

MARCH 2004



A Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners

Special Notice !

**The March 25th meeting will be held at the Riverside Community Center, 3700 East Belknap st. Ft. Worth.
See driving directions on page 3.**

**No Pre-meeting Activity for this meeting.
The regular meeting starts at 7:00pm and ends at 9:15pm**

March Demonstrator: Howard Hale

For March madness we have a fun and an entertaining program. Howard Hale from the Addison Woodcraft store will keep you guessing! You'll go away asking yourself "how did he do that?" Before the woodworking bug bit Howard, he was a wizard (magical kind). That led him into making magical props for the different magicians around the world, which he continues to do today. He also gives some very instructive woodworking classes at Woodcraft. So what's he going to do for the March program? No, he wouldn't saw anyone in half! His program is on FINISHING. He has presented this program to other clubs in the area and they have really enjoyed the information. His 6 step finishing program is easy, simple and fool proof. So come and be prepared to be entertained. P.S. Bring your note book, the 6 step program is worth writing down and hanging in your shop.

Woody Needs Help!

"HELP.....with the move of our club we are trying to round up all the extra pieces of the club collaborative that was completed a few years ago on the Treadle Operated Lathe & Woody. I have been told that some of you have the extra pieces stored in you home. A number of original construction participants want to complete a second lathe and donate it to Arrowmont Art School in Tennessee. Jimmie Arledge has been in contact with the Director of the school and he has agreed to put Woody and the Lathe on permanent display. PLEASE help in rounding-up all the extra turned pieces. If you have information or some of the pieces please contact Lynn Blanchard. 214-500-8701

(lynntexas@purelyonline.com) Thanks for your help.

Making Good Shavings

I am sure that you have heard the old saying, "there are no problems, only opportunities." We members of WNT have the opportunity to find a new meeting venue. While driving around Fort Worth yesterday I noted that there are a lot of vacant buildings. With a group as large and diverse as WNT, there must be some folks who have ideas about how to tap into this resource of potential meeting venues. Please do some thinking about this and let us know. We need any ideas you have on possible new meeting sites.

This is also an opportunity to do a little reflecting about our club and its long-range goals. I have pondered this issues since I agreed to serve as president and frankly find it difficult to clearly define suitable long-term objectives. Maybe we don't need to be concerned with such things and I have just spent too many years writing strategic business plans to see this.

One clear thought has come to mind. Why shouldn't woodturning have the same standing in the artistic and craft community as pottery? True, there are differences between woodturning and pottery (by pottery I mean clay turned on a wheel, not ceramics) but there are also a lot of similarities. There are also a lot of similarities between woodturning and sculpting. Why isn't woodturning as widely known and respected as these other forms of three dimensional artistic _expression. I can imagine Rodney Dangerfield doing a comedy routine as a woodturner.

While driving yesterday I also thought about a "Center for Three Dimensional Art & Craft". Now there is a long-term goal! Since 3-D art involves all the messier activities, why not have a dedicated site that is set up to provide for those activities. It could include sculpting, pottery, woodturning, wood carving, etc. Yeah, that is a pretty lofty goal for a group of people who just want to get together and talk about woodturning. But it is something to think about. Do we have any WNT members on the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County?

Hands-On Work Session

There will not be a pre-meeting activity this month. However, there will be a hands-on work day on Saturday, March 27th (the Saturday after the March meeting) at Larry Robert's shop from 9:30 AM until 12:30 PM. The topics will be "methods of dealing with grain tear out" and "vacuum chucking and other methods of reverse chucking". But you can come and ask questions about any woodturning topic.

Larry's shop is located at 6409 Calender Rd, Arlington, TX. (Mapsco Page 109 Grid Square G). **From Ft. Worth: Go East on I-20 and exit on to Hwy 287 South (toward Waxahachie – NOT Bus. 287). Exit at Sublet Rd and Turn Left (East). Go about 1.5 miles and Turn Right (South) on Calender Rd. Go about 0.6 miles and Turn Left into the 1st drive after the yellow caution light. From Dallas: Go West on I-20 and exit Bowen Rd. Turn Left (South) and go to about 2 miles, Turn Right (West) on Sublet Rd. Go about 0.5 miles and Turn Left (South) on Calender Rd. Go about 0.6 miles and Turn Left into the 1st drive after the yellow caution light.**

Safety Catch - Proper Attire...Glove Use?

Since I have been turning, I have read several articles regarding safety. Most of the articles seem to agree on the basics and I follow most of the recommendations. When it comes to proper attire for woodturning, there are some specific "do's and don'ts" that you will want to pay attention to. First, make sure you do not turn wood while wearing loose articles of clothing. Loose clothing can easily be captured by the turning wood and pull you into the lathe. Be especially aware of long sleeves, loose t-shirts, unbuttoned jacket or sweater lapels, etc. Remember to never reach across a turning piece of wood if at all possible. Turn off the lathe and then reach, thus avoiding the capture of your clothing material in the spinning wood.

One area of differing opinion is the area of the use of gloves. I have read that one should not use gloves because of the risk for material capture by the lathe as mentioned above. However, after turning enough wood to receive numerous splinters, bark stabs, super hot shavings and dust...I began wearing a glove! My personal preference and suggestion is to use a close fitting, thin leather glove on my left hand. It provides me the protection I need while leaving enough sensitivity to respond to tool vibration and maintain control. Others use golf gloves or batting gloves, both of these would be good candidates and are relatively inexpensive. Some of our members use gloves they get from MSC and they are pleased with their protection and value. It really is personal opinion, but as long as a glove is not too loose, have flaps or draw strings, and doesn't adversely impact your feel of the tools, then a glove can provide added protection and increase the pleasure of your woodturning experience.

Mike Jones

Directions to March Meeting Site.

