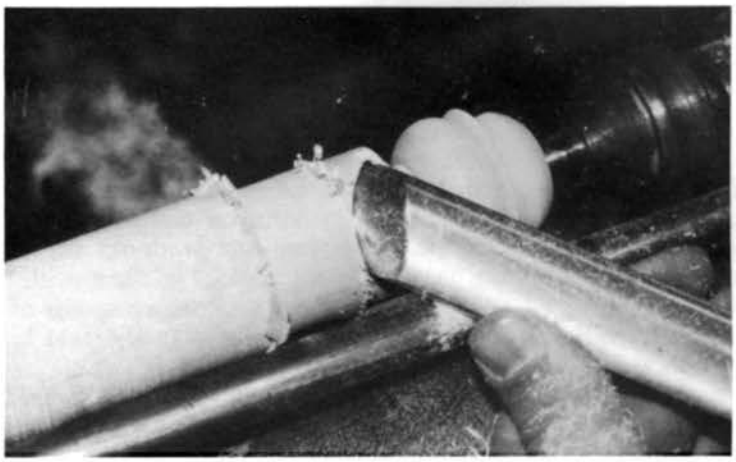
SHARPENING

The skew is the only turning tool I use for which I strive for the same degree of sharpness and refinement that I knew as a woodcarver. The tool does not respond or even work at times unless you maintain a high degree of sharpness—control is lost as it becomes even a little dull. My grinding is done on an 8-inch wheel grinder, using a 60-grit white aluminum oxide stone with a J hardness. My objective is to produce a single-faceted, hollow-ground edge.

On a straight-edged skew (no curve to the edge) the grinding is performed by holding the edge horizontal, starting with the heel of the bevel and lapping forward in an even progression on both sides, always being cautious of the delicate points. For the alternative grind with a partly curved edge, the process must follow the shape of that edge, therefore, a pivoting and arcing motion must be added to follow the shape. The bevel length is about twice the thickness of the steel, so on my 1/4-inch thick skews, the bevel length is normally between 7/16-inch and 1/2-inch long. For further refinement, I hone the edge after the grinding process as well as at regular intervals while in use. For this I use a fine India stone.

In recent years I have found an excellent way to hone the edge in a quick and efficient manner: on a cardboard or fiberboard wheel loaded with stainless steel polishing compound (white in color when purchased). The woodcarvers in my area have for years made use of 1/2-inch thick cardboard wheels (made of laminated sheets of thin cardboard) with the compound applied. These wheels turn on an arbor with rotation AWAY FROM THE USER and turn at speeds usually not above 1725 rpm. I learned from Del Stubbs the advantage of using medium-density fiberboard for the same process—it has less of a tendency to round over the edge. I hit the skew with the wheel on each side for a few seconds and have a tool that you could skin a mosquito with. (Note: this technique is also wonderful for removing the milling marks from the inside of a gouge. Simply turn beads in the fiberboard that fit the contour of your gouge's flute. Apply the compound and polish out the last inch or so of the tool. You will find that the gouge really does take a better edge.) And one last point: be sure the very back edge of the bevel's heel (the furthermost area from the cutting edge) is rounded off. This is necessary to prevent marring the work with the sharp edge produced on the heel of the bevel.

The size of the skew that you use will be determined by the scale with which you are working and to some extent the type of cut you are making. You may purchase skews in a variety of sizes from 1/4 to 2 inches. Personally, I find myself using the 3/4-inch size for most of the cuts described in this article, with most of my stock between 1 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter. For the planing and pommel cuts, a larger skew may be a real asset. For these I would recommend a 1 1/4-inch skew if these were cuts that you commonly made in diameters of 4 inches or less. I seem to use only 1/4- and 1/2-inch skews for small work (less than 1 inch in diameter) or where I find it necessary to move to those tools for clearance reasons in tight detailing.

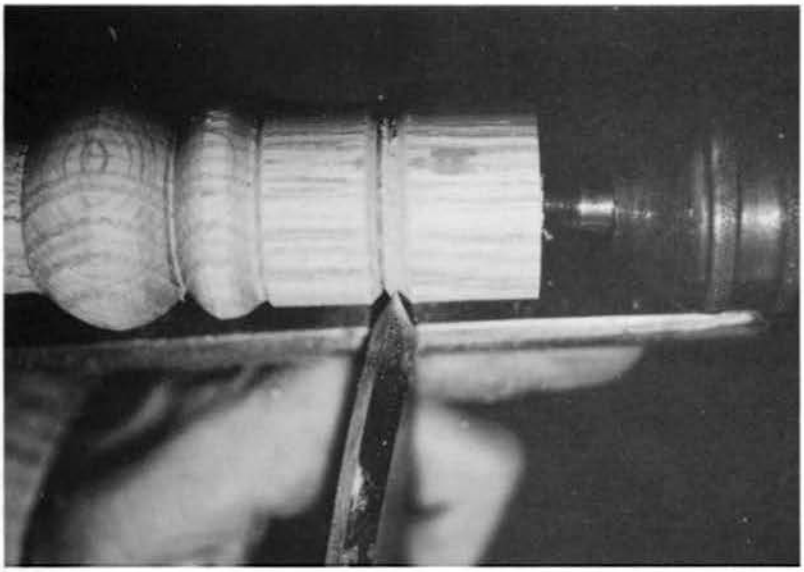


Planing cut

CUTS

PLANING—perhaps the most widely known and used cutting technique of the skew. I prefer to make this cut with the long point up, cutting with the curved portion of the tool. The angle of attack lies in a balance between a peeling cut (edge parallel to the grain of the wood) and a vertical approach (virtually 90 degrees to the grain of the wood). At both extremes there are problems: the peeling cut is a rough action and can be virtually impossible to control if too much of the tool is buried in the wood; the vertical action produces a riving cut—much like splitting firewood—that can be very inefficient for removing wood or that simply leads to an unacceptable amount of chipout. Begin the planing cut at an approximate angle of 45 degrees. Vary the angle progressively in small increments in both directions and notice the effect on the cutting action. Just as in hand planing, a slight change of angle can dramatically improve the quality of the cut. Depending upon the species and qualities of a particuar piece of wood, you should be able to find an optimum angle of approach.

The planing cut is used as a smoothing and finish cut for cylinders (flats) and cones (tapers). You may also want to experiment with using this cut to rough a piece from



V Cut

square to round, rather than using a roughing gouge. I often increase lathe speed when I use the skew for roughing out in order to provide more support for the tool. The main drawback, however, is the riving action produced that may lead to an excessive amount of splintering in some woods as the corners are removed.

Problems encountered with the planing cut. In making a planing cut with the long point of the skew up, you can cut quite close to that point and the cutting action will be fine, however, if that trailing point contacts the wood, you get an immediate wake-up call. (The short point is, therefore, the "leading point"—if it enters the wood it simply frays and chips wood in advance of the cut, but no dig-ins occur.) When the long point digs in, it often happens twice in rapid succession: you get the catch and try to return to clean it up, only to have another catch. This occurs because the steering part of the cut (the bevel) follows the previous cut much in the same way your front tires will follow a rut in the road. It is usually better to level off the area with another tool or make a roughing cut with the skew, then start with a flat surface.

Another problem is to lose the bevel support, i.e., move into a scraping action with no secondary support (the toolrest is the primary support and the bevel acts as a secondary support, both acting as fulcrums). When this occurs, the tool will run out of control and in all likelihood produce a wonderful spiral slash in your work.

Also, there can be the problem of overdoing the concept of "rub the bevel." One can apply too much pressure, especially at a right angle to the grain direction. On smaller pieces you could actually break the piece or at least produce ribbing or other uneveness to the surface. The "invisible" element in turning that is rather difficult to detect when watching someone else turn is the amount and direction of pressure being applied at the point where the tool meets the wood. With this tool, excess pressure almost always punishes the work or the turner. A sharp tool, used with light, even pressure, applied along the direction of the cut is all that is needed. When applied properly, very thin work can be cut without the use of a mechanical steadyrest or even your fingers to back up the cut.

Finally, there are some pieces of wood that are virtually impossible to machine plane, hand plane, or work with the skew. Straight-grained wood (preferably split rather than sawn) would be the ideal type for the planing cut. But reality is often quite different. The goal is to get the finest cut with the tool, knowing full well that at times chipout is caused by lack of support in the wood itself and is not due to poor sharpening or lack of tool control.

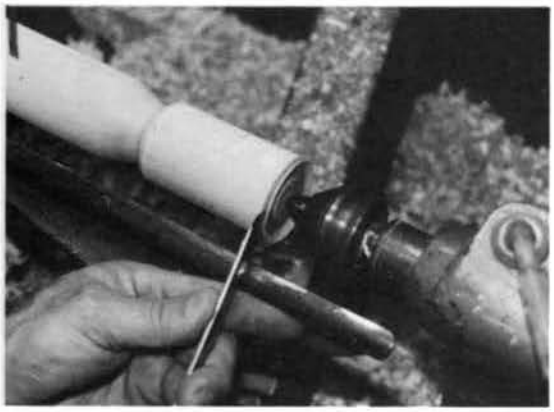
Variation of a planing cut. Try the cut with the long point down. You may find this is easier for you to control and maybe even a bit more natural. I will sometimes move to this approach when using the skew to make a roughing cut from square to round.

V CUT—a straightforward cut that can easily go wrong—so maybe not so straightforward. The cut is made with the long edge of the skew resting flat on the toolrest, long point down. The action is to simply arc the tool into the wood. You will find that a single cut will not enter the wood very deeply before it reaches a stall point. By angling in from both sides of the original V cut, it becomes rather easy to deepen and widen the cut. When the long point is sharp and the flat portion of that edge acts as support, we get a clean cutting action. It often helps to hesitate for a brief moment once the point makes its initial contact with the wood, followed by the arcing motion to complete the cut. This hesitation assures that the cut is started properly, helping to prevent the tool from skating out of control.

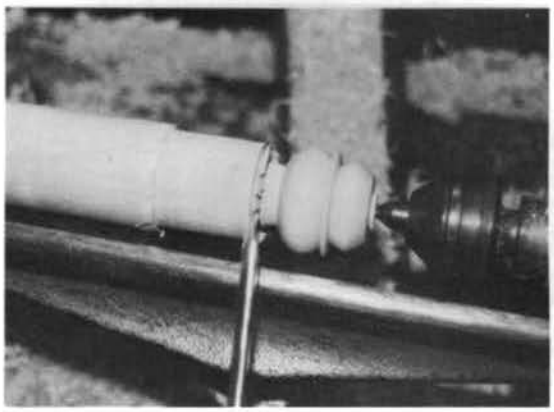
The V cut is used: to mark the location of detail as it is clearer than a pencil line; to do the preliminary shaping of a bead; to produce V-shaped beads for items such as honey dippers; or to cut free rings, as on baby rattles.

Problems encountered with the V cut. If you simply push the tool into the wood without the arcing motion, you will discover that the point quickly overheats and the cut may be far less than desirable. There is also the case of the point not entering the wood properly—the net result being that the tool runs out of control, once again cutting a nice slash with the long point. This problem may be overcome by keeping the tool handle low and being very definite in adding the arcing motion.

Variations of the V cut. By adding a rolling action to the tool, you can produce a bead or follow a curve. If you pursue the V action deeply enough, it serves as an effective way to part a piece off of the lathe. Rings



Shoulder cut



Shoulder cut

can be cut free on a shaft (as on a baby rattle or goblet) by simply undercutting a bead from both sides with a small skew. This undercutting action is sometimes referred to as a "saucer cut." Occasionally the saucer cut may be incorporated into a detail that does not involve cutting a ring free, simply undercutting a face or detail.

SHOULDER CUT—a natural progression from the V cut, but with a few changes. When this cut works properly, it is probably the best manner with which to clean up exposed endgrain. The tool is held in the same manner as with the V cut—the long point down. If you are cutting a square shoulder (90 degrees to the axis of the wood) and will be cutting on the left side of the tool, the left-side bevel will be in line with the shoulder. This places the handle of the tool to the right of the shoulder, approximately the degree of bevel angle ground on the tool. The shoulder cut is started well above the center line of the wood, again with an arcing motion, with the result being that the cut is finished just above center. The key to avoiding a catch is to allow a clearance angle of just a few degrees that pulls much of the cutting edge away from the wood. The cut is made with the long point itself and the area of the cutting edge just above the point. Support is provided by the flat under the long point (which acts somewhat like a bevel in providing the secondary fulcrum) and a small portion of the bevel itself that rides the face of the shoulder.

The primary use of the shoulder cut is to clean up endgrain. It also plays an important role in undercutting faces, such as when pieces are to be joined with a round mortise and tenon (or dowel). This cut is performed by relying on the saucer-cut concept to add a slight concave face, allowing the pieces to set flush. I also use the same type of cut on the underside of goblets and candlestick holders so that the pieces sit on a rim rather than on a flat surface.

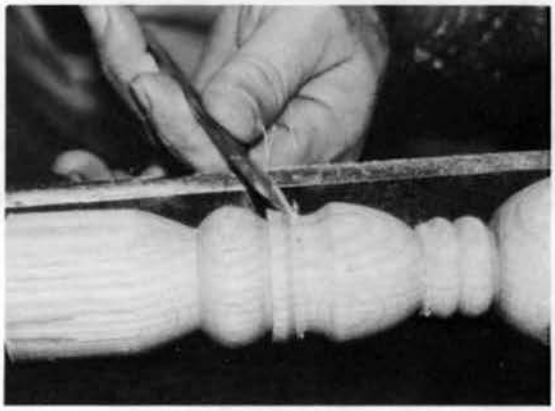
Problems with the shoulder cut. First of all, keep in mind that this is a finish cut. If you try to remove too much material, the cut will either stall or you force the tool to skate and subsequently slash or catch the wood because of the excessive pressure. Depending upon the species of wood, I can only remove 1/16 inch or less of wood to really have a fine cut. So, make the cut in small increments until the exposed endgrain meets your standards. The other big problem with this cut is when you forget the clearance angle. This angle is ever so slight, but without it you will get those "mysterious failures" that leave you wringing your hands trying to figure out where you went wrong. When that angle is lost, the tool climbs out of the cut and produces a spiral slash on the face of the shoulder as well as part way down the piece—dramatic stuff! Other problems: simply pushing the tool into the wood without the arcing motion; cutting below center which may actually have a tendence to pull the tool in and force a loss of control; and using excessive pressure that leads to an uneveness of the shoulder face. Remember, once the unevenness appears on the wood, you may only increase it by repeating the same cut.

Variation of the shoulder cut. In some difficult woods (usually very soft ones) I will make the shoulder cut with the upper edge of the tool. I still begin the cut with the long point, as it allows considerable control to start the cut, then I move the cutting action into the meat of the edge (the area above the point to about the middle of the edge). To get this cut correct, it still requires a shallow cut and maintaining support of the bevel against the face of the shoulder. I have also seen turners make the shoulder cut using the short point. It does work. My only problem doing it that way is that I have trouble seeing my clearance angle and the progression of the cut—but do try it sometime.

