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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Art Liestman

The past month has certainly been busy for me! After our April meeting, several members journeyed south to attend the Pacific Northwest Woodturning Symposium in Everett, Washington. I was pleased to be one of the presenters and (other than having a nasty cold) had a great time both presenting and watching the other presenters. I believe that everyone else also enjoyed the experience and, collectively, we learned a lot. The following weekend was Michael Hosaluk's demo and classes that I will report on in a separate article. There is also a lot of planning going on for future events that will be reported on as details are worked out. Suffice it to say that we hope to have a lot more excitement in store in the coming years.

For the May meeting, don't forget the President's Challenge – something inspired by Michael Hosaluk. If you weren't able to attend his demo, have a look at the pictures of his work in the last newsletter. They should give you some ideas.



Michael turned this super thin Arbutus bowl at the demo.

NEXT MEETING ON MAY 22, 2002

at the Sapperton Pensioners Hall
318 Kearny St., New Westminster

Focus on Fundamentals

(Starts at 6:30 p.m.)

LEVEL 1 – Sharpening

Free-hand sharpening a spindle gouge and a parting tool

LEVEL 2 – Mounting Systems II

Screw centers and chucks

LEVEL 3 – Basic Cuts III

Using a bowl gouge and scrapers

MAIN EVENT:

Gerrit Van Ness

of the Northwest Wood Turners will demonstrate offset turning – for instance how to make a funky tea pot then applying different dyes for a unique finish.

A Reminder for the May Meeting Food Providers.

We ask that the following members please provide some food for the meeting on May 22nd:

Bill Kennedy, Steve Kent, Al Koehn, Phil Laliberte, John Lenaghan, Ken Lewis, Bill Luck, Bob Macgregor.

(Food is supplied in alphabetical rotation. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. Yum!)

THE FULL HOSALUK!

Art Liestman

We were very happy to welcome Michael Hosaluk to do a demo for us on May 4th. Unfortunately, the attendance was a bit low, but those there certainly were able to soak up a lot of



Michael demonstrates the art of making a sphere.

information and inspiration. All of the pieces he made that day will be available at the auction at this summer's picnic.

Michael was bursting at the seams to pack a lot into a short day, so he actually started turning 15 minutes before the official starting time. He started by quickly making a large 4½" tall x 3½" diameter top – the kind that you throw with a string wrapped around it. He continued, making a matched pair of doorstops, a microwave bent spindle, a large multi-sectioned box, a large ladle, a wooden baseball, and an impossibly thin bowl. Along the way, he showed us many simple ways to take our turnings beyond the usual. A good time was had by all! Thanks to everyone who helped in moving equipment in for the day – even the few things that we didn't get to use!



Turning the bowl of a spoon in a jam chuck.

On the following two days, Michael taught classes at KMS. The students made a variety of pieces including large, multi-sectioned boxes, bent spindles, and ladles. One lunatic even made parts of a teapot. Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun and went away with new skills and new ideas. What more could you ask?

Thanks, Michael, for an inspiring visit!



Turned fish (Not edible).

INSTANT GALLERY

Andrew Forrest

The Instant Gallery for April's meeting was a little scarce. Let's do better for May's meeting. This seems to be a recurring theme in my articles. I'll even bring something in for the next meeting. Let's see lots of stuff.



Don Hoskins' laburnum goblets.

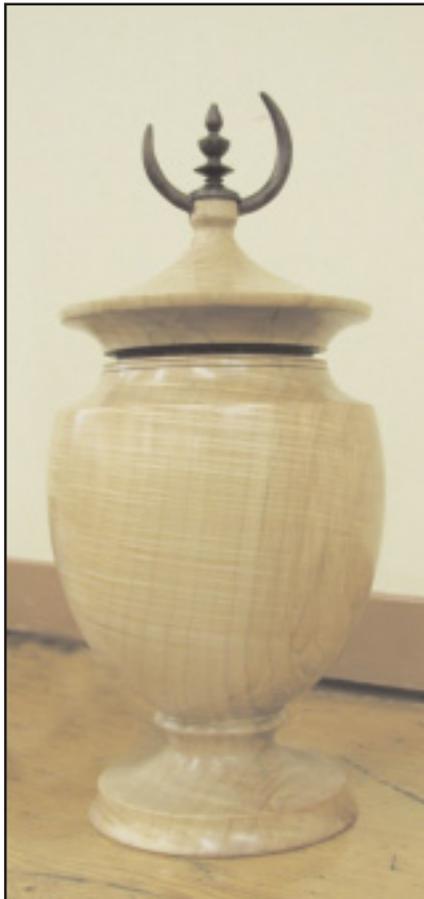
Andrew Forsyth brought in a large gouge of indeterminate heritage. An oak and maple bowl as well.

