

WOODCHUCK CHATTER



July 10, 2004

Volume 1, Issue 5

Special points of interest:

- Photos of Last Meeting
- Random Shots: What to look for here and there.
- AAW News
- What's Coming Up

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Tabletop Photography Demo By Army Spahn

Photographing your work takes some equipment to do well. It also takes an eye for details.

My three points of reference for good photography are: Focus; Exposure; Background. Starting with Background, a neutral background is best—no patterns, nothing to distract the eye from your subject. The color of the background should be quiet and not like the subject. With wooden turnings, a grayish or bluish background works well. Using a brown back-

ground unlike the color of the subject is also good. The idea is not to let the subject fade into the background or be overwhelmed by it.

Exposure: Use enough light to get a proper exposure. Set the camera for the lighting.

Focus: Make sure the subject is in focus by using the smallest lens aperture available.

What equipment do you need for tabletop photography? At a minimum, you need a table, a background holder, at least 2 flash

units and stands for them, and a camera and tripod. Commercial photographers use powerful flashes so they can use tiny lens apertures to get great depth of focus. They use many flashes to control lighting exactly. We don't need that level of lighting to get good photos for submission or for record.

What film to shoot: In my opinion, film is dead. If you are going to buy a camera, buy a digital with 3-4 megapixel sensor. If you would rather spend your

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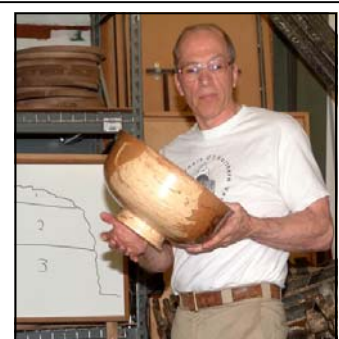
Photos From June



A lovely cherry funnel by Hav. Smith



Small ball by Brad



Nice burl work by Ted.

Woodchuck Chatter

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Woodchuck Chatter will be published monthly. Deadline for submissions is the 7th of the month. Please E-mail all submissions to the Editor in text or Word format. Visuals can be submitted as JPEG or TIFF.

June Meeting (Continued)



Another of Hav's beautiful cherry bowls



Gavel by Brad



Peppermills by John Brislin



Lookin' closer

Arny's Demo (Cont'd)

money on woodworking tools than on a new camera, shoot slide film for sending to craft juries and color negative film (prints) for a portfolio of your work. Slides are still the standard for submissions to magazines and to craft juries, but that's fading fast. Even National Geographic, the most exacting buyer of photography, is using digital files more and more.

There are several advantages to digital photography. You can shoot in any type of light and get good color automatically. Film must be shot under daylight equivalent. With incandescent or fluorescent light, you need special filters to get good color. Digital files can be converted to B/W, made into slides or prints, or used with electronic projectors.

I will bring some equipment which I

made or bought second-hand to demonstrate that getting set up does not need to be expensive. I will use my digital camera solely to show the differences technique makes. I will be shooting the camera manually as you would with a 35mm SLR, but hook it to a laptop computer to display photos as I make them. My basic premise is that regardless of the type of camera you have, you can get good photographs with moderate care.

In the last issue of The American Woodturner, there's an excellent article on photography by Bob Hawks (Page 30). His is a classic approach, using "hot" lights for economy. I'll show that technique and bring copies of the article.



Proportioning the workpiece

My demonstration for the June meeting was about whimsically turning spheres.

Whimsical because my goal was to show how I produce a sphere that is neither precise nor accurate yet can be done on a whim. Why? Well, because it's fun and doesn't require anything that a moderately equipped turner wouldn't have or couldn't easily make. It is encouraging to make something that is as simply satisfying as a sphere. I think this is especially true now as so much more gadgetry is being folded into the thickening batter of woodturning.

You will need a hunk of wood to turn, a lathe and sharp tools to remove what isn't the sphere, spindle-type centers and cup centers to hold the wood and sphere on the lathe.



Wood

A. Acquire your wood. This is an important step to do right. Start with something that isn't precious to you and expensive. It is just too hard to learn when the fear of ruining the piece of wood you are working on constricts the learning valve of your noggin. I find that most of my favorite work has come out of material I have no expectations or attachments to. Besides, we live in a region of the world where won-

derful woods grow like weeds. Go out into the back yard if you have one. If you don't then go into the neighbor's yard or find a local arborist. Cut a fresh green branch about three or four inches in diameter to a length of one inch greater than the diameter. Take a couple chunks into the shop. I might suggest cherry, sugar maple, hop hornbeam, apple, ash, locust, lilac, elm, yellow birch, beech, buckthorn, hawthorn, honey locust, or honeysuckle. Use something local and something you are interested in trying. Bonus points if it is an invasive exotic species like buckthorn or honey-



suckle.