POMMELS—the cutting of squares. This cut offers a particular challenge to turners—if not properly executed, the corners of the square will break away or the exposed endgrain will be torn to the point that it cannot be smoothed with sandpaper. No doubt the word "pommels" is derived from the beating action the squares do to your hands while trying to sand. The objective becomes one of getting the best possible cut directly from the tool; here the skew outshines virtually every other tool for square-shouldered and rounded pommels.

For doing the square-shouldered pommels, the cut is made very much like the one already described above. Begin by drawing a pencil line on all four flats of the square which represent the end of the cut. I work the waste wood to the side of the line with a series of V cuts (to act as stop

Pommel cut



Cutting a cove

cuts) and a variation of the planing cut, leading with the short point—that is if the detail to the side of the square is to be a flat section. For the final pass along the square face, I lead with the long point down, removing less than 1/16 of an inch. This is just a bit trickier than cutting a round shoulder, in the sense that the edge support is somewhat less. This is acutely obvious at lower speeds—it is bouncier and harder to get satisfactory results unless you progress very deliberately and slowly. One obvious solution is to increase the lathe speed, giving more contact for the edge in making the cut (but it will also magnify your mistakes when they occur).

For making the tapering or rounded pommel, I also make the cut with the long point down. For roughing, I lead with the long point itself, but as I approach the finish cut, I move the cut well up into the meat of the edge to produce a slicing action. This is essentially a planing cut with the long point down. Difficulty arises quickly if you lose the bevel support or if too much pressure is applied on the transition areas that are partially flat. Too much pressure leads to a bouncing effect that produces a poor-quality surface. These types of cuts are also done in a series as opposed to one or two heavy cuts.

Problems with cutting pommels. The problems are similar to the ones for the shoulder cut in round stock. The main difference is that when there is a failure it is usually accompanied by the corners being blown away—often with that dramatic effect again! Most of the problems can be traced to: a dull tool (remember, the points must be equally sharp); excessive pressure; loss of bevel support; or trying to take too heavy of a cut.

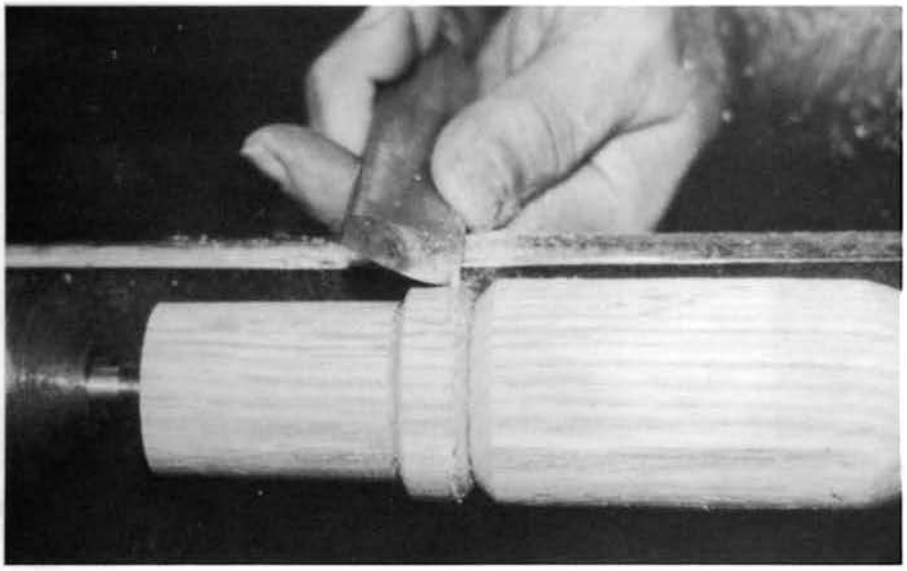
PEELING—a rapid way to remove large amounts of material. This cut is definitely to be viewed as a roughing or sizing cut rather than a finishing technique. In this position, the skew acts as a rather large parting tool to peel away the wood. The tool is held flat on the toolrest, but in a position to cut rather than scrape. To accomplish this, the tool, although held flat, is elevated to cut rather high on the stock. It becomes a cutting action rather than a scraping one by virtue of the bevel being used to support the edge. I try to avoid making a cut the full width of the skew, as it is rather hard to control. So, one limitation to this cut is the size of the skew you use. If I am using a 1/2-inch skew for detailing, then I would readily be able to reduce a section of about 3/8 inch or so with no problem. If the area I am reducing is larger than the skew in my hand, I would either switch to a larger size or simply nibble away at the wood with the tool in hand (usually quicker than changing tools).

Problems with the peeling cut. Scraping rather than cutting is the most common one. This becomes easy to do if you forget to "chase" the smaller diameter as you remove the wood. I try to stay under the surface of the wood and treat it much in the same matter as you might peel an apple—the only difference being that the apple would be getting smaller all the time if it were truly like turning wood. Trying to remove more wood than is comfortable for the size of tool or your skill level is another problem with this cut. The best way to learn the peeling cut is by practicing on fairly narrow widths of wood.

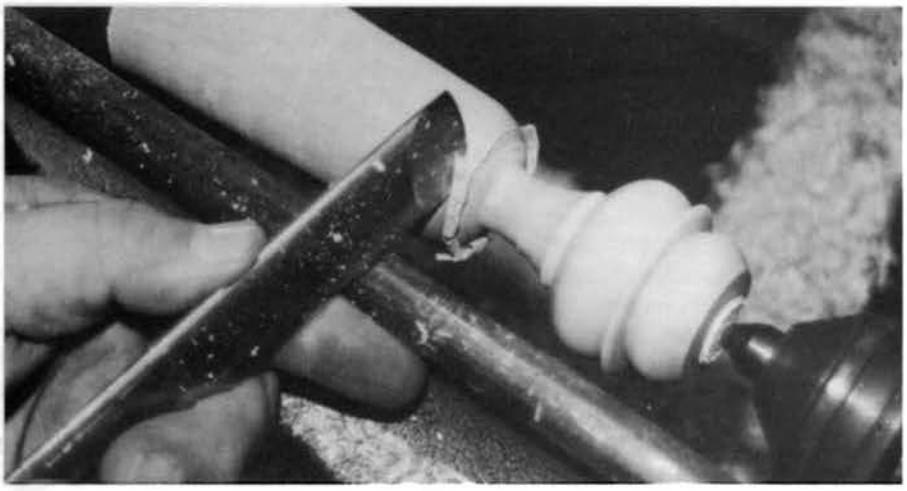
COVES—you certainly can cut coves with a skew chisel if you pursue the cut with a scooping action. I make the cut with a variation of the planing cut: the long point is up, the tool is held at a similar angle (45 degrees will be a good start), but the action is much like removing hard ice cream from a container with a spoon—scooping and following the sides of the cavity. The action must follow a progression from each side of the cove until the proper depth and curves are produced. Why on earth would anybody want to use a skew for coves? You will if you are a real "skew freak" or if you don't want to pick up another tool or if you simply want to practice tool control.

Problems with cutting coves. You will quickly discover that there are radisus for which the size of the skew you are using will simply seem awkward to cut, such as in a steep-sided, U-shaped cove, 1/2-inch wide, using a 1 1/2 inch skew. I find that the skew works best for long shallow coves that have gently sloping sides. But to be fair, if you really push the limits of yourself and the tool, maintaining some hint of bevel support, you may be pleased to discover how narrow and deep a cove may be produced with this tool.

Variation of the cove cut. Use a gouge!



starting a rolling cut



rolling cut

rolling cut

ROLLING CUT—appropriate for rounded beads, domes, egg shapes, and anywhere there is a convex detail that depends on a curve rather than on a flat line. The rolling cut is certainly one of the more difficult cuts of between-center work, but perhaps the most rewarding when it works. The difficulty seems to be in the fact that there are a number of motions that must be added to the cut to properly execute it: an arcing or twisting motion; advancing the tool towards the smaller diameter; moving the tool down the toolrest (unless the detail is small enough to allow a simple pivot); and raising of the tool handle to insure continued bevel support.

You may approach the cut with either the long point up or down. This will determine if the cut is made with the long or short point in the lead. Unless it is a very small bead, I tend to lead with the short point. As a matter of fact, I use the short point to start and continue the cut. I find that when I cut with the meat of the tool edge, it is very easy to lose the bevel support—and even if for only a millisecond, the magic slash appears. By leading with the short point, the fibers that are fluffed up in front of the tool act in a way to pinch the tool against the bead and therefore assist with maintaining the necessary support.

For this cut, I prefer to work a bit above the center line of the piece to avoid the hammering effect if we get too low on the work. I do this cut in a controled sequence of light cuts. Like many other cuts with the skew, the heavier cut stalls out, begins to buck and snort, and usually causes problems.

The first action is to place the bevel on the wood and lift the handle until the short point picks up a bit of wood, then begin the movements of rolling and lifting the tool handle, ending with the tool edge virtually vertical at the bottom of the cut, with the cutting action coming to a stop. The initial motion of the point into the wood is a gentle pivoting action, often combined with a pause or hesitation as it rocks into the wood to be assured of a clean entry. Something that helps with the tool's move-

ment is to rotate your wrist into a cocked position to begin the cut (somewhat uncomfortable) that unwinds with the cut and ends in a natural position (comfortable) as the cut finishes.

Problems with the rolling cut. Failure to perform all of the necessary motions will be punished. What happens most often is the loss of bevel support and therefore tool control. This can occur by not rotating the tool quickly enough to follow the shape of the bead and its changing diameter as well as by over rotating the tool during or at the end of the cut, essentially allowing an unsupported edge to contact the wood, which causes the tool to skate . . . well, you know by now.

You may also find that one side of your bead may look better than the other side or that your failure rate is much higher on one side of the bead than the other. This is normal while learning how to make this cut. Obviously you must learn to be adept at cutting both sides of a bead. A great way to practice is to place a 6- to 8-inch length of 2-inch material on your lathe. Part in the center to about 1/2 of the diameter. Practice the rolling cut on the section to the right of the line until you are almost to the end of the piece. Follow this activity with rolling cuts from the center to the left until coming within 1/2 inch or so of the driving end. This will give you numerous practice cuts for each side of a bead. Practice until both left- and right-side rolling cuts seem natural.

Variation of the rolling cut. For years I rolled my beads without using the short point to lead the cut. It does work to cut with the meat of the edge rather than a point and leaves a nice burnished appearance to the bead. I will use this strategy on rather large beads or for egg shapes; but I still find that for most beads of between 1/4 inch to 2 inches in width, the short point technique is far more controlable—at least for me. You can also make the rolling cut with the long point down (therefore leading the cut) and either using the point or the meat of the edge. It works well, but I find that the amount of tool handle movement becomes a bit excessive in order to swing it through the entire cut. Do try it in that manner if the other approaches fail.

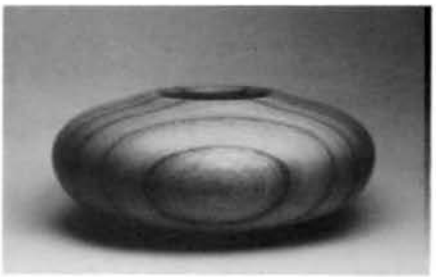
ROUGH-GRAIN CUT—for working particularly nasty areas of grain, even knots. I learned this cut from Del Stubbs. Begin with lightly working the section with a roughing gouge held with the flute facing upwards. Next, gently cover the same section with a square-across bowl gouge, also held with the flute up. These cuts prevent the riving action that would be characterized by a skew in a planing cut or even by a gouge held at a shearing angle. Next, move the toolrest as close as possible to the area in question. Take a sharp skew, hold it flat on the toolrest, and make very delicate dust cuts along the length of the knot or twisted grain. Finally, we have hit upon a technique that takes advantage of the most widely used method of the skew—scraping! The difference is, very little material is removed, and we are scraping with a definite purpose. Practice this cut on the worst grain you can find, and I think you will be pleased. The application is of value when a piece of wood is still worth keeping, in spite of the flaw or in architectural turning where you may not always have the best choice of woods, but must still get acceptable results.

* * *

How many cuts have I covered? The planing, roughing, V cut, saucer, parting, shoulder, pommel, cove, peeling, rolling, and rough-grain. There are a few more cuts that I haven't covered, and I'm sure that I personally have not exhausted all of the possiblilities and uses that turners have discovered for this flat piece of steel, but this should at least give you something to think about.

Final advice: explore the skew and go beyond your mistakes. You will have had a marvelous teacher in this tool. You will understand supported and unsupported edges; use of the bevel; grinding and tool refinement; variations in sharpness; leading and trailing edges; grain direction; angle of cut; differences between scraping, peeling, and shearing; applied pressure (direction and amount); and executing detail. This, in turn, will improve all other areas of your turning.

Alan Lacer, madrone goblet, 3 1/2" x 8"



Osage orange bowl, Alan Lacer, 9 1/2" x 2 1/2"

buckeye vessel, Alan Lacer 4 1/2" x 7"

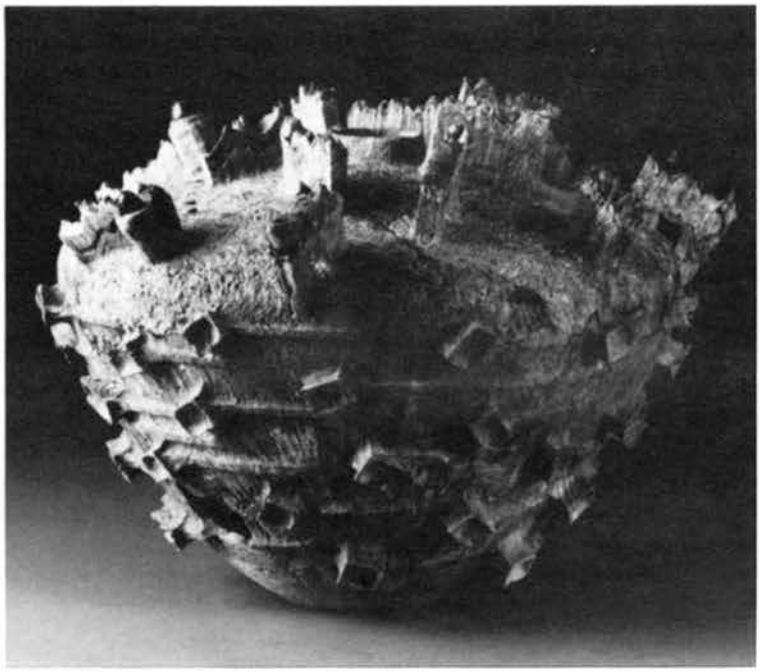
Alan Lacer turns and teaches the craft out of Norman, Oklahoma. He is currently President of the American Association of Woodturners. He envisions woodturners' hell as a place where the devil makes you turn long, thin porch columns out of spalted balsa wood with a dull skew!

SANDBLASTING

Hugh McKay

Sandblasting is a relatively easy and straightforward process that can be easily mastered by anyone who has the abilities to turn a piece of wood on the lathe. The equipment you need includes a compressed-air system, the sandblaster and abrasive, and the necessary protection worn by the operator.

Living on the Oregon coast most of my life, I have long admired the work of the wind and sand on the piles of driftwood found along the beaches. The interesting patterns and flow of wood grain are accentuated by the wind and sand's removal of the softer spring wood, leaving the harder summer wood prominent. As I found myself thinking more and more about carving and shaping the outside of my turned work, I couldn't imagine trying to hand sand some of the textures I wanted to create. After shaping the outside of a vase or pot with air tools and router bits, I could blend and "finish" the different textures and patterns by sandblasting. I felt that the designs I was creating were even more unified by the exposed texture of the wood running through the piece.