Don Hoskins is using his snazzy lathe and made some laburnum goblets and a walnut platter.

Tom Byrom had an interesting grain pattern in the bottom of his accurately titled maple 'Fish Bowl'.

Stan Clarke's large urn with a threaded inlay top had a long gestation period.

Marco re-turned a laminated bowl that was found in a second hand store. Prior to Marco getting his hands on it, you could describe it as being big and very ugly. He did a great job salvaging a bowl out of it.



Stan Clarke's wonderful urn.

Perry Neihaus who is one of our friends at the Fraser Valley Guild, brought in an "Inside Out Bowl" that was the inside of a bowl if it was turned out. I think?

David MacDonald's copy of a video game thingy (I didn't catch a purpose for your gizmo David, sorry) was a large and regal/official looking battle axe/flag standard/can opener???. Interesting anyhow.

I spent 5 minutes looking at Bruce's carved, coloured, textured hollow form trying to figure out what it was. Bruce called it a Venetian flower bud and that is exactly what it was. Very neat looking.

John Bese works with large blanks of wood and does a lot of coring. He brought in a left over outer ring from one of these coring sessions and is going to be making something of it, keep us informed. He also had a Michael Hosaluk Christmas ornament with carved and coloured birds on it.



David MacDonald's staff.



Bruce Campbell's Venetian flower bud.



Marcus re-turns.



Gina's bowl. If you love an Ulu knife you'll make a bowl.



Perry Neihaus made this inside out bowl.

A new turner who has been with us a short while, brought in a lidded box and container. Bent Hansen did a very fine job on both items.

Gina Myhill-Jones (Who Ted Fromson and I confused horribly about sharpening during the coffee break) made a round, slightly concave cutting board for her Ulu knife. The knife is semi-circular in shape and rocked back and forth to cut. Well done.



John Bese's Vice President's challenge pieces.

Now for the Vice President's Challenge. John Bese took a page from the "Go big or go home" book and set forth a most excellent challenge for the month, a lidded box with inlay. Surprise, surprise, I think we got more this month than last month.

We had pieces from Bruce Campbell, Tom Byrom, John Bese, Ross Pilgrim, John Mathers, Sandy Howkins, Stan Clarke and David MacDonald. All were well done. We'll see you next month.

HELP NEEDED

The Richmond Carvers Society's 13th Annual Woodcarving Show will be held at the Steveston Community Centre on Saturday, May 25 and Sunday, May 26. This show is an excellent opportunity for our group to show the current high level of woodturning in this area. Our club as individuals, and as a group are excellent woodturners and we should be proud of our skills and be willing to show other craft and artistic groups that there is more to turning than salad bowls.

If we are going to enter these shows and exhibitions then we need support from the membership. This is a request for helpers in the booth at the show, and also for some to the items that are regularly brought to the meetings.

If you are willing to help in the booth for a few hours please contact Ted Fromson at home 604-876-0267 or by e-mail at fromsonet@aol.com.

A TEST OF MICROWAVING

Dick Veitch

(From the NZ Woodturner at www.woodturning.co.nz)

Recently I took three small bowls along to our club meeting. I had microwave dried these from fresh-cut wood in the previous couple of weeks. Comments on microwave drying in this manner were readily forthcoming: "You will kill your microwave"; "You can't dry wood without a fire brick in the oven"; "I did a bit recently and it took far less time" and, from Faceplate of September 1994, "air dry to 22% moisture before microwaving". As I had done none of these things in the course of producing perfectly good bowls I decided a little research and experimentation was in order to gain a bit more definitive information on the subject.