B. Begin with a spur center or safety center on the headstock and live center on the tailstock and mount the wood.

If the pith is centered mount it right at the pith. If not, find the center and mount it there. Turn the piece to a cylinder with a roughing gouge. Mark the center of the piece with a pencil - this will be your first axis. Determine the diameter at the center and with a ruler or dividers mark a distance of 1/2 the diameter to the left and right of the center. These will be the ends of the sphere. At these end marks part



down to about 1.5 inches in diameter and waste away the wood outside the marked ends (1). You should now have a cylinder as long as its diameter with the center marked. It will have a tail on its left and right of holding wood about 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter leading out to the headstock and tailstock. Get at least two other chunks of wood to this state. If you don't have a large block of time set away for this project this would be a good time to break. If green, put the wood in a plastic bag, freeze it, submerge it in water, or paint it with end grain sealer to prevent moisture and wood movement.



Next, you will essentially turn a large bead (2). I say this because the technique will be the same, just larger than your average bead. We are spindle turning here because the wood grain is parallel to the lathe axis. With a roughing gouge or the wing of a swept back bowl gouge knock the corners away and turn a quarter circle left of the center line then the same to the right of center (3). Some things to keep in mind to help make this easier are:

1. Once you are comfortable with your cutting technique move your line of sight from the action end of the cutting tool up to the profile of the work. Shine a light on the sphere so that it is brighter than the background. This will help you see the profile develop.

2. It is important not to cut away the pencil

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News From Away

Woodchuck Chatter

In House Demos:

August: Picnic at Herb's. Al Stirt to critique work and lecture on the process.

September: Ted Fink: Turning platters. Also: Ralph Tursini: woodwalk

We need to start planning for future demos. Do you have a subject you would like explored?

AAW Totem Pole Project

This is a correction to the article in the AAW Journal about your chapter making a totem figure for the totem poles at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. The correct diameter for the steel pole that your piece will slide down over, is 3 1/2" OD, not the 4" OD stated in the article. Your piece should be approximately 21" high and 21" in diameter with a hole through the center allowing it to slide down over the 3 1/2" steel pipe. Be sure and make your piece strong enough to support the other pieces to be slid down on top of yours. Also be sure to finish your piece well enough to weather gracefully in the Tennessee environment.

Have fun and get your chapter to turn and build a totem section. It should be properly boxed and sent to Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Attn: Wood Studio, 556 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738. Thanks, John Hill
AAW Chapters and Membership Chairman

1-828-645-6633

Info From Minwax Via Mike Boylan

Currently Minwax does not manufacture a stain or clear finish that is FDA approved. We do not perform animal testing and cannot test for ingestion. Most Minwax clear coatings are fully cured in 14-30 days. Once cured, the film is considered inert and is no longer releasing

toxins or chemicals.

I suggest contacting Liberon @ 1-800-245-5611 (online @ www.liberonsupply.com) or Mohawk @ 1-800-545-0047 (www.mohawk-finishing.com). Both Liberon and Mohawk manufacture coatings that are safe for infant furniture, high chairs, recreational objects (games, puzzles, children's toys) salad bowls, wooden utensils, chopping/butcher blocks, and food preparation surfaces. Here's another link you can also try: <http://www.triedandtruewoodfinish.com/>

From Eric at askMinwax.com

LOCAL CHAPTER BEST WEBSITE AWARDS

Thank you to all 18 local chapters that submitted their websites for the contest. As you can see when you check out their websites a great deal of work goes into a local website and I'm sure the local chapter members appreciate it.

The top three websites will receive award plaques at the Orlando Symposium. They are to be congratulated. The winners are listed below:

First Place:

www.carolinamountainwoodturners.org Carolina Mountain Woodturners Webmaster - Paul Vonk

Second Place:

www.wnywoodturners.com Western New York Woodturners Webmaster Kurt Hertzog

Third Place:

www.ovwg.org Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild Web-

master - John Wake

There were a total of 18 websites submitted for the contest. Thanks go to Chris Wright for setting up the judging. Of the entrants, 2 webmasters were involved with maintaining the AAW website and therefore excluded from judging to keep the contest as unbiased as possible. The group of 18 websites were divided into blocks of 5 sites and each of the 16 remaining webmasters received a list to judge that did not include their own website (due to the way the grouping worked, 3 webmasters received lists of 6 websites to compensate).

The webmasters were asked to judge the sites based on 7 criteria points:

- 1) Layout/Graphic Design - visually appealing, easy to access,
- 2) Ease of Navigation - easy to traverse pages, intuitive menu.
- 3) Use of Technology - use of scripting, styles, databases and search engines.
- 4) Up to Date / Current Content - new info up front, archive material available
- 5) Content in website - contains useful woodturning tech content - contains useful woodturning news-related info.
- 6) Uniqueness/Personality - good blend of design with woodturning appeal.
- 7) Contribution to AAW - how does the site reflect back on AAW.