"Squared" maple and serpentine 19" x 13"

The compressed-air system and the sandblasting gun have to be somewhat compatible. I have a 5-HP, 80-gallon compressor which is a good-sized system, but there are some guns for which this system could not supply enough air to operate effectively. The air compressor needs to be able to meet the air demands of the particular gun you are using.

There are two kinds of sandblasters, the siphon feed and the pressurized feed. In my opinion, there is no comparison between these two types. I've tried the siphon-feed sandblaster but found it not very efficient at wood removal. It also uses more air and abrasive than a pressurized system. The pressurized feeds are more expensive than the siphon feeds, but it's well worth the additional expense if you want to do much sandblasting. I've seen some pressurized sandblasters that could do a good job at wood removal with just a 2- or 3-HP air compressor.

All sandblasters have a storage tank that holds the sand. The difference between the siphon feed and the pressurized feed is that the abrasive in a siphon feed is sucked from the tank; but with the pressurized feed, the sand is under pressure in the tank and is forced out. When the nozzle of the gun is release, the air/sand mixture comes out under tremendous pressure. This pressurized air/sand mixture can do work unlike any other tool when used properly or become very dangerous to the operator's health without proper procedure and protection.

The operator always needs to be wearing a sandblast hood, long gauntlet-type gloves, and heavy clothing, such as coveralls, when the sandblaster is first turned on and should wear this protective clothing until the pressure is fully released in the tank. The other protective device that must be worn is a dust respirator. Breathing the dust of the silica sand created by sandblasting can lead to respiratory problems. An approved dust respirator must then be worn at all times under your hood.

There are different kinds of abrasives for sandblasting, but unless you want to come up with a way to reuse the abrasive, they are all a lot more expensive than the silica sand from a good builder's supply. I pay $4 for a 100-pound bag. I have tried using different grit sizes, but for me, the 0/30 grit works best. The 0/60 grit removes the hard woods I use too slowly. Supposedly this finer grit would result in a finer finish, but with sandblasting, I have not noticed that much difference. Besides, I am not particularly interested in obtaining a fine finish on my sandblasted work. I have even tried a very coarse 0/20 grit but it was too big for the size of nozzle in my sandblast gun.

The abrasive must be kept dry and the air supply to the sandblaster must be somewhat dry also or you will end up with a clogged sandblaster. You cannot blast with wet sand. One advantage to a pressurized tank is that you can direct all the pressure through the tank and loosen up a lot of damp-sand clogging. Another potential clogging problem is using sand that has not been poured through a sand sifter before putting it into the tank. I pour all of the sand I use through a fine screen and have yet to find a bag of sand that did not contain some sand larger than the stated grit size, which would have jammed up in the nozzle of the gun.

The nozzle-orifice size is important and determines how much air will be required to effectively run the sandblaster. With my equipment, a 3/32-inch nozzle will require about 7 CFM at 80 PSI; a 1/8-inch nozzle needs

Hugh McKay sandblasting "Squared"

sandblasting equipment

about 10 to 12 CFM at 80 PSI. I use a 7/64-inch orifice at 120 PSI and have found that I have good control of the wood removal, but at the same time, wood is being removed fast enough so that I feel like I am accomplishing the task as quickly as possible. My air compressor runs about one third of the time with the nozzle I use—you don't want to have your compressor running too much. About three fourths of the time while running the sandblaster would be as much as I would let the compressor run or it can overheat. Also, carbide nozzles are well worth the extra expense over the cheaper ceramic ones. Use the ceramic nozzles to determine which size orifice you prefer, then buy the carbide equivalent.

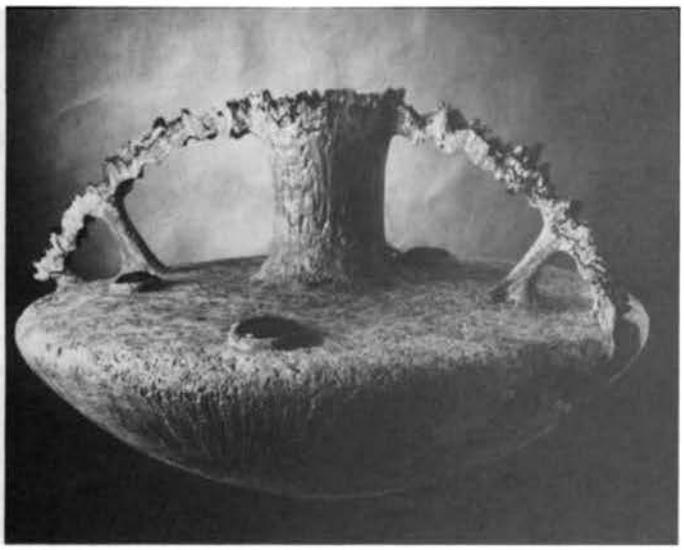
You need to find a suitable place to run the sandblaster, as it makes quite a mess with the sand bouncing around for quite a distance. Make sure that someone can't accidently stumble onto your sandblasting activities. Also, the gritty dust that develops from sandblasting is not good for your air compressor to inhale, so you don't want to be blasting too near your compressor.

Most of the time I sandblast the entire turning. If I want to have a heavily sandblasted piece, I've found that about a 1/4-inch wall thickness is plenty for the look I like. If I'm not going to remove a lot of wood, I might leave a 3/16-inch wall thickness.

I have tried several materials and methods to protect the wood when my vessel design calls for leaving some of the wood intact. There are different types of commercial "resist," but the products I have seen are made for flat surfaces only. Because of the compound curves and angles that have to be dealt with on a turned wood piece, this commercial resist does not work well. It is also expensive, so I've looked for less expensive ways that can deal flexibly with the curves of a turning and still protect selected sections of wood.

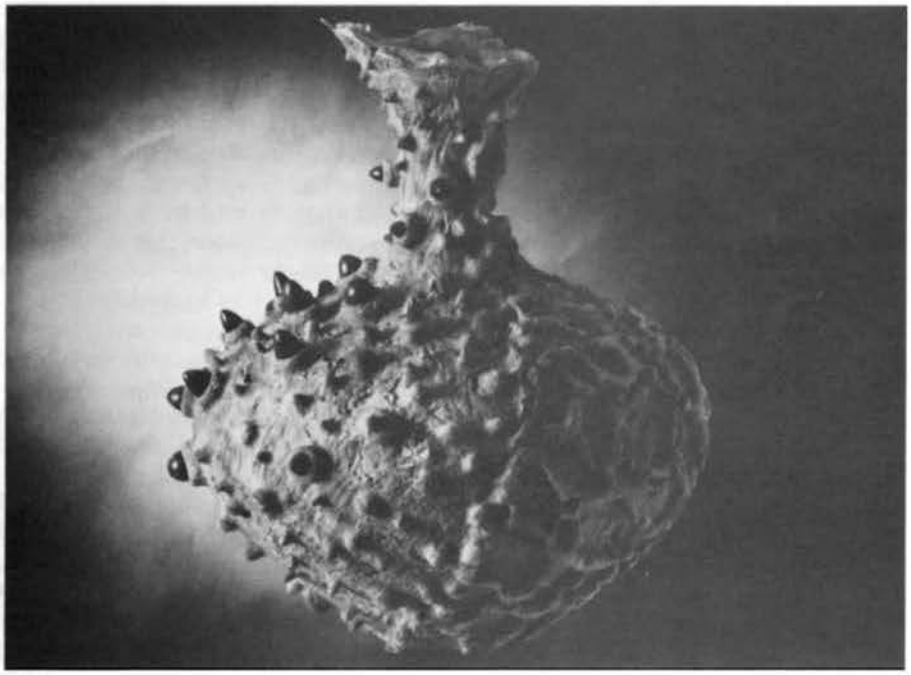
Auto-body filler will stand up to the abuse of the sand for awhile, and it will easily conform to any complicated curve. The compound that I use will stick to wood quite well, and as long as I use a release agent (wax, oil) I don't usually have problems in removing the auto-body filler after I've sandblasted. Silicone caulking resists sandblasting very well if it has a little thickness to it—about 1/8 of an inch. The sand just seems to bounce off of the rubbery, dried silicone. Silicone caulk is not as easy to control in application as auto-body filler is, but it really resists being removed by the sand.

I have also spot glued pieces of wood to the turning's surface and popped them off with a chisel when I was done blasting. Several layers of duct tape will also work for lighter-duty applications. I am still looking for the ideal material that could be applied like paint, resist sandblasting like metal, and peel off easily when

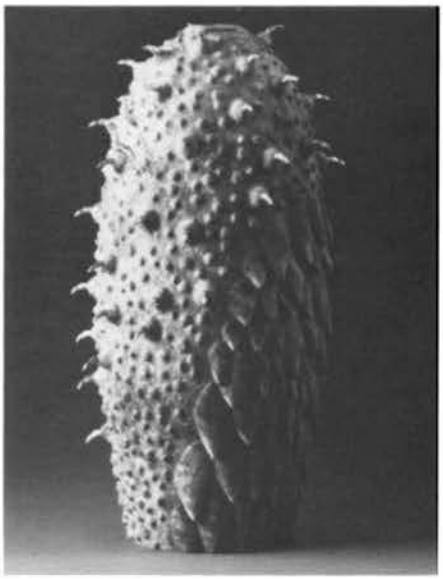


"Halo 2" 1991, maple burl, serpentine, 17" x 11"

"Brainstorm" 1991, maple burl, serpentine, 20" x 11"



"Break-out 1991, maple burl, serpentine, 15" x 15"



"Thorned" 1992, madrone burl, cast pewter, 7 1/2" x 16"

done. If anyone has any ideas, please let me know.

Not all woods are equally suitable for sandblasting. My favorite wood at the moment is big-leaf maple burl, and I also use madrone and myrtle burl. I have not tried any turnings using softwoods, although in experimenting with some pieces I have achieved dramatic results. Some woods I have experimented with have not given me the look I want from a sandblasted piece, and I think that most tropical hardwood types would not work because of their very consistent, hard wood. The effect I wish to create comes from the inconsistent hardness within a piece of wood.

The "senseless beautification" of an idea (the vessel) that was once a practical and utilitarian object, has always interested me as a craftsman. The irrational and "wild" elements that I see in nature are the design elements that attract me the most, and I like to combine this "wildness" with the rigid symmetry of the turned-wood form. Sandblasting allows me the freedom of expression to pursue this ideal.

I will always be an admirer of finely polished turnings and the beauty of the wood thus revealed, but sandblasting exposes another facet of wood's beauty for the admiring eye to behold and can be used to great advantage by the discerning woodturner.

Hugh McKay learned woodturning in his grandfather's myrtlewood shop, started his own woodworking shop (furniture and patternmaking), and is now turning one-of-a-kind pieces in Gold Beach, Oregon.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR FUNCTIONAL BIRDHOUSES

Donald M. Wood

I am impressed by the two articles I have recently read by Andrew Barnum and Robert Rosand on making birdhouses. Since I cannot technically comment on their splendid workmanship, only to hope someday that I may have like ability, I would like to offer something of interest to those who are contemplating turning these magnificent homes for our feathered friends.

The non-functional, decorative-birdhouse turners need not read on; however, the functional birdhouse must be constructed to proper dimensions to attract and house the kind of bird desired. This is critical for survival in most instances. There are several considerations that must be made for any birdhouse. Most concern dimensions.

The first involves inside dimensions: floor space, total height, and height of the entrance hole above the floor. For the smallest bird to be attracted, normally the house wren, minimum floor diameter must be 4 inches. Wrens are notorious for nesting almost anywhere, but they need a minimum amount of room. Total inside height of the nesting cavity is important, also. In our wren example, 6 to 8 inches is recommended. Equally important, so that the fledgling cannot prematurely fall from the house, is the height of the entrance hole above the floor. Wrens require six inches. Fledglings, unable to fly, are nevertheless active children and must be protected from escaping as well as from predators that might be able to reach them in a small environment.

An extremely critical specification is the size of the entrance hole. If it is too big, sparrows or starlings, normally not desirable species, will move in. They are quite competitive. If the hole is too small, the house will not be used at all. Our example requires a hole no smaller than 1 inch for the wren family. The accompanying nest-box specificaitions give the proper birdhouse dimensions for attracting the most popular birds.

Because the considerations for dimensions are critical, turners must work backwards to determine the size of the rough log that will be used for the birdhouse. If walls will be 1/2-inch thick, add an inch to obtain the final outside diameter, then add another inch or so to determine the size of the barked, rough log to use. Then add the bark thickness to find what you want in the woods.

The chart showing nest-box specifications was derived from "Nest Boxes for Birds," *Urban Wildlife Series*, Washington Department of Wildlife, Olympia, WA 98504. Two additional references for attracting birds are: *The Audubon Guide to Attracting Birds*, National Audubon Society, Washington, D.C., and *How to Attract, House, and Feed Birds*, Walter E. Schutz, Collier Books, New York. There are many other excellent similar publications.

In the chart, I have expanded the dimensions to include finished outside dimensions, using a wall thickness of 3/4 inch. The dimensions are derived from Andrew Barnum's beautiful example on the back cover of *American Woodturner*, March 1991.

One last comment concerns finishing the birdhouse. Birds are extremely susceptible to the organic solvents used in most finishes. If not toxic to the bird, the finish can coat feathers with oils that can affect the bird's abilities or that may make its odor unacceptable to its family. If a finish is to be applied to a functional birdhouse, coat only the exterior and never the sides of the entrance hole nor the interior. A better alternative is to use rot-resistant wood such as western red cedar, redwood, or other wood that will last a long time when exposed to the elements. Bringing the house in each fall, cleaning it, and setting it out again in late winter will further protect it.

Donald M. Wood lives in Victor, Montana.

DECORATIVE TURNED BIRDHOUSES

H = height, W = width, D = Diameter, OD = Outside Diameter, Dimensions are in inches

	NEST BOX REQUIREMENTS				TURNED DIMENSIONS						
SPECIES	CAVITY		HOLE		TOTAL	NEST	BOX	ROOF		BASE	
	D	H	Above Floor	D	H	OD	H	W	H	W	H
Bluebird	5	8	6	1.50	15.6	6.5	9	8	4.0	6.5	2.6
Chickadee	4	9	7	1.13	17.5	5.5	10	7	4.5	5.5	3.0
Duck, Wood	12	22	17	4.00	41.3	13.5	23	15	11.0	13.5	7.3
Flicker	7	17	15	2.50	32.1	8.5	18	10	8.5	8.5	5.6
Kestrel, American	8	12	9	3.00	23.0	9.5	13	11	6.0	9.5	4.0
Nuthatch	4	9	7	1.13	17.5	5.5	10	7	4.5	5.5	3.0
Owl, Barn	15	16	4	6.00	30.3	16.5	17	18	8.0	16.5	5.3
Owl, Screech	8	17	10	3.00	32.1	9.5	18	11	8.5	9.5	5.6
Purple Martin	6	6	1	2.25	12.0	7.5	7	9	3.0	7.5	2.0
Swallow, Tree	5	7	5	1.50	13.8	6.5	8	8	3.5	6.5	2.3
Swallow, Violet-Grn	5	6	5	1.50	12.0	6.5	7	8	3.0	6.5	2.0
Woodpecker, Downy	4	9	7	1.25	17.5	5.5	10	7	4.5	5.5	3.0
Woodpecker, Hairy	6	13	10	1.63	24.8	7.5	14	9	6.5	7.5	4.3
Wren, House	4	7	6	1.13	13.8	5.5	8	7	3.5	5.5	2.3

REVOLUTION IN DESIGN: A CNEW Show

Pamela Vogt

photo courtesy of The Worcester Craft Center

Philip Bowman, covered bowl, walnut, maple, bloodwood "Best of Show"

Tom Kamica, red oak, bleached and stained, 10" diam. x 5 1/2" h. First place tie for "Public Choice Award"

Ron Pirani, spalted beech, 8" diam x 4" h., First place tie for "Public Choice Award"

J. Paul Fennel, Masur birch, 7 1/2" diam. x 9" h.

Philip Bowman, 17" diam. 20" h.