As drying wood from fresh to dry can take from 40 to 90 'cooks' per bowl there could have been some truth in the "You will kill your microwave" comment. I therefore checked out the operation of microwave ovens with two electronics experts, one of whom has a doctorate in microwave technology. The answer: "Cooking wood like this is exactly what a microwave oven is designed to do." But if you turn your microwave on without using the timer and leave it for too long then the wood may catch fire and thus burn the microwave and possibly your house!

While talking to these experts I asked about the fire brick theory. A microwave works on meat, vegetables, cold coffee, wet wood, and all other things, by agitating the water molecules and this produces heat. If the brick in the oven contains no water molecules to agitate then it is just a 'nothing' as far as the microwave is concerned. So a dry fire brick will have no effect on the drying of wood but if the brick is wet then it will absorb some microwave energy and hence slow the drying of the wood.

With those two comments set aside I began my experiments. My microwave oven has a full power of 700 watts and a defrost power of 245 watts. My series of test bowls were 100 to 130mm diameter and all turned to about 15mm thick. I weighed each bowl to start with and then after each five 'cooks' and recorded the weight. When ten cooks passed with no weight change the bowl was declared dry. For greatest efficiency in weighing I suggest you use scales which will consistently detect a 1% change in the weight of the wood.

The first obvious difference was the number of cooks needed to dry and the rate of weight loss of different woods and different cuts from the same tree containing more or less heart (Figure 1).

My starting thickness of 15mm was generous for some woods, notably puriri, but not so for others like pohutukawa and casuarina. The swamp kauri barely moved but note that it never levelled out in weight. Indeed, towards the end of the experiment its weight loss increased and I think it was beginning to break down (burn) internally.

The time that each piece of wood is cooked for is determined by the temperature of the wood at the end of each 'cook'. All previous reports recommended use of the

defrost setting on the microwave, cooking the wood until it is 'comfortably warm' and then allowing it to cool completely. I saw no reason to change this and found that a good starting point is 1/2 a minute on defrost for each 100 grams of wood. As the bowl dries it may get hotter so

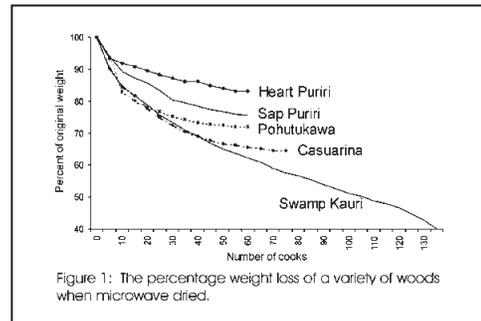


Figure 1: The percentage weight loss of a variety of woods when microwave dried.

keep checking. If the wood gets too hot it can crack but if it does not get hot enough it will not dry. To test this I reduced the 'cook' time for some bowls to half that of others. When taken from the oven the half-time bowls could be described as "comfortably warm" (this may be likened to the cat on your knee or the cup when the soup is nearly gone) and the full-time bowls as "toasty warm" (which really warms the hands but can continue to be held). When the half-time bowls were apparently dry (Figure 2) I began to cook them at the full-time (toasty warm) rate. They lost a further four to six percent in weight.

I then returned to question the person who said "I did a bit recently and it took far less time" and the outcome was that his one bowl may have started dryer and really taken a similar number of cooks. All the bowls I cooked were from fresh green wood and now look just as good as air-dried wood. Air drying to 22% (Faceplate September 1994) would

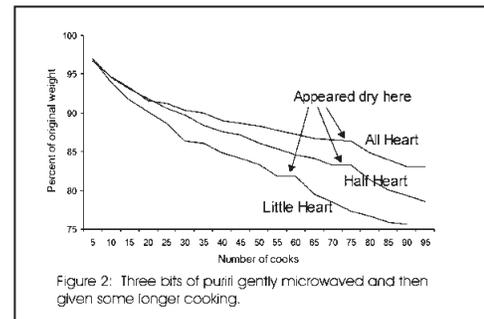


Figure 2: Three bits of puriri gently microwaved and then given some longer cooking.

reduce the microwaving time but I have seen nothing to suggest a better bowl would result. Some microwave ovens operate on the lower power settings by reducing the total power while others use pulses of the full power. These differences may cause differing times and results. Turning the bowl upside down for every second cook (which I did not do) is reported to reduce the number of cooks needed.