Each area had a weight of 10

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line indicating the center. More often than not I don't begin removing wood until about 1/4 inch to the left and right of center. This flat spot and center line will leave you a good guide for the next step.

3. You can use a template of a 1/3 to 1/2 circle cut from cardboard as a gauge. The folding edges on Dick's template were a nice refinement.

4. Turn from the large diameter to the small diameter - this is spindle turning (4 & 5).



Parting off the tenons

Again, now would be a good place to break if you have to. Bringing at least three pieces through the process in stages like this will accelerate your rate of learning and proficiency, I guarantee. It is like programming your body and mind through repetition. When you make a mistake on one of the spheres you can recover rapidly by correcting the mistake on the next piece without having to start way back at the beginning. You will also have multiple finished pieces each technically better than the previous.



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C. Changing the axis. You will now mount the piece by rotating it right or left 90 degrees - so that the plane of the penciled center will be parallel to the axis of the lathe spindle (6). Now you are going from spindle turning to faceplate turning - the fact that you will still be using the tailstock is irrelevant.

If you don't mind having a sphere with center marks on the surface you can mark out two points equidistant from each other along the first penciled equator and mount it between the centers at these points. If you



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want an unmarked sphere you will need to make cup centers. The best I can describe them is as if they were like two bowls with rims about 1/3 the diameter of the sphere. Each is mounted by its foot to the headstock or to the tailstock. The sphere is then squeezed between them contacting the centers at the rim of the bowl (7).

Before you start turning it is a good idea to trim the two tails off with a saw. Now mount the sphere between centers or cup centers and turn on the lathe. When you look at the profile now you will see a ghost image. You want to turn away the ghost shadow. Keep in mind the following:

1. You are only removing the high spots - therefore the tool will want to chatter. Prevent this by keeping pressure into the tool rest, not the work piece.

2. Cut from the small diameter to the large diameter - remember, this is faceplate turning.

3. Stop the lathe and check your progress frequently. If all is going well



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you will be removing equal amounts of wood from the end grain on both sides of the original equator - from the poles if you will. Turn this down until you have come close but not removed the pencil line

Unmount the work and check for high spots. Remount aligning the remaining bumps and turn them away. Sand the piece between centers rotating it to access the whole surface. A faster option if you have it available is a vacuum chuck (8) (talk about gadgetry!). It will give you access to more of the surface.

If anyone follows this article from beginning to end please let me know how your results turn(ed) out. I would love to hear about your experience and better yet see your results.

-Ralph Tursini

“When you make a mistake on one of the spheres you can recover rapidly by correcting the mistake on the next piece without having to start way back at the beginning.”

- <http://www.woodturningcenter.org/links.html>
- <http://www.woodcentral.com/>
- <http://www.woodturningonline.com/>
- <http://www.cnew.org/> (Central New England Woodturners)
- <http://www.woodturnerscatalog.com/>
- <http://www.packardwoodworks.com/>
- <http://www.tools-for-woodworking.com/> (Highland Hardware)

Woodchuck Turners of Northern Vermont

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Craig shows a shop-made tool holder for his lathe.

This Space For Mailing Label

News from Away (cont.)

points, making the total possible score 70. Judging was held open until every site had been re-viewed by at least one judge. Those with more than 1 response had their scores averaged out to find their median score. This left each site with 1 total overall score.

From the overall scores, the highest three were deemed the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners of the contest. The scores (out of 70) ranged from 62 (first place) to 31 (18th place).

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Random Shots

We have received several emails about wood sources recently. That's good for folks looking to "found" wood to work with. I like the idea of salvaging wood for useful projects. I'm a hobbyist in turning. I would like my hobby to be interesting and low stress.

Buying wood puts stress on the wallet. I have a very indulgent wife, but the constant strain of feeding my hobby makes for some interesting conversations.

The article on the AAW website competition prompted me to look at some. There's lots of interesting websites out there. A new one, www.woodturningonline.com.

is a real on-line magazine.

There are links to other websites and some interesting project ideas.

I decided to subscribe to the British "Woodturning" magazine. I get a kick out of their phrasing—some ideas just come across differently when the Brits voice them. There's an article on "Woodturning—Craft or Art?" which worries the subject to death. Working with wood, there's a little bit of art in most of our works, along with a large dose of craft. The question I have every time I pull a piece off the lathe is, "Is it good art or mediocre art?" Frankly, I let others make that

decision. That's the best way to make enduring art.

I wanted to mention that I've received notice from Ted & others about the Totally Turning 2004 Symposium scheduled for Albany, NY on Oct 30/31. It's at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. They will feature presentations by many outstanding turners, including at least one woodchuck. Go to their website, WWW.TOTALLYTURNING.COM for more info. Or for registration questions, contact Eric Mead, 518-452-3802, email emead@nycap.rr.com.