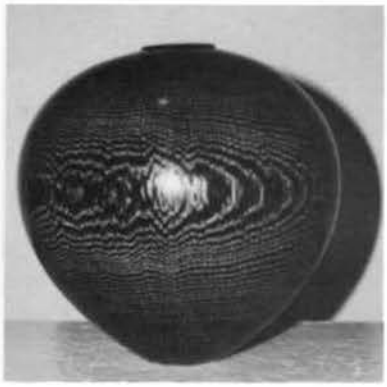
On a hot August night in 1991, the directors of the Central New England Woodturners (CNEW) met to decide the upcoming year's program. We discussed demonstrations, demonstrators, lecturers, and trips, along with an idea to have a juried show of our members this winter, to be held at the Worcester Craft Center in Worcester, Massachusetts. We had hinted at such an event last year and our members seemed enthusiastic.

Our last show, which was open to all Northeast turners, was very successful; however, a few of our members were disappointed at not being accepted into their own show. To alleviate that problem, the directors of the chapter decided to have a show in which all CNEW members were invited to submit up to three pieces of recent works, and the directors would jury the pieces and choose the best work of each person. There would be no categories for beginners or advanced turners. We asked only that the best work to date be submitted. Everyone in the chapter was guaranteed to be in the show, but each member had to submit to the jurying process. This may sound redundant, but it proved to be a workable, fair method. At this point, all the directors were wondering what they were letting themselves in for.

The chapter meetings resumed in September, and we laid the ground work for our show. Members were asked to submit pieces at our October meeting. Judging took place the afternoon before our meeting in November. The directors opened each box or container separately and placed individual members' piece or pieces on a large table so that the judges could view each item from all angles. We discussed the length of time a turner had been turning, his or her design approach, finishing techniques, and overall appearance of each turning. We expressed openly our thoughts about each piece, and when all jurors had been heard, we voted on that piece. The majority ruled with regard to the voting process. I must say that each one of us approached our task as "judge and jury" with the utmost desire to do our best. None of us are full-time turners, and yet, for a group as diverse as ours is, we were able to come together to produce a terrific show, with new and exciting pieces. When it was time to judge our own work, we listened to the critique from the other directors with open minds. This was not the easiest time to be a judge!

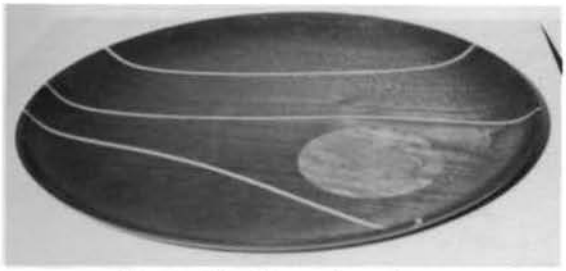
When all forty pieces had been chosen, with at least one from each person who had submitted work, the director of the Worcester Center for Crafts, Cyprus Lipsitt and media

Joe Ferola, willow, 16" diam. x 13" h.



Tom Kamica, red oak, 7 1/2" diam. x 8" h.

Ralph Hamilton, white alabaster, 6 1/2" diam. x 5" h.

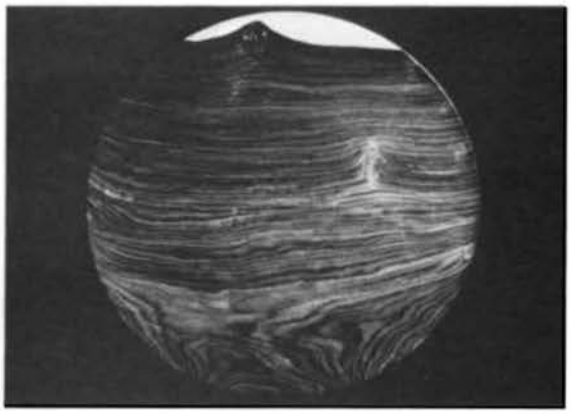


Charles Sheaff, maple, walnut, 10 1/2" diam.

James Fisher, walnut with maple lid, 5" diam. x 6 1/2" h.

Charles Sheaff, cherry, bowl 4 1/2" diam. x 3" h., log length 10 1/2"

Andrew Motter, apple, 10" diam.



Pam Vogt, cocobolo, 17" diam.

events coordinator, Aileen Cox, selected the turning for "Best of Show." They made an excellent choice in Phil Bowman's laminated lidded bowl.

We left the turnings on display so that our members could view the pieces that had been selected. At the general meeting, the judging committee discussed the choices in more or less the same fashion as before. The whole group was brought into the discussion and each artist expressed his or her thoughts about his or her own work. It gave each of us more insight into each others' work. In all, it was a wonderful learning experience.

Our show, "Revolution in Design," opened December 14 and ran until January 11, 1992. At the opening reception, we awarded Phil Bowman with a "Best of Show" ribbon and a surprise cash award of $100 from the chapter's treasury.

One other judging took place during the show's run, the "Public Choice" award. Visitors to the exhibit were given a detail sheet stating each artist's name, piece, and price if the piece was for sale. At the show's conclusion we tallied the results and awarded the "Public Choice Award" for first, second, and third place. Tom Kamica's and Ron Pirani's turnings tied for first place; Karl Ehrenpreis won second place; and Phil Bowman took third. When Karl Ehrenpries, who has been recovering from a heart attack, was told of his winning, you could see first disbelief, then smiles, and then honor on his face. This is what our chapter is all about.

This show acquainted the public and the local media with various aspects of the world of woodturning, and the "Public Choice Award" caused visitors to study the work more directly and objectively than if they had not participated as judges.

To put on a show like this could not have been done without the tremendous help of the Worcester Center for Crafts, Cy, Aileen, and David, who set up the show, and the Central New England Woodturners' board of directors, Roy Pirani, Bob Howland, Andy Motter, Hank Cahill, and Pam Vogt. Thank you all!

Pam Vogt is president of the Central New England Woodturners.

THEMES AND DIRECTIONS: TRENDS AND TRADITIONS

Steve Loar

True education makes for inequality;
the inequality of the individual,
the inequality of success;
the glorious inequality of talent, of genius;
for inequality, not mediocrity,
individual superiority, not standardization,
is the measure of progress of the world.
—Felix Schelling, 1929

Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny.
—Carl Schurz, 1859

What I care about is not what the walls mean or how they function, but how they "taste."
—Peter Eisenman

photo courtesy of the Arkansas Arts Center

Steve Loar, "In the Dark of the Moon," 14" diam. x 12" h. spalted elm, acrylic, paint

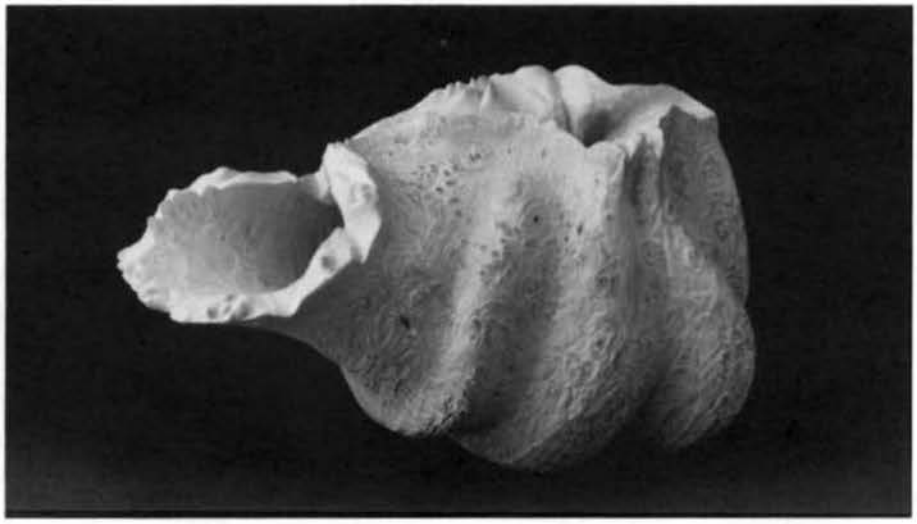


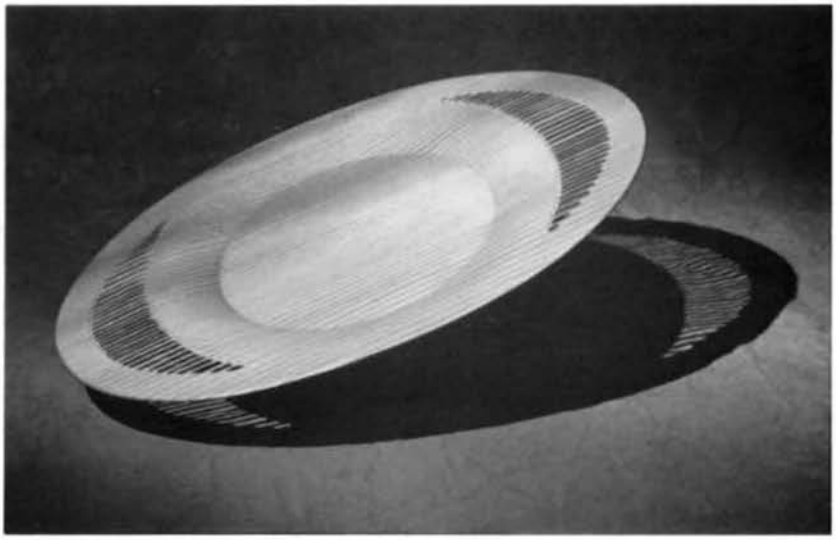
photo by Roger Schreiber

Michael Peterson, 1991, "Fossil Series," bleached and sandblasted maple burl, turned and carved, 8" x 5".

A fashion or fad is a short-lived event. Some have relevance or "staying power" which allow them to become trends, having become integrated with individuals' perceptions of their time and place. Identifying traditions through their quantity of production and duration is the role of the historian; of looking backwards. It is interesting and worth the risk to look *forward* and speculate on a bit of future-history with regard to turning. The themes and directions in woodturning at this very moment surely contain the stuff of future trends and traditions.

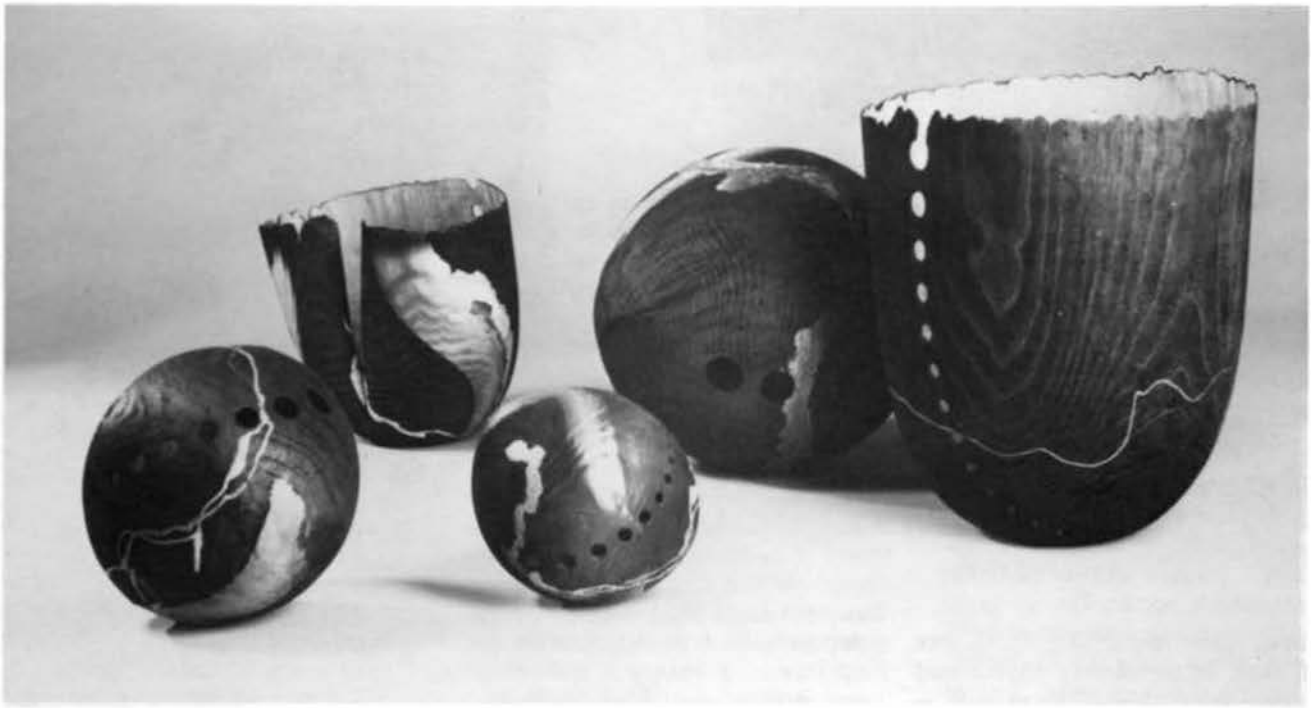
An examination of the photographs of the work that accompanied my first article (*American Woodturner*, December 1991) does not reveal any specific unifying theme. Each turned piece has a bold, identifiable, personal approach. The work is bound to the traditions/techniques of turning, as well as to impressions taken from our contemporary culture and history. Yet each artist has made a clear statement, focusing and interpreting their own particular mix of perceptions. They show a general, but not pervasive, interest in working the form, in some manner, after it leaves the lathe by combining the product of mechanized revolving with hand work. Each artist's strength of vision and commitment allows him or her to expand the accepted norms of what's "possible" and still succeed in producing work that is technically and aesthetically resolved. Their work is worth noting, and possibly emulating, but at the moment there are also larger currents already visible. Schools of thought are forming now. For this commentary, four directions of note have been selected: two are technique-based and two are theme-oriented.