I rough turned my bowls to 15mm thick which, if the 25mm per year air drying time is true, would equate to seven months of air drying. In all my microwave oven did 845 'cooks' during this experiment and still mulls wine perfectly well. I did more than 56 hours of microwaving and mulled over the thought of doing more. Even my Great Aunt Liz can surely wait seven months for a bowl.

PAPER THIN?

Victor Radin

Recently, Barry Turner posed the following question on rec.crafts.woodturning, the woodturning news group: "I was recently in a gallery in Gatlinburg, TN looking at some of the turned wood items on display for sale there. Some of the bowl walls were barely more than 1/16" thick. Just wispy feathery little things! An 8" bowl probably weighed no more than a couple of ounces. I am understandably awed that someone could possess the amount of skill it must take to produce such a turning, but once you do, what good is it? Seriously? The bowls I saw were so thin you could have squashed them in the hand like a handful of potato chips. You could see light through them! Have we taken this "thinner is better" thing way too far???"

This is strictly my personal feeling, but sometimes size DOES matter. I've seen those whisper thin bowls, even tried one myself. Yeah, it's nice to LOOK at, challenging to turn, and even better to show off that it CAN be done. It's a matter (for me) of form versus function. Do I want pure form (art) and no function, all function, or do I try to find a balance? If so, what balance do I choose? More form than function, going for looks rather than capacity? Or do I choose function over form, making a big solid ice cream bowl to hold a pint of Chunky Monkey and insulate it, too?

I suppose that it depends on the person turning, and why they are doing it. As a strictly hobbyist turner, I turn what the wood wants. I don't have clients to please or stock to build and no one to make happy but me. If the wood grain and patterns demand thin walls, I do my best to make those walls as thin as I can and let the grain and wood speak for itself. If I have some moderate grain that looks short and squat (like me) then I get a nice little bowl that looks like the one on my desk waiting for it's picture to be taken.

I've got a pile of wood in the basement waiting to be "something". Every once in a while I'll sit in the shop and just look at the piles. The bowl on my desk was a 2x7x7 chunk of cherry that I bought. I watched that piece for 3 months wondering whether it should be a couple of goblets, or a bowl, or a plate, or something else.

I haven't answered your question, mostly because I don't think there's a single answer for you. There is a collection of opinions perhaps.

I'm awed and amazed when I look at segmented work of any kind, and especially the large hollow forms. Those large hollow forms (ok-even the smaller ones) are daunting to me, as are the miniatures at www.gallerybminiatures.com. Every style has it's own personality from the paper-thin art pieces to the massive-walled bowls. Each reflects the turner's vision of what THEY see in the wood and the final product shows the creator's skill at releasing what they see.

If I were of a more religious sort, I might attribute this to some mystical being allowing me to see what the wood wants, and give credit to some "Great

Maker" for the ability to let me release the FUNCTIONAL form from the wood.

We, as turners, are in a lucky position amongst most woodworkers. Others build things up, adding bits here and there until the piece conforms to the maker's vision. Turners take away the parts that don't belong and allow the wood to find it's own form, and most times, at least for me, hope that the form has some function remotely close to what I saw in the first place.

By the way, my answer to your question is: yes, paper-thin is too damned thin.

SANDPAPER AND SANDING

Bruce Campbell

First of all I'd like to say a few words about two important topics: sandpaper and tear-out. There are lots of kinds of abrasives (paper or cloth backed, kinds of glue, different abrasive material, open or closed coat, etc.) but there is one common thing to consider – the quality of the grit.

Less expensive (cheap) abrasives often use abrasive material that has an "average" grain size. That means it can have a few grains that are much bigger averaged out by a few that are smaller. The problem is that those few larger grains will scratch the daylights out of your nice turned surface. Better (usually more expensive) paper has more consistent grain size and every piece will perform the same way. Bottom line – the more expensive stuff is MUCH better for turning.

Tear-out is one of the most difficult things to sand, but the solution is not in sanding techniques. Tear-out is prevented with by learning to cut properly with sharp tools and the right kind of cut. If you are having trouble with tear-out why not ask someone for some advice, or better yet take a basic woodturning class? It will help a lot.