The technique of sandblasting was simultaneously explored by a number of turners in the early 1980s. The typical result of blasting wood, using various abarasives, is to initially "clean-up" the surface by removing foreign matter or stray fibers; and, if the sandblasting is continued, to remove the softer elements of the wood grain, producing a textural surface. I often employ both of these effects in my work and have extended the investigation into spalted wood. With the range of density differences and the zone lines resisting the abrasion (much as the summer growth rings do), a more random and less predictable surface is created



Art Rogers Photography

Albert Clarke, Douglas fir platter, pierced by sandblasting.
16 1/2" x 12" oval x 1 1/2"



David Ellsworth, 1991, "Solstice Series"

than if using sound lumber. I then use paint and dye to further contrast this pitted surface against its polished counterpart. In his "Fossil Series," Michael Peterson is more aggressive, as he uses the destructive force of the blast to actually carve away the initially tooled form. He then dampens the blast in order to create the finely detailed textural surface. Michael often bleaches his work to further unify and strengthen the visual effects of the form. Albert Clarke's new work is the result of a more calculated/objective application of the abrasion process. In actually piercing through the spring-growth wood, he opens up a positive/negative pattern, negating much of the formal seperation of top/bottom and in/out. This also extends the presence of the form into its shadow, which is now a dynamic part of the composition.

The vocabulary of the thin-walled vessels is most clearly tied to the efforts of David Ellsworth. In exploring this technique, David has reinvented his style several times, most noteably in his recent "Solstice Series." The pieces no longer so overwhelmingly bear witness to their origins within a lump of timber. The thin-walled vessel is given dramatic new presence; and David is more fully the arbiter of the product, as he aggressively manipulates a variety of openings, chars the wood, and intuitively applies color in relation to the basic vessels.

It has taken an unexpectedly long time for any woodturner to significantly depart from David's early form/technique combination. It ***has*** started, though. Christian Burchard's and J. Paul Fennel's recent work are examples of a movement away from the recent "tradition," of thin-walled vessels. Christian's dancing forms open the thin-walled vessel into an animated wafer. Full of gesture and

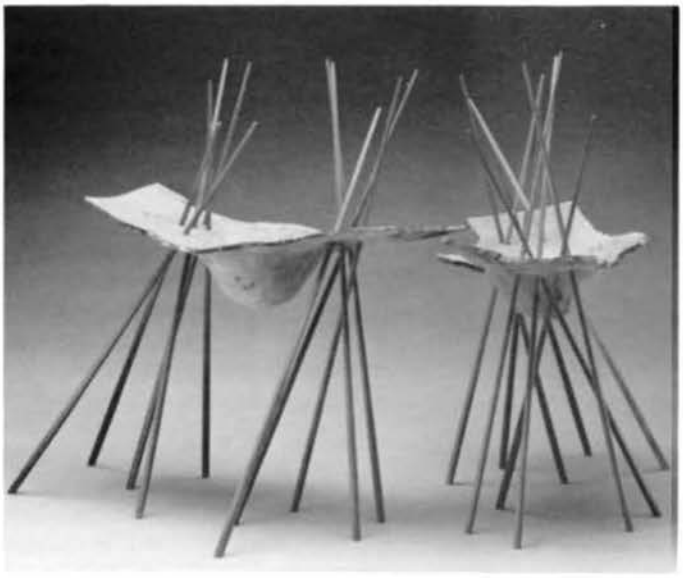


photo by Rob Jaffe

Christian Burchard, "The Dancers"

J. Paul Fennel, "Fleur de Neon 1," 4" diam. x 11" h.

photo by Ray Allen

Ray Allen

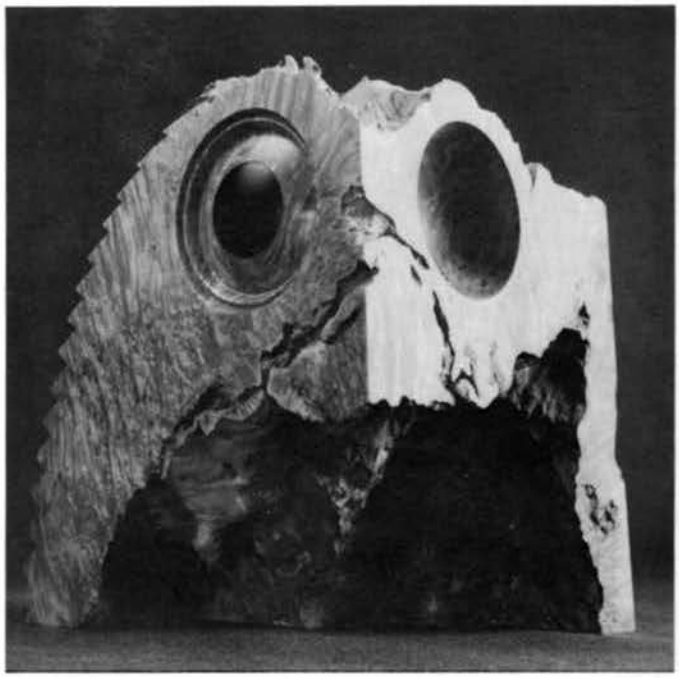
Lincoln Seitzman, "Petrified Somali Basket," 14" diam. x 14" h.

motion, these petal-like forms are held aloft by sensitively angled and grouped spikes. Noteable, as well, is his use of multiple forms as a composition. The lively interaction of the parts and the wholes compounds and increases their potency well beyond the ability of a lone, stark vessel. J. Paul Fennel's "Fleur de Neon" pieces bring a radically new interpretation of color to turning. The neon light saturates the thin walls in a way that dyes and paints cannot. The resulting visual punch has surprising subtlty due to the natural density differences in the wood. The necessary aluminum/heat-sink bases are in need of further resolution, but the power of the concept and the beauty of the flower forms speak of a total refinement which should be close at hand.

A theme within turning that is quite popular and truly interpretive is the reference to basketry and weaving and pottery patterns. There is already a range of examples, from those who mimic the dimensionality of weaving, to a flatter two-dimensional play, to those who only peripherally refer to the pattern's origins or dimensions. Ray Allen's work is a superb example of interpretation. Initially inspired by the work of Addie Draper and Bud Latven, he has brought his personal interests to the decorative nature of this approach. Southwest Native American pottery patterns have been distilled and then consumately executed. They exude the "atmosphere" of the Southwest but with Ray's unique vision. The classically refined forms would allow them to fit comfortably within the context of nearly every design style in the last one hundred years. Lincoln Seitzman's "petrified baskets" are a delight, as one explores the visual impression of depth and over-lay in obvious contrast to the reality of the polished surfaces. Rather than wood dictating the form, here again we see wood's various qualities being used for specific decorative effects, creating a sense of intrigue and surprise. Michelle Holzapfel has periodically employed the three-dimensional nature of weaving. Michelle's work is clearly forward-looking, as it counters Modernism's concern for "truth to materials" which prohibited any medium from mimicing or interpreting the effects which were more "naturally" inherent in another. It forcefully plays upon weaving-in-wood, and then extends this ap-

Michelle Holzapfel, "Woven Bowl 1991," 15" x 4"

photo courtesy of Peter Joseph Gallery



John MacNab, "Owl Bowl," 8" diam. x 9" w. x 19 1/2" h.

photo by Tim Barnwell

Stoney Lamar, "Mesquite Torso," 7" x 10" w. x 26" h.

proach by creating layers of information/effects. Much like the work of artist M.C. Escher, in Michelle's work there seems to always be something more to see down and *IN*, as the viewer moves from what appears to be simplicity, into complexity. What initially appears to be *trompe l'oeil*, has been pushed into the arena of *still-life* which Michelle says, "transcends the amusing visual joke or egocentric exhibition of skill. It is meant to be an object of contemplation and inspiration."[1]

With the second of the themes, I am at greatest risk in making predictions about a trend, as there is little in the way of actual example. The relatively unexplored terrain of multi-axial turning and the long, artistic examination of the figure (human and animal) combine to produce immense potential. Stoney Lamar's recent body of work, represented by "Mesquite Torso" and John Macnab's "Owl Bowl" provide a peek at the power that is possible. It would appear that the two turners developed their own techniques independent of one another, just as their application of it to "figurative" work wells from totally personal interests. Stoney has a large body of work which represents an extended and aggressive exploration of multi-axial effects out of which the new figurative pieces have evolved. These are the best kind of abstraction; there is a familiar subject that has been stripped down, organized, and adjusted. The resulting composition is not only understabdable to the viewer, but its impact has been actually intensified by the manipulation. With John's newness to the field of woodturning, his "Owl" represents a wonderfully executed initial foray into the possibilities of multi-axial/figurative work. His adaptation of a die-grinder to his metal lathe opens up possibilities akin to the ornamental lathes. The results of his cropping and abstraction are similar to Stoney's: the subject has been radically altered, but still speaks immediately and powerfully to the viewer. Noteably, both Stoney and John have been able to retain and integrate aspects of the original timber surface into their compositions.

* * *

It is hoped that these examples and this commentary will foster a greater sensitivity to forces already very much in place within turning. You may identify others or dispute these. Whatever your perceptions, an examination of work being produced at this point in time will create a frame of reference that will help support you as you venture into the stream, to either run against the currents or to go with the flow.

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1. Michelle Holzapfel, "Passion and Reason Reconciled," MICHELLE HOLZAPFEL (exhibition catalog), Peter Joseph Gallery, 1991, ISBN 0-9628849-4-4.

Steve Loar teaches two- and three-dimenstional design in the School of Art & Design at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. He is also a turner/sculptor, author, and lecturer and lives in Warsaw, New York.

EXHIBIT REVIEW

Mark Sfirri

Photos Courtsey of the James A. Michener Art Museum

"Revolving Techniques—Clay, Glass, Metal, Wood" was an exhibition organized by the Wood Turning Center and hosted by the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. It ran from March 28 through May 24, 1992. Curated by Diane M. Douglas, Belleuve Art Museum, Seattle, Washington; Mark Richard Leach, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina; and Albert B. LeCoff, Wood Turning Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I am continually amazed by the growth of the field of turning in recent years, especially in relation to the field of furniture. There are some straightforward reasons that must have contributed: to turn one only needs a lathe and not an entire shop; shipping turned objects is easier and cheaper than shipping furniture; and collection does not require as much space or, in some cases, as much money. A more important explanation is the presence of Albert LeCoff. His promotion of the craft and the symposia and exhibits that he has organized over the past fifteen years have inspired the range of turners from beginners to professionals of long standing to explore new ideas and to challenge themselves. The concept of this most recent exhibit, "Revolving Techniques," the second in a series, was to present other media used in rotating processes, including metal, glass, and clay, as well as wood, to afford an overview of related forms and methods. This was an insightful idea.

There were three areas of focus suggested by the organizers: those exemplifying "the mastering process" (technique and function); "the manipulating process" (exploitation of technique for personal expression); and/or "the process as metaphor" (the process as a way of expressing content, for example motion or narrative). The method of selection was, in part, invitational. One hundred and ten requests were sent for submission of slides for review. Three jurors chose sixty-six objects by twenty-six artists. The number of objects was limited by the size of the gallery space at the Michener Art Museum. The exhibit was intended to showcase established and emerging artists, but this approach to selection made it impossible for most even to be considered. An open call for entries would have given the jury more to choose from rather than supplied them with work with which they were already familiar. The decision to include more than one piece by each entrant (in some cases three or four) was a way to present the vision of each artist in context, but in an exhibit of this small size, it is difficult for the viewer to see the broad picture of the relationship of the various media, and this difficulty undercuts the apparent intent of "Revolving Techniques." For example, there were nine turners showing twenty-six objects in wood. We might have seen one or two pieces by eighteen turners or even one piece by twenty-six turners. With only a few exceptions, most notably Todd Hoyer and Hans Weissflog, the exhibit would not have suffered, and the field would have been better represented.

Lynne Hull, 1992, "Vertical Basket #10," copper, 7" x 13"

Richard Mawdsley 1985-1986, "Feast Goblet," sterling silver, 2 1/2" x 9"

The show boasted work by **Dale Chihuly** and **Albert Paley**, superstars in glass and metal, respectively. Most of the work is medium-to-small scale (12 inches to 18 inches). Paley's lectern is one of the larger pieces. While it is a beautiful piece, it is a stretch to figure out why it was included since a revolving technique seems, at most, incidental to it. The four pieces by **Philadelphia Wireman**, made of bottle caps, bits of paper, and other small found objects wrapped in wire, also raises the question of the jurors' definition of the theme.

The ceramic entries most exemplified the facet of manipulation of process. The pure thrown ceramic form displaying mastery of technique was unexplored. Ceramic glazes include the color range of the spectrum, so I was disappointed to see only neutral tones. My favorite glass piece was "Scarlet/Ruby/Amethyst" by **Sonja Blomdahl**. Its contrast and combination of vivid colors against bold and simple forms in wonderful proportion give this piece a vibrant presence.

Two works in metal stand out. Of **Lynne Hull's** three copper baskets, I was most impressed by the delicate proportions and the beautiful blue and black patina of "Vertical Basket #10." The connection of the handle at the top of its long arch is very sensitive and contrasts with the essential symmetry of the piece. **Richard Mawdsley's** "Feast Goblet" at first appears as if it is a combination of metal spinning and lathe-turned parts. In reality the top bowl form and base of this silver goblet is made by a technique called raising. It is formed from a piece of sheet stock that is hammered over a form while manually rotating it. This piece deserves a second and third look. It offers so much in the way of small-scale detailing. The spherical forms that begin to rise up from the base

photo by John Carlano

Hans Weissflog 1992, "Saturn Box, Moveable Ring," basswood burl, ball, 1 7/8" diam. ring, 4" diam.

photo by Wehmeyer

Hans Weissflog, 1992, "Ball Box With Windows," turned broken through, African blackwood, basswood, 2" diam.

and descend from the bowl almost appear as bubbles emerging through the forms. There is the added surprise of some turned miniature goblets and champagne on ice on a small ledge around the center of the piece.

Hans Weissflog's small (1 1/2 inch) spherical wood boxes are four very different variations on a theme. In this case the exhibition of all four pieces was important since it allows the viewer an opportunity not only to marvel at Weissflog's technical proficiency but to see each piece in context. Each solution was well thought out, distinct from the other three, and carried through a common thread of the pure spherical form. This was my second exposure to Weissflog's work (see *American Woodturner*, Vol, 6, No. 3, Sept. 1991, p. 20, David Ellsworth's review of "Challenge IV"), and I look forward to more.

In stark contrast are three pieces by **Todd Hoyer** entitled "X Series #19, #20, #18." Even more than Weissflog's work it is important that these pieces be shown together because they are much more subtle variations on a theme that together create a cohesive statement. The surfaces are a contrast between scorched and chainsaw marks and the subtle, coved, torn grain areas between the horizontal ridges. This is a sort of streetwise aesthetic that risks failure unless it maintains a balance between controlled technique and spontaneity, and its riskiness creates tension and excitement. There is a control in the evenness of the spacing of the horizontal bands and the coves in between, and an almost violent expression in the layout of the X's. It is not work that will appeal to the purist who values only traditional technique and polished surfaces, but I pick them as best in the exhibit in wood. Hoyer's other piece from his series entitled "Hallowed Vessel Series" is a half log cut square with a negative vessel form in the middle and a series of scores in concentric circles around it. The control is not as evident, the scorching not as defined, and compared to the strength of the "X Series," this piece falls short of the mark.

The extreme of manipulated form was best evidenced in **Stoney Lamar's** "Invitation to Openness." His use of multiple axis makes a strong statement in this bold curved mass that is pierced through with a concave shape. **Craig Nutt** explored manipulated form as well as process as metaphor in three works. "We Will Never Use Food as a Weapon: Orka Bomb" was typical of Nutt's whimsical work that simultaneously makes a statement. One of his older pieces,

Lincoln Seitzman, 1990, "Petrified Hopi Basket," various hardwoods, 15" diam. x 13" h.

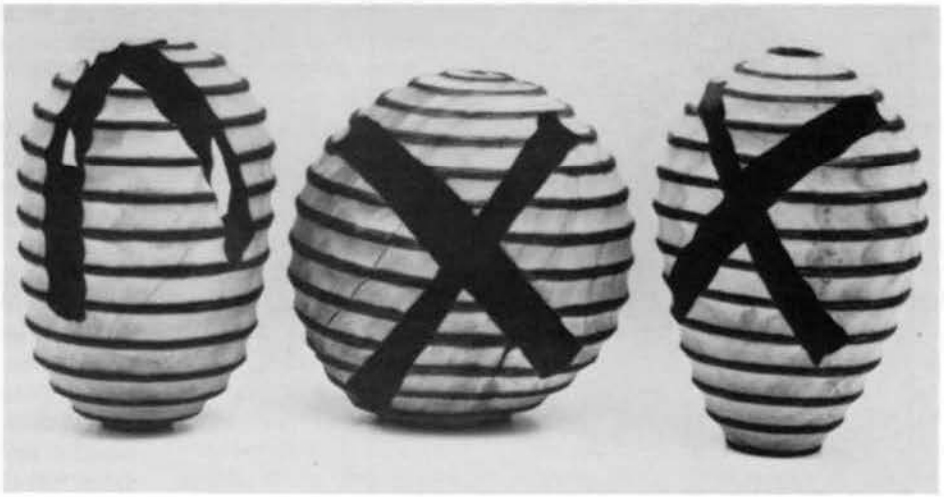


Photo courtesy Synderman Gallery

Todd Hoyer, "X Series #19, #20, #18," cottonwood.

"Reliquary" (1986) is a more straightforwardly depressing piece that shows the earth in a mahogany coffin.

Two coiled baskets that seemed natural for the theme of the exhibit turned out to be **Lincoln Seitzman's** very convincing trompe l'oeil "Basket Illusions." The highlight of the pure turned forms was **John Jordan's** "Textured Vessel" in bleached boxelder which has a creamy color on a gently ridged surface contrasted by pink streaks in the wood. **Frank Cummings** displayed four of his lace vessels, the most delicately proportioned of which was "Lady in Red," made of pink ivory, garnets, and gold. The color and shape of the garnets contrasts delightfully with the lace above. His "Carousel 'An Age of Innocence'" featured suspended pearls alternating with small gold horses which seemed to compete with the lace, and the result is not as successful.

The exhibit was well displayed and the work is documented in a high-quality black and white catalog that includes photographs of over forty-five pieces.

After an exhibit of the magnitude of the "International Turned Objects Show" which presented over a hundred artists, mostly in wood, a show representing four craft media with one fourth the number of artists, left me feeling that a lot was left out. Perhaps a show of this size would seem more complete with a more limiting, unifying theme.

Mark Sfirri teaches in the Fine Woodworking Program at Bucks County Community College in Newtown, Pennsylvania. He is a furniture designer and maker who uses turnings in his work.

A black and white catalog of "Revolving Techniques" is available for $6 plus $2 postage. A set of 60+ slides is $80.00. Write to the Wood Turning Center, P.O. Box 25706, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM DEMONSTRATIONS

Nancy Gerard *Photos by Nancy Gerard*

Indianapolis, Indiana, is home to the world's largest Children's Museum. In conjunction with a new exhibit, "HANDS CAN," two local turners were asked to demonstrate lathe turning to the children visiting the museum during several weekends earlier this year.

Betty Scarpino and Dick Gerard, with their miniature lathes, turned colorful tops for the children to play with. Children were delighted to be able to help in the creative process by coloring the tops before they were parted off the lathe.

Miniature lathes definitely appeal to young children (as well as to adults). If your local chapter has access to one or two small lathes, why not set up demonstrations at a local children's museum or similar facility? You will be well rewarded with the enthusiasm and interest that young people have for woodworking, and it is a great way to introduce them to what we all know is the greatest machine for working wood—the lathe.

Betty Scarpino at The Children's Museum

Dick Gerard demonstrating

"Children" spinning the finished tops

BACK ISSUES OF *American Woodturner*

Listed below are the available back issues of the journal. To order, send your check, payable to AAW, to Mary Redig, AAW Administrator, 667 Harriet Ave., Shoreview, MN 55126.

1988
Vol. 2, No. 3
Vol. 2, No. 4
Vol. 3, No. 1
Vol. 3, No. 2

1989
Vol. 3, No. 3

1990
Vol. 4, No. 3
Vol. 4, No. 4
Vol. 5, No. 1
Vol. 5, No. 2

The journal was renumbered at this point. There is no Vol. 5, No. 3 or Vol. 5, No. 4.

1991
Vol. 6, No. 2
Vol. 6, No. 3
Vol. 6, No. 4

TWINNING

"The object of twinning is to promote the exchange of ideas, good fellowship, and an understanding of the other fellow's way of life, his customs, and amenities," writes John Holyoak. He is a member of a local woodturning chapter in England whose members would like to connect with a local AAW chapter on the eastern seaboard of the United States. Since some of the forty members in his group would eventually like to travel to the United States, it would be best that the U.S. chapter be located near an international airport. If your chapter is interested in twinning with John's, please write to him at: "Mead Cottage," 69 New Road, Blakeney, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7PA Great Britain.

3rd ANNUAL WOOD AUCTION BY MAIL

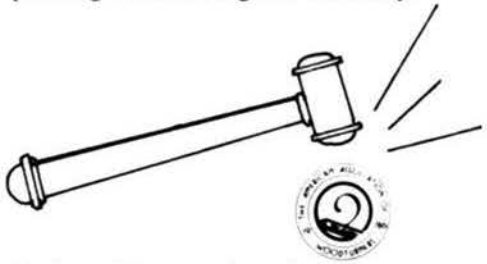
Robyn Horn, Auctioneer

The American Association of Woodturners needs your help in making the **3rd Annual Wood Auction by Mail** a success. Look through your stash of wood and find one or two special pieces to set aside for this fundraising event. You may also donate tools or related turning items. Send A DESCRIPTION of the wood or item (do NOT send the wood) to Robyn Horn, auction coordinator.

Descriptions of wood should include the following: 1) type of wood, 2) size, 3) any knots, splits, cracks, or unusual grain pattern, 4) how long the piece has been seasoned, 5) rough estimate of its value.

Each item for bid will be listed in the **December** issue of *American Woodturner*. Members will then bid by mail on the pieces of their choice. Highest bidder on each item will be notified by mail by the auctioneer; payment will be made to the auctioneer; then the person who donated the item will send the wood to the bidder. The bidder will then reimburse the donor for mailing expenses.

Your description of a donated item must be postmarked by **September 30, 1992**. Proceeds of this year's auction will help defray the cost of printing and mailing the directory.



Robyn Horn, Auctioneer
7801 Westwood Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72204

SAFETY REMINDER

Woodturning can be dangerous. Keep safety in mind when trying new procedures, and use tools and machines in an appropriate and safe manner. Select wood that is appropriate for your woodturning skill. Always wear eye and face protection when working in your shop.

A Focus on HIDDEN TALENT

Curated by Albert LeCoff

Craig Nutt
2014 Fifth Street
Northport, AL 35476

Generally speaking, my work is the result of a concept rather than the process. I develop my ideas on paper, through rough sketches used as a visual shorthand. I frequently work with three-dimensional models on large or complex designs. I am beginning to use the computer for modeling and for client presentations. When I have worked out the basics of the design, I decide to produce it.

The lathe is an efficient tool for producing cylindrical and spherical objects. I frequently use it to rough-out and hold those carved elements which lend themselves to the process. The vegetable forms I have been working with have required a suspension of many of the techniques I worked hard to perfect. There is no place for tightly formed beads and coves. Vegetables require a controlled randomness, multiple centers, etc.

While the turning process is evident in some of my work, it is not my intent to design specifically for lathe production. The lathe is one of many tools I use to produce my work and, like any other tool or process, has an affect on the final work.

photo by Rickey Vanaura

Flyin' Cayenne II, 1989
H. 21" x Diam. 16" x L. 27"
oil on wood

photo by Rickey Vanaura

Unmanned Interplan[t]etary Probe, 1989
H. 25" x Diam. 15" x L. 27"
oil on wood

Richard Gillam
RR 2, Box 369B
Ellsworth, ME 04605

From the Book of Orts (Gillam's Journal)
February 27, 1992
Reflecting on the way the shape of a tool affects the way it cuts on the lathe: shape intersects energy in the form of rotating material; change the shape and the interaction changes, so shape is encoded information. Information is energy. Shape is encoded energy—a sort of third kind of energy: potential kinetic and shape.
On the womb of the lathe, energy intersects energy intersects energy—motion, shape, idea. And energy, which is never still, congeals and slows, and we regard this leftover, this ort, and invest it with meaning or not, as we can or will.

photo by Ken Woisard

#107, Vessel, 1991
H. 12" x Diam. 7 1/2"
Birch, rope, bronze rod, paint

photo by Ken Woisard

#103, The Interpenetration of Void and Substance, 1991
H. 7" x Diam. 13 1/2"
Ash, bronze rod, rope, paint, shellac

These two pages are dedicated to those who make objects from the lathe. Photos are selected from the Wood Turning Center's archives. If you feel you are a Hidden Talent, *send your 5" x 7" glossy b/w photos, resumė, and a personal statement to Albert LeCoff, HIDDEN TALENT, 42 W. Washington Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19144 U.S.A. Accepted photos will not be returned; nonpublished photos will be returned if a self-addressed stamped envelope is supplied.*

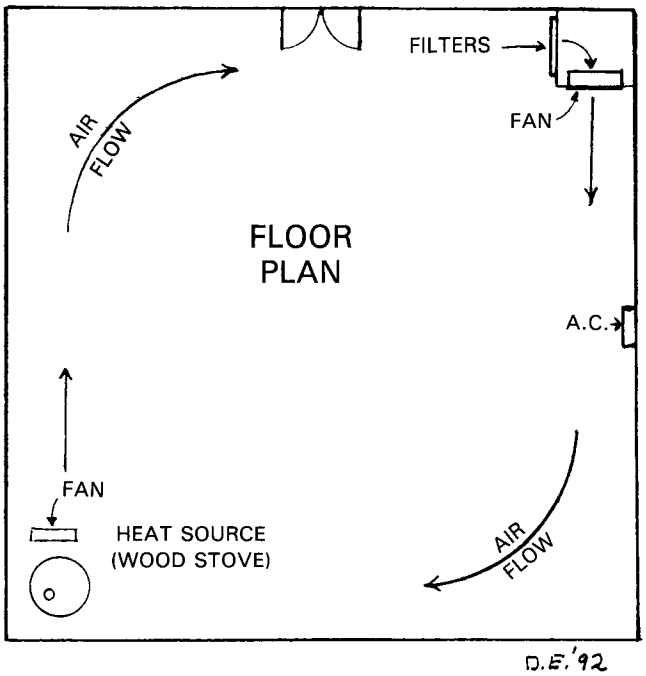
STUDIO MULCH: A Home-Made Dust-Removal System

David Ellsworth

It's my nature to have shavings on the floor—I turn wood. In fact, I work on a cement floor, so my affection for a soothing layer of studio mulch might even be described as "a relationship." But I'm not crazy about all that "stuff" floating in the air of my work space. Here, I believe in the old saw: "it's the stuff you can't see that can kill you." Thus, every time I step into the workshop I flip three switches: the light, the radio, and the dust collector.

Most turners today are conscientious enough to wear a face mask for protection against on-site dust particles while sanding. Yet most have not invested in an adequate full-room evacuation system to take care of all those airborn particles once the mask comes off. All it takes to stir the dust around is to walk from one side of the room to another. Money, of course, is the major problem. But not the only one. Other problems involve limited physical space, noise of operation, cost of operation, and loss of heat during winter months.

The system I'm describing here is not a perfect cure-all for every turner or every workroom, although it does solve the problems mentioned above. It works best in rooms that are square or rectangular in design and free of obstacles, like walls that block air circulation. Also, this system is versatile so that one or all of its features can be adapted to most work spaces. The system depends on circulating the air in order to clean it, which is a different approach from most units that are of little help when woodturners produce dust on the opposite side of the room from the collector.



Physical layout: I designed my turning room as a square to get the best use of the space for turning *and* to circulate the air most efficiently for both dust removal and heating (see the floor plan). To save floor space, I have placed the heat source (wood stove) in one corner of the room instead of in the center or along a wall where it would heat the room more evenly. To make use of the heat produced, I have hung an inexpensive 20-inch floor fan from the ceiling, about 30 inches from the chimney of the wood stove. This fan blows the heated air in one direction down the wall—the first step in collecting the dust.

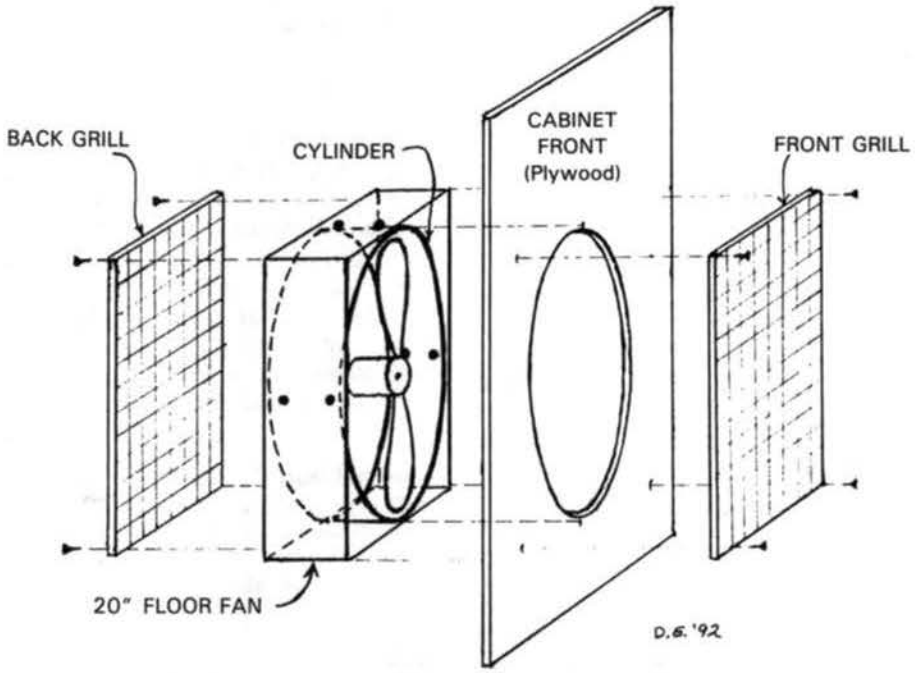
The dust collector is located in the opposite corner of the room from the stove. Using another 20-inch floor fan and 25-inch square furnace filters, this unit draws the warm air from the stove fan, cleans it, then moves it back around the room toward the stove. The result is clean air that circulates throughout the room, providing even heating in winter months and even cooling in the summer using air conditioning. Bonus: very quite operation. Double bonus: cost for the two fans, filters, and plywood for the cabinet is about $100, and they use about $3 a month in electricity!