Here is how I sand my work. I use cloth-backed paper that I buy in belts. The first pass is to get a smooth profile so I start with the grit that is appropriate for the task. Very skilled people can get a really smooth surface right off the tool. However, if the profile is bumpy (like many of mine) don't be afraid to start with a coarser grit (say, 100 or even 80). It should only take a few passes to smooth out the surface. I have tried power and self-powered sanding systems but repeatedly come back to the basic hand-held system with a fairly stiff foam sanding pad.

Once the bumps are gone I follow a process called "Running the Grits". That is, I use progressively finer paper until I get to the desired finish. The trick is to not skip grits. The next grit should be less than 50% finer than the previous one. So, if I start with 80 grit the next should be less than 120 grit (80 + 40); the next should be less than 180 (120 + 60) and so on. The grits I have are: 60, 80, 100, 150, 200, 300, 400, and 600.

I know that I am done with a given grit when I can cause all the lines in the work (while it is spinning) to

appear to move as I move the paper from side to side. If one or more lines do not move then I continue with the current grit. I check the paper regularly to be sure it is not clogging or plain worn out. From time to time, I stop the lathe and have a quick look. Sometimes I get a small trouble spot that is better to sand out by hand before I move on to the next grit. I normally go to 400 but if I want an exceptional finish (say on exotics) I go to 600, then extra-fine steel wool and even Micromesh up to 1500. A number of turners use wet sanding with water or oil. The primary advantage is that it vastly reduces the dust. Another advantage is that it raises the grain of the work so it can be sanded off cleaner. Some disadvantages are that you require wet/dry sandpaper that is often more expensive, oils tend to darken the wood which is sometimes undesirable (use water), and it can be messy (think globs of wet wood dust flung at high speed at the walls and ceiling and you). But, if dust control is a major concern you should consider wet sanding.

Summary:

- 1) Dealing with tear-out is not a sanding problem – it is a cutting problem
- 2) Use good quality abrasives
- 3) Run the Grits – remember the 50% Rule
- 4) Consider wet sanding if you want/need to control dust

Hope this is helpful.

PRICING YOUR WORK

Stan Clarke

Woodturning can become addictive. After a short period of making firewood the turner starts producing “keepers” which creates a strong desire to turn more, better and bigger work. Soon there are some pieces with which you just cannot part. Some you trade for wood. Some go to relatives. Some to friends. But sooner or later as you keep turning you, your relatives and your friends start to run out of space. So why not give the public a break and peddle the stuff. It goes without saying that the work has to be saleable. The design must be good, the foot or bottom well done, sanding impeccable and completed with a suitable finish. But where to sell it and for how much! Marketing and pricing can be a real pain. When I told my daughter that I was writing a piece on pricing her response was: “WHAT!! You don’t know anything about pricing, you are still in the nineteen thirty’s, etc. etc.” I hate to admit it (at any time) but she is absolutely right. I have been selling pottery, glass and woodturnings at craft fairs and to galleries since 1958 and I still don’t know how to price the damned stuff. I have read many articles on how to price: you add up all your yearly expenses for shop rent, heating, electricity, insurance, etc. etc. divide this by the number of pieces you make a year, add cost of material, hourly wage and profit and that is your price. This may work if you are turning the same item out the same kind of wood every day, but most of us are turning “one offs” from scrounged wood that is far from consistent and the mood of the turner also is

far from consistent. We have all had those days when we drop a tool on the spinning wood and it catches and pulls the piece off the chuck and it takes forever to get it centered again. Can you charge extra for that? How do you charge for all the work that went into the wood before it was placed between centres? And should you make a deduction for the fun and enjoyment you had while turning the piece?

There appears to be three types of pricing: The regular “what will it sell for” price. The “to me this piece is worth six hundred bucks and I will not take a penny less” or “ego” price and the “elite” price. That is the price for a piece by a turner who, through either exceptional skill and creativity or well developed public relations (self advertising) skills (Raffan, Hausaluk, Sudal, Liestman) can sell at a very high price but only to collectors.