How well does it work? The acid test came when I first turned the system on. I chose a summer day when the sun was shinning through the south windows so that I could detect any fine dust particles drifting through the air. With both fans turned on high, I blasted a huge cloud of dust with the compressor hose in one corner and stood back with my eye on the clock, counting. Thirty-five *seconds* later the air was clean with no particles—even in direct sunlight! In normal daily operation, I set the fans on low so the air gently circulates throughout the room while the filters collect the ambient dust.

When constructing this type of system, care must be taken that the collector fan actually draws air through the filters and *not* from the front corners of the fan's square body. To do this, cut a circle in the plywood face of the cabinet supporting the fan, then remove the back grill and fabricate a cylinder that fits inside the fan's body and just beyond the blade tips. The front edge of the cylinder butts flush to the inside surfaces of the circle cut in the plywood cabinet. This cylinder could be made with aluminum flashing material held together with pop rivets; mine is a 6-inch length of 20-inch I.D. cardboard Sono-tube.

Of course, individual furnace filters don't work very well for removing super-fine particles. The key is to gang them up—I use four. I tried five in the beginning, but the extra filter caused too much drag on the fan motor. The filters are easily removed and should be cleaned regularly outside the building. You could shake them or beat on them, but the best way is to blow out the dust with the aid of an air compressor.

This brings up another point about saving costs when building your own system . . . beyond the joy of making something that adds to the functional operation of your personal work space. A good commercial double-bag dust collector costs about



$600. A good 5-hp, 60-gallon compressor costs about $500 including the hoses and fittings. Thus, the money saved by building this system paid for the compressor—now I have both. Once a week I strap on my face mask, turn the fans to high and blast off every surface in the building, then walk outside and let the "system" do its thing.

David Ellsworth is past president of the American Association of Woodturners and is currently a board member. He lives in Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

TURNERS' TIPS

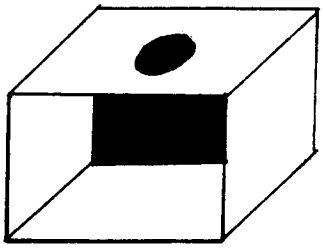
Robert Rosand, Section Editor

Send tips to: Robert Rosand, Dutch Hill Woodturning, RD. 1, Box 30, Bloomsburg, PA 17815, 717/784-6158

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the "Turners' Tips" that AAW members have sent to me. One tool manufacturer delcared, facitiously, that his tip would be that other turners should purchase *his* tools, while another turner sent me an even dozen tips. I now have a small pool of tips from which to draw, but I still want MORE!!! If you have been considering sending a tip, please do so now. Everyone has something to offer—your "insignificant" offering may be a revelation to someone else.

If you have sent me a tip and do not see it in this issue of the journal, please be patient, we'll use it sooner or later. My thanks to those who have taken the trouble to respond to my "plea" for assistance. To those who have not responded yet: we have no deadline, and we are looking forward to hearing from you. And one more thing: it's **Dutch** Hill Woodturning, not Ditch Hill Woodturning!!!

Cleaning shop



Cleaning up after a day's turning is always a chore, but it can be made easier and accomplished more quickly with a simple addition to your shop equipment. Get a 50-lb. nail carton from your local hardware store. They are made very strong. Cut out the top completely (see sketch) and use a sharp knife to make a handle hole near the bottom of one side. This scoop will gather much more than any dust pan and be easier to wield than a shovel, particularly in a small shop.

—Palmer M. Sharpless, Newtown, Pennsylvania

Inlay Veneer

Want to add decoration to a turned box or bowl that is just too plain by itself? Strips of inlay veneer from commercial suppliers can be simply glued into a carefully cut groove on a cylindrical surface and sanded flush. The finished object takes on a new look. I use masking tape to hold the strip in place as I glue it in and make the final cut to length after lapping the ends, then cutting through both for an exact fit.

—Palmer Sharpless

Shop-size kiln

I do a fair amount of laminating in my turning business, and I have had my share of cracking due to inadequately dried wood. I could neither afford a commercial drying unit, nor could I spare the room for one. My solution was to construct a small drying box (any size will work) of two-inch styrofoam board. In it, I placed a six-inch personal fan and two light fixtures. The fan circulates the air and the lights raise or lower the temperature depending on the lightbulbs used. You will also need a shelf or two (from an old refrigerator?) and a thermometer. At one time I placed a dehumidifier in the unit, but found it to be totally unnecessary as it raised the temperature far too high.

Since I have started using this unit to dry wood, I have had no failures due to shrinkage. Incidentally, when I dry my birdhouse bodies from fresh-cut logs, they are generally down to 6 percent or less in about two days with no cracking.

—Robert Rosand, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

Waterproof glue

Franklin International, manufacturers of Titebond Glue have introduced a new one-part waterproof glue called Titebond II. It meets type II water-resistance standards. The only restriction is that it not be used below "the waterline." I called the company and explained that I would be making exterior birdhouses, and they responded that that is what they intend Titebond II to be used for. If I have any failures, you will be hearing from me.

—Robert Rosand

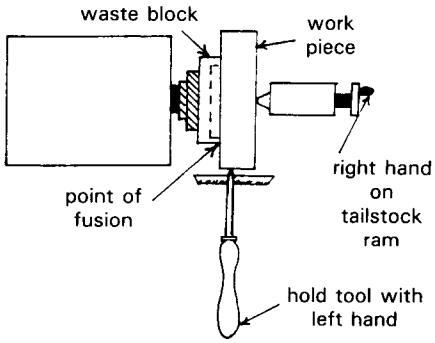
Improving slides

Those of us who have been struggling to improve the quality of slides of our work without hiring a professional photographer, might consider buying some high-quality, graded backdrop paper. This paper can give you a professional "fade-to-black" look with very little effort. A wide variety of colors and sizes are available. Contact: Helix, Jacqueline Sapien, 310 S. Racine Ave., Chicago, IL 60607, 312/421-6000, ext. 44.

David Ellsworth provided this simple solution to eliminate hot spots or glare that show up in slides of turned objects. Purchase white sail material and drape it around the work. The sail material is a very effective diffuser and it is also reasonably priced.

—Robert Rosand

Fastest Chuck in the East



This mounting method works for small, flat pieces, 6 inches in diameter or less for which the item will be remounted later to turn the opposite end. Examples include small shallow bowls, inlays, rings, and box lids.

Attach a waste block to a screw chuck, turn to a diameter about one-third smaller than the piece to be worked on, and hollow out the side facing the tailstock, leaving a band of wood about one-quarter inch wide at the perimeter. With the center of the turning stock lined up with the center of the tailstock, push the piece of wood firmly against the waste block with the tailstock ram. Turn on the lathe to medium speed, and with the toolrest in the appropriate position for turning, take any tool and after relieving some pressure on the tailstock, jam the tool against the spinning wood to stop it. Friction between the stalled wood and the spinning waste block will quickly create intense heat. Smoke will appear. Gradually increase pressure on the tailstock until dense clouds of smoke form, then pull out the tool, allow-

ing the wood to begin spinning and simultaneously increase the pressure on the tailstock. The work will be fused to the waste block securely enough to carry out light- to-medium cutting operations. Some woods fuse better than others (rosewoods fuse well, ebony poorly). Experiment, wear a faceshield, and be careful. To remove the turned piece, tap briskly with a mallet.

—Michael D. Mode, New Haven, Vermont

Stains on Wood

I turn green birch, mostly. It is a light-colored wood that stains if you just give it a dirty look. It stains particularly badly if you touch it with your hands after touching bare steel. I started out scrubbing my hands with fresh chips to get rid of the metal particles before I handled the piece or removed it from the chuck. From there, I went to putting a paper bag over the form and grasping that. (I tried plastic bags; they don't give enough grip.) Finally, I've learned to keep a pair of clean cotton work gloves handy (so to speak), and I put them on to remove turned work from the chuck.

If you do get that nasty gray stain on a green bowl, a 50-50 solution of Clorox (or any such bleach) brushed on the stain will remove it. This should work for other light- colored woods turned green such as apple, maple, and dogwood.

—Buz Blum, Palmer, Alaska

Let there be Light

In addition to the standard flex-neck light mounted close to my lathes, I use two, 150-watt ceiling-mounted floodlights in inexpensive exterior holders with a separate on-off switch. The focal points are the same as close-in lights, one straight down on the headstock and one coming in from the tailstock end. These floodlights are wonderful as I can see everything. They are especially helpful when sanding. I can just about guarantee that your turning will improve, and if you do have a catch or make a mistake, at least you will be able to see what you've done. Proper lighting is a must.

Rodger Jacobs, Newland, North Carolina

Tailstock Extension

A couple of years ago, as I was finishing a complex form, the shape of which dictated that it be held between centers for reverse turning, I found the tailstock getting in the way of the gouge handle as I was final-shaping the base. After talking over this problem with a metal-working friend, I ordered a #2 to #2 morse-taper sleeve from a machinist supply catalog.

The sleeve is essentially a tailstock-ram extension and allowes me to move the tailstock back out of the road while keeping the live center pressed against the work. I could now sweep and roll the gouge to my heart's content. I have found the extension invaluable and having it handy opened up new areas of design.

—Rodger Jacobs

French Polish

For small items such as pens and pocket mirrors that receive lots of wear and require a durable finish, use equal parts (more or less) of linseed oil, alcohol, and shellac.

Sanding disc

A valve stem cut from a tire tube makes a cheap and flexible sanding disc.

Outboard sharpening

As a full-time turner, I make good use of this outboard sharpening disc. It cuts down on the number of steps taken during a long work day. Glue together two, 3/4-inch plywood discs, the same diameter as a grinding wheel. Fasten this to a left-hand thread faceplate, then coat the edge with a thick layer of epoxy. After the epoxy has cured, turn the epoxy-coated disc true and glue leather to the edge. This leather can be charged with buffing compound, then used for renewing the edges of your turning chisels several times before making a trip to the grinder.

—Gary D. Adams, Roanoke, Virginia

Decorative wire burning

When you use a wire to burn blackened lines on a turning, it is hard to get the line to settle right where you want it. On cylindrical surfaces, scribe the surface with the long point of a skew chisel first, then burn your line in. On surfaces like the lid of a box, make a shoulder to hold the wire in place, then remove the shoulder after the line is burned in.

—Jay Weber, Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania

12 tips from Joseph M. Herrmann

#1. Recently in another magazine, Palmer Sharpless suggested making a small tray to prevent lathe tools from sliding off the lathe bed while you are turning. I went one better and built a larger tray to hold not only lathe tools, but also abrasive paper, finishing supplies, and other small objects that talways seemed to get lost while I was working. To prevent these articles from falling off the tray onto the floor from lathe vibration, I built a shallow, enclosed box instead of a three-sided tray. I also notched the tray to enable it to straddle the lathe bed, then screwed it to my wooden ways. Magnets or double-sided tape could be used on lathes with a metal bed.

#2. When turning tauga nuts or other miniature objects, standard-size lathe tools are often too large or do not conform to the shape of the object being turned. "Cut" nails (cement nails) or allen wrenches can be used to grind your own tools for these specialized tasks. Handles can be fashioned from small file handles or you can turn your own.

#3. A lot of my work lately involves small production runs of objects that are turned between centers. Keeping track of the dimensions of tenon diameters was a problem until I started keeping trackof these details on a miniature "story pole." I use the table saw or bandsaw to make notches in the pole for the major caliper settings, and I drill a hole through the

board to determine exact tenon diameter. Next, I mark all the major transition points so that I can just lay the pole against the round blank and transfer the locations right onto the turning blank.

#4. It is difficult to find a suitable finish for lathe- turned objects. If the finish is too glossy, the piece looks "plastic." If the finish is too dull, the piece appears lifeless. A spray finish is risky because runs and "orange peels" can easily ruin the appearance of a bowl, especially on the interior surfaces. A brushed finish also has its drawbacks. A simple, EASY finish that eliminates most of my concerns involves brushing on a heavy coat of Deft lacquer, allowing it to dry for less than a minute and wiping it off completely with paper towls. I allow the finish to dry overnight, then I "wet" steel wool the object with some sort of oil (Watco, Minwax, tung oil, or even boiled linseed oil). I apply two coats, allowing for ample drying time between each one. On light-colored objects, the steel wool can sometimes leave an objectionable gray cast. To eliminate this problem, a white "scotch brite-type" pad, available from 3M, can be used.

#5. I have found that the "white" silicon carbide abrasive paper holds much better than other types when hand sanding on the lathe. It cuts cleaner and quicker and does not generate as much heat as, for example, aluminum oxide paper. It costs a little more, but it is worth it. One brand is "nofil Durite" manufactured by Norton Abrasives. Grits frange from 120 to 320. The paper is manufactured by other companies as well.

#6. Spindle turning sometimes involves gluing up blanks to produce a piece of wood that is large enough. The gluing process, however, is time consuming and messy. Instead of spreading the glue with your finger or a brush, use a "knife" made from a thin piece of wood. Slightly shape the stick into a modified knife-shape and spread out the glue just as you would mustard. An old credit card also works well.

#7. For the lathe work that involves smaller pieces of stock, try to find pallets that would otherwise be thrown away. Pallet lumber often contains different species of wood such as red and white oak, walnut, cherry, ash, and hard maple. Companies that import goods from Japan often have pallets that contain "exotic" woods. *Editor's note: one member of the Indiana Chapter was pleased to find a pallet made, in part, from tulipwood.*

#8. A high luster can be buffed on the surface of spindle turnings with the shavings that were turned off the spindle. Sand as you would normally. When you are finished, scoop up a handful of the smaller shavings and press them against the turning while it spins. Use only dry shavings and remember, heat is generated furing this process. On some woods, like cherry or maple, this heat can discolor the wood. This process works great on oak and ash.

#9. Many turners have discovered the cyanoacrylate adhesive or "Superglue." This glue has a shelf life that can be extended by keeping any extra bottles in the fridge until needed. Don't do this with opened bottles because any moisture that might condense could contaminate the glue. Allow the glue to reach room temperature before using.

#10. To use up nice pieces of scrap wood, I save all my larger pieces, glue them together in random sequence and use the resulting blanks to turn small objects to sell at craft fairs. Small tops and the like can often be sold for enough money to pay for the original board.

#11. Another way to conserve expensive lumber is to cut the blanks on the bandsaw rather than on the table saw. This produces a smaller kerf. It is also much safer for cutting smaller pieces of wood, as there is less danger of kickback. Install a fence and be sure that the tension on the blade is high enough to temper any blade deflection.

#12. After purchasing a good live center for your tailstock, the next most useful item would be a light to illuminate the wood you are turning. A clamp-on light on a pivoting arm allows you to see better and will make visible small scratches that need to be sanded.

—Joseph M. Herrmann, Jefferson, Ohio

TURNING CASUALTIES!

Stephen H. Blenk

With the recent resurgence in woodturning as a hobby and an art form, the lathe is surprising some folks; it is capable of causing significant injuries, even death. The lathe has, for the most part, been considered a "safe" shop tool. After all, it has no spinning saw blades, no router bits rotating at thousands of rpm, and no knives and feed rollers waiting to snag stray fingers. My purpose is not to scare anyone away from their lathe; I would just like to urge a little caution. I have a unique perspective on this issue: I have been called as an expert witness in injury cases resulting from turning. Almost invariably, it is not the equipment that is at fault; it is the operator. I will not tell the horror stories here. I will tell you some things to do to help avoid injury.

With this renaissance in turning, craftsmen around the world have worked to expand the possibilities of what we can do with the wood lathe. New techniques are the norm rather than the exception, and new devices such as chucks and chisel systems have proliferated. The resulting storm of new information and procedures can be bewildering to the beginner. And it is almost always the less experienced turner who makes the most dangerous errors.

One of the best things to come out of the turning movement in this country has been the free sharing of information and techniques through publications, symposiums, and demonstrations. We watch John Jordan and David Ellsworth produce beautiful vessels, while stretching the limits of turning. We watch videotapes of Richard Raffan working; we watch Del Stubbs and wonder at his control. We try to learn from all of them. But herein lie some of the dangers as well: many beginners try techniques that are the result of years of turning experience. The results can be dangerous. Students tell me of attempting deep, endgrain turnings while using improper tools. Chisels catch and they have a disaster. Aspiring to do the best work is great, but beginners must realize that it comes from patient practice and experience. There are no quick fixes.

Beginners and experienced turners alike are subject to injuries while attempting new techniques. Yet the nature of turning today is to attempt an endless variety of new ideas. There *is* a safe way: learn from someone who already has experience with the technique. This may not sit well with "self-taught" turners, but it is the prudent method of learning. And since we now have this wonderful network of turners, it is easy to find instruction. One of the stated goals of the American Association of Woodturners is to promote education in woodturning. Let's make sure this happens at the local-chapter level where it is needed the most.

Injuries from the lathe come in several forms. The two most frequent are impacts from wood that has come loose and hand injuries resulting from contact with the workpiece or machinery.

Of the two, the first type are the most serious. Many are head injuries incurred when a bowl blank is torn loose from its mounting. Often this is caused by improper mounting procedures or from using incorrect tool angles (or a combination of both!). Catching a piece of wood in your teeth is not a great parlor trick; wearing a face shield can greatly reduce your risk of injury from such encounters. Mounting the bowl blank properly is a must:

1. Make sure that faceplate screws are of an adequate size.
2. Use fresh glue and allow adquate drying time. This also applies to cyanoacrylate glues; old glue does not hold as well as fresh glue, so check the shelf life.
3. The jaws of your chucks should be clean and aligned properly.
4. Be sure that the proper-sized holes are drilled for screw-chuck mounting and that the wood is not split by the chuck when mounted.
5. Give laminated turning blocks time to dry properly in a heated place before turning.
6. Always check the lathe speed before starting the machine.
7. Stand clear when first starting any faceplate or chuck work.
8. Use the tailstock for as long as possible.
9. Check the mounting of your workpiece each time you stop the lathe.
10. Examine the mounting of old waste blocks on faceplates; three or four turnings are enough to work screws loose and cause problems.
11. Be wary of irregular or off-center work. Many of the above problems are magnified by such turnings.
12. Look over *every* workpiece for potential problems. A lathe acts like a centrifuge. Small cracks can translate into big trouble at 600 rpm.

Hand injuries can be caused by the workpiece, the machine, or the chuck or holding device. Most common are injuries involving the workpiece. Fingers can be caught between the spinning wood and the toolrest. Develop the habit of keeping clear of the "gap" as much as possible. Another potential problem is irregularly shaped, natural-edge bowls. Too often, what we cannot see CAN hurt us. While the edge of a bowl may be invisible as it spins at 700 rpm, it has a definite way of making its presence known should you allow a hand to stray over the toolrest! This also applies to negative-space areas during the sanding process. If you must sand these areas under power, use extreme caution.

Chucks are a problem when turners try to work too close to them, especially on small projects. Three- and four-jaw machinist's chucks can do painful things to knuckles. (I speak from experience.) It is *much* easier to allow for some extra wood when you set up the project than it is to bandage or splint a finger.

One other type of hand injury that may not be obvious, but is a risk of turning, is carpal tunnel syndrome. If you are having problems with your grip or if your hands are going to sleep, you may have it. Ask your physician.

Most lathes require the operator to change belts at least occasionally for speed changes. Some machines have a power switch hooked up to doors and covers, but they are the exception. It is up to YOU to make sure that you do not leave part of a finger on a belt sheave. Take time to make sure the power will *stay* off while you are changing belts!

Another problem that can lead to injuries is the "new-tool syndrome." We go watch the professionals work, and we see them using some fancy hardware. In our mind runs the standard, "gee, if I only had one of those, I could do that." Don't count on it. Tools and chucks may open up possibilities, but they also require time and training. A new set of chisels will not make up for lack of experience. Every time we change one of the many variables in our own personal turning procedures, we run the risk of unforseen consequences. Approach new, unfamiliar tools with caution.

I have saved the most important factor for last: YOU. As a lathe operator, there are certain things you can do to insure your safety. Anyone with the money can buy a lathe, and using it without proper training and caution creates the possibility for calamity. Most of us would not operate a car without a seatbelt. Why work without face shields and dust protection? Don't work when you are tired or distracted. If you cannot keep your mind on what you are doing, it's time to knock off for the day. If you are not completely comfortable about trying some new process, common sense should tell you to wait. Murphy lives in every woodshop; don't give him a chance to make his presence known. Never be casual about safety. Casual is the first word in casualty.

Steve Blenk is a professional woodturner and turning instructor residing in western Washington state. He is the founder of the Olympic Peninsula Chapter of the AAW and works with Delta International Machinery on their turning equipment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear fellow AAW members,

In addition to being an AAW member, I am a member of the Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen. To my mind, we are not just an assortment of odd craftsmen trying to eke out a living. We truly are a family, and as such, we help one another when a storm flattens a person's display or if someone needs a place to stay. In the years that I have participated in the PGC craft shows I have rarely had to stay in a motel beyond my first year of participation in any craft show. Far more important than that, I have made a number of lifelong friends and have come to realize that there is a life beyond woodturning. In short, I have benefitted from my association with these people beyond the normal "acquaintance" relationship.

There is a suggestion before the AAW board that AAW members might be able to benefit from our membership in a similar manner. I have suggested that when the 1993 membership renewals come out, you will be able to check off a box that will designate you in the 1993 Directory (with an asterisk) as a "host." If another AAW member is traveling in the area and would like or needs a place to stay, he or she can call you. This would in no way obligate the "host." If you cannot entertain guests, you have the option of refusal, no excuses necessary.

I fully realize that this is not feasible for everyone. Certainly many well-known turners would be filled to the rafters with weekend "guests" cursing me for all eternity. I do believe, however, that this could make us a stronger group in some small way. I would hate to think that some fellow AAW member was in need of some small assistance not far from my home and did not call for fear of bothering me.

This is one of the most sharing groups I have ever been a member of, and I believe that most of you would willingly assist other members. To make your opinion known on this issue, write or call the AAW board member nearest you. Their addresses are listed in last year's directory. If you don't have a directory, write to me and I will forward your comments.

—Robert Rosand, Dutch Hill Woodturning, RD #1, Box 30, Bloomsburg, PA 17815

Dear AAW members,

Hospitality is extended to any member of the AAW traveling to New Zealand at the home of Brian Tunbridge of Ratanui Woodturning, 25 Ratanui Rd., Paraparaumu, Wellington, N3. Forty minutes drive north of the capital. A good selection of native timber blanks and burls is available. I also have a gallery. Free overnight accomodation is extended to AAW members. Phone (04) 298 7863. Thank you to all members for an informative and helpful magazine—looking forward to the 1992 season.

—Brian Tunbridge

Dear Editor,

In response to William A. Montgomery's cry for help (*American Woodturner*, March 1992) in acquiring a left-handed wood lathe I would like to offer the following suggestion: try a Shopsmith or one of its competitors. The headstock has a spindle on each end and all the chucks that fit one end will fit the other. The carriage supporting the toolrest can be mounted to the left of the headstock instead of the right, as well as the tailstock. It doesn't hurt any either to have all the other functions and variable speed to boot.

Having owned a Shopsmith for the past ten years, I often mount turnings on the opposite end during finish sanding. A Shopsmith is made of aluminum so, in my opinion, as a faceplate lathe it makes a good coat rack. However, if you hang enough concrete blocks off the bottom rails, you can achieve some semblance of solidity. Among the competition is the Mastershop which is made of case iron and is also a few hundred dollars cheaper, even if you do need a block and tackle to hoist it into drill-press mode.

I must confess, however, that I have never seen a left-handed bowl gouge for sale. Perhaps some other readers can help with that one.

—Criss Mattingly, Ohio

To the Editor with tongue in cheek,

Prompted by recent references to turning left handed, I, as a left hander, offer my support to your American left handers who are having difficulty obtaining left-handed lathes. In the United Kingdom, we left handers are in a very fortunate position, our left hands are no longer tied behind our backs in school to prevent us writing with them. We even drive on the left-hand side of the road, and the gear change is handy for the left handed, so I can burn up any right hander when it comes to getting through the gears fast. As for lathes, all British lathes are left handed—its great having the headstock at the left-hand end so that the control panel can be easily reached with the left hand, and the headstock does not get in the way of the feet or body when turning left handed. But even on my left-handed lathe, I must admit there are occasions when I do turn right handed, but only when it's the safest and easiest way to do it. (But please don't tell anyone.) The solution to your problem is to buy British or from one of the Commwealth countries such as Australia or Canada who still make left-handed lathes, even though they do drive on the right.

While I support your campaign, please keep it low key or we are likely to have a blacklash from the right handers over here. Signed with the left hand,

—Michael O'Donnell, Scotland

Editor,

In regard to the recent letters on shop safety, I would like to add my comments. For an emergency message from your shop, Radio Shack markets an auto dialer that can be activated by a push button and will then call up to four numbers and deliver an emergency message when the person called answers. This device will continue to call the four numbers in succession until someone receives the alert message and responds by entering your phone number (given with the alert message). This precludes the system being defeated by an answering machine or a child answering. This device is in the $100 range. The DAK catalog offers

a similar device that is activated by a small transmitter you can wear around your neck.

My approach to stopping my lathe is to use an industrial photo-control unit attached to one of the front legs of the lathe at floor level with the reflector attached to the other. I have the unit wired so that the lathe will stop when I break the light beam by sliding my foot forward any place between the two front legs of the lathe. I also have a stop button wired in parallel, but I find that I use my foot through the beam 90 percent of the time. During those exciting moments when I no longer wish to be standing in front of the piece, I can easily move toward the tailstock and get my foot through the light beam to stop the lathe.

—Chuck Woodruff, Seattle

Dear editor,

The turning process is exciting and pleasure-giving because of the personal involvment of the turner in its successes and failures. Nothing happens at the lathe until the turner applies himself. No tool cuts, no surface appears and smooths, no form develops, no piece just happens.

The riches of the lathe experience are not reserved for the one-in-a-hundred who can apply original, artistic, design-oriented ideas to produce gallery and museum objects. These special turners serve as pioneers and trend-setters. They have their special goals and rewards. They are a "wonderful few." For the rest of us, working with great natural material, using good tools and the talents we have been given is enough for now. Bringing beauty into our lives and the lives of our friends and customers is sufficient reward.

But watch out for us. We have potential. Those of us who haven't "made it" yet may be closer than those who have arrived wish to admit. We all start as amateurs, grow in skills and experience, and as time passes, become craftsmen to whom the newer amatures look to for guidance and example.

—Palmer M. Sharpless, Newtown, Pennsylvania

on it. Our conferences have grown in scope and variety with more demonstrators, less repetition of demonstrators from the previous year, more local and regional talent showcased, more types of turning emphasized.

Even with these developments, it is not enough to build a healthy organization. We, like the local groups, must continue to be alive and active and far reaching in what we do. I would like to talk about some of the things we have done recently. The membership directory will be a regular feature of AAW membership. The directory includes a list of all chapters and an expanded demonstrator directory. What will be new this year is a resource directory of suppliers, schools, and organizations of interest to woodturners. We expect the directory to grow in the years to come. Scholarships have been expanded to include local chapters, allowing many to benefit from a single scholarship by sponsoring a demonstrator to the chapter. We are holding another annual wood auction which will be greatly expanded with all proceeds going to fund the printing and mailing of the directory (any excess will go to an educational fund). We are also in the final phases of obtaining liability insurance coverage for chapters, the board, and the symposium. A positive development in that arena is that we may have located a company that would provide a wide variety of insurance options to our members (especialy those who teach, demonstrate, and sell their work on a serious level) at a reasonable cost. What else are we doing? Communication between other turning organizations in the world is occurring. Also, we joined a new organization comprised of other national craft organizations: potters, weavers, silversmiths, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, furniture, and the like, and we are are already benefitting from information supplied by other groups. We have initiated the process of local chapters in the U.S. developing relationships with local groups elsewhere in the world—it is definitely being turned into reality.

What next? Special videos, unique publications, specialized conferences, collective projects (like the totem pole at Arrowmont two years ago), international scholarships, AAW-sponsored demonstrators to travel to selected areas (at little or no cost for members), activities in public schools to emphasize uses and safety with the lathe have all been put forward. At our national conference this year the AAW board will make decisions on these and other matters, and I intend to set aside at least one-half day to identify specific actions or programs that we will initiate for the future.

Are turning organizations really necessary? No, turning does not die as a craft because a national or local group folds—but the craft has the potential of becoming richer because of their existence, if they do indeed provide and produce meaningful results. Individuals will continue to benefit in important ways, the least of which will be to shave years off of trial and error learning new techniques. And one other thing is clear: no matter what the organizational-success level has been, the group must always beware the Siren's song of success and the status quo—it must keep maturing and building on its successes.

—Alan Lacer, AAW President

Dear AAW Scholarship Committee,

I would like to thank you for granting me the scholarship to attend a woodturning class under Dale Nish offered by Craft Supplies in Utah. I feel that I have gained much ground as a woodturner from this experience.

I have often used the techniques that Dale taught in class. Several people that I have been in contact with who knew that I went to this class want me to teach them the basics of woodturning.

I entered a bowl in the Oregon State Fair and received a ribbon. My goal is to keep improving my work. I hope to be able to take more classes to accomplish this. I feel that I have gained much from taking this class, and I recommend that all woodturners take similar classes. Thank you once again for making this possible for me. I hope that I can repay this by helping others.

—Conrad W. Witt, Tangent, Oregon

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Shoreview, MN 55126
(address correction requested)

Second Class
Postage
PAID
at St. Paul, MN
and additional
mailing offices

photo by Judd Mosser

"Man Turning Mahogany Bowl," 1991, Charles Guilmain, East Aurora, New York.
Mahogany, red oak, red pine, white pine, 7 1/2" diam. x 8" w. x 10" h.
Note that the bowl on the lathe is spinning.