I have discussed pricing with several successful sellers of turned wood and they all use the same pricing system: “what the market will bear” or “the price for which other turners are selling the same kind of item”. I think that this is probably the way to go but it is not quite that simple. What you sell and for how much will depend a great deal on where it is sold. Craft Fairs are a “low end” market, it is difficult to sell anything priced over \$50.00 at craft fairs but you do get your full price. Galleries vary a lot depending on clientele and location. Those catering to the Interior Decorators and “yuppies” can sell more expensive pieces (\$400-\$500.00 if the pieces are creative and well turned) while those selling to the tourist trade do better with smaller cheaper items and they prefer “local” wood. I have one gallery that specifically orders “inexpensive” items so for them, that is what I turn. Most galleries accept work only on consignment and take 40% of the selling price which means that you have to mark up your work by 1.67%.

Then there is the problem of perception. A piece may not turn out the way you planned. The wood is blah, the piece is rather clunky or heavy and you are not happy with it but it is too good to throw away, so you put a low or moderate price on it only to be criticized for selling “such a beautiful piece” too cheap. Conversely, a piece you think is superior and worth more than usual, the buyer doesn’t see that way and the piece sits on the shelf forever. A few years ago I turned some tall oil lamps from Cocobolo. I put a lot of time and effort into the turning and the fittings were expensive so I charged \$90.00 each. I tried hard to sell them but it was not until I lowered the price to \$60.00 that they eventually sold.

One thing I have discovered: You can never get it right!! You are accused of being either “too bloody expensive” or of “selling too cheap and undercutting my price”. I have heard it said that too cheap a price will turn off a customer. I understand that the turners on Vancouver Island have a system where they charge ten dollars an inch (diameter) for average well turned bowls. For a 12” bowl this would have to sell in a gallery for \$200.00, after the gallery take their 40% the turner gets \$120.00. This may be a good place to start.

Now there is a new market...selling on the Internet about which I know absolutely nothing. Finally after all that, I have one request: YOU FIGURE IT OUT!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fred Baldwin – Education Co-ordinator

Guest presenters for upcoming meetings are as follows:

MAY 22 – Gerrit Van Ness of the Northwest Wood Turners will demonstrate offset turning – for instance how to make a funky tea pot then applying different dyes for a unique finish.

JUNE 26 – Threaded boxes are the theme and Bruce Campbell will turn the lid and bottom of a box then show how he cuts the threads into both pieces.

SEPTEMBER 25 – Roger Clapham of Claphams Beeswax Products will talk about applying various finishes to turned worked.

OCTOBER 23 – TBA

NOVEMBER 27 – Again this will be a collaboration of turners (John Bese, Steve Hansen, Marco Berra and Rich Schmidt) who will be demonstrating Xmas gifts or novelty. If you have any ideas and would like to see them demo please let me know.

DECEMBER – Group demonstration to be arranged.

JANUARY 22, 2003 – Bowls can have handles – really – and John Bese will take on this challenge.

That's all so far. For future meetings if you have any suggestions please give me a call – 604-531-9395 or email me at fbaldwin@shaw.ca.

CLASSIFIED

FOR SALE: 1/5HP, 240v, 1750rpm motor – excellent condition. Offers to David Broomhead 604-533-1142 or broomhead@shaw.ca

GVWG PICNIC Sunday, July 21, 2002

Our thanks to Sandy Howkins and his wife for once again generously hosting our picnic.

The picnic will begin at 2 o'clock and the address is: 18726 Advent Road, Pitt Meadows. There will be a map in the June Newsletter and copies will be handed out at the June meeting.

We will be asking for donations of turning wood and finished turned objects. The money raised at this event will be used for our ongoing education programs.

I will ask Bruce Campbell to be in charge of the Egg Cup Race. After this event, it will be time for the Bocce Competition.

Next, comes the Barbecue. This will be potluck and more information will be given in the June Newsletter.

The last event of the evening will be the Auction.

See you there!
John Bese

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please be sure to email me any articles you would like to see in the next newsletter by June 7th, 2002. Send attachments as text only to gvwgnewsletter@shaw.ca. More!!! MORE!!! SEND ME MORE!!!!

Oops, sorry for yelling. If you want to read it, somebody's got to write it.

A SPECIAL THANKS

To KMS Tools and Equipment for their support in the past and in the future!!

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