The Riverside Community Center is located at 3700 East Belknap in Sylvania Park (MapSCO Page 64 – Grid Square N). Belknap St. runs along the North side of the park but the entrance is on the South side of the park from Maurice St.

From I-35W: Exit to Hwy 121 (Airport Freeway) Northbound. Go .75 miles and exit at Riverside Dr. Turn Left (North) on Riverside Dr. for 0.3 miles and Turn Right on Belknap St. Go 0.25 miles and Turn Right on Maurice St. (just before Bill Williams Tool). Go about 0.2 miles East on Maurice St. and Turn Left into Sylvania Park and the Riverside Community Center.

From Hwy 121 (Airport Freeway) Southbound: Exit at Beach St. and Turn Right (North). Go about 0.4 miles and Turn Left on Belknap St. Go about 0.4 miles and Turn Left on Eagle St. (just past Sylvania Park). Go 1 block and Turn Left on Maurice St. Go about 1 block and Turn Left into Sylvania Park and the Riverside Community center.

From I-30: Exit at Beach St and go North 2.25 miles to Belknap St. Turn Left on Belknap St. Go about 0.4 miles and Turn Left on Eagle St. (just past Sylvania Park). Go 1 block and Turn Left on Maurice St. Go about 1 block and Turn Left into Sylvania Park and the Riverside Community center.

Call For SWAT Demonstrators

The Southwest Association of Woodturners formerly known as Texas Turn or Two is soliciting proposals from those interested in demonstrating at the 2004 woodturning symposium in Temple, Texas., October 2nd and 3rd. We here in Texas and the surrounding states have a vast amount of talent, and it is time to share skill and talents. This event last year attracted over 450 participants -- the second largest gathering of woodturners in the nation. If you have a unique skill or feel that you have something to offer, please contact your club TTT representative, or the TTT website for an information sheet that must be filled out and returned to the demonstrator selection committee by **April 30, 2004**. Information sheets are also available from the website www.texasturnortwo.com or from Bill Berry - Demonstrator Committee Chairman, bberry2301@aol.com

“Chance of a Lifetime”

David Ellsworth, world famous artist/woodturner, will provide an all day demonstration on April 24th starting at 9:00 AM at a location to be announced. As one of the founders of the American Association of Woodturners, David has traveled all over the world demonstrating and educating woodturners with his own special style of presentation. We are honored to have David visit the WNT for the first time. Being able to see David up close and personal is a rare treat which no woodturner, no matter what the skill level, should pass up. For only \$20.00 you will see one of the great master artist/woodturners at work. He will show you how you, too, can accomplish some of the art for which he is famous. For more information about David Ellsworth’s art see the following URL: <http://www.ellsworthstudios.com>

Another “Chance of a Lifetime”

Bring your best turnings for a display at the North Richland Hills Library which will run from April 1st through April 30th. Your turnings should be brought in a container to the March meeting. Be sure to have your name on each turning. The items should be no larger than 12 inches in diameter and 24 inches in height to fit in the display cases. We have room for about 60-80 turnings.

On April 10th there will be a woodturning demonstration at the library from 9:00 AM until 12:00 Noon. We need help in demonstrating and in passing out information about the club to the people that attend the event. In the past, several new club members have resulted from our participation in this event. Contact John Horn at 817-485-7397 if you can help in any way.

Yet Another “Chance of a Lifetime”

On Friday, March 12th, eight of the WNT turners took seven mini-lathes to the Green Valley Elementary school to participate in their annual Arts Day event. Participating in the event were, Walter Barrett, Wayne Clowers, Fred Denke, Ken Diehl, D. P. Hooper, John Horn, Vic Miller, and Paul Tiefel. About 50 fourth and fifth grade students got hands on experience making candle sticks on the lathe as a part of the Arts Day activity. You can’t imagine how thrilled these young people were to actually make something on the lathe under the supervision of our club members. In addition to the candle sticks, the children were able to take home their own personal dust mask which they were required to wear as a part of the safety precautions that were emphasized as a part of the program. If you would like to participate in the next school project at the Smithfield Elementary School on May 6th, contact John Horn at 817-485-7397.

Don’t stop here... go to pages 5 & 6 and learn how to deal with NIP.

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WNT WEB SITE:

www.woodturnersofnorthtexas.org

Turning and Finishing Norfolk Island Pine

By Larry Genender

End-grain turning of Norfolk Island Pine (NIP) has become my main woodturning interest, and I have spent much time learning how to make these translucent vessels. I'd like to share what I have learned.

NIP is a unique wood, found widespread in Hawaii and also in a small area of the gulf coast of Florida and southern Georgia. It grows very straight and tall, and it is said that in past times the trees were used to make masts on sailing ships. The branches emerge symmetrically around the circumference, giving the characteristic circle of knots around the outside and the star effect on the inside, particularly on shallow open vessels.

Turning the Vessel

This is basically an end-grain vessel, but there are a few things unique to NIP.

- First, determine which ends of the log are from the top and bottom of the tree. The branches come out at about a 20 degree angle pointing to the top, so that the knots on the inside are closer to the bottom of the tree. Look at the log with the bark on, and you will see a little "vee" shaped depression on one side of the knot. This is the bottom side.
- NIP is creamy light yellow when freshly cut. Left alone for several weeks the wood spalts giving those nice streaks. It's actually pretty bland before it spalts. If it spalts too long, it gets pretty dark and transluces less. I keep my NIP logs in the shop, and you can wait several months if you do so. They don't split to any degree while waiting.
- Strip the bark off and cut the knots flush with the surface. You can try and orient the piece between centers so that the knots are roughly in the same plane – this is good if you can do it, particularly if you want a star on the inside. I've stopped fussing over it. It is not vital to me if the pith isn't exactly in the center; just make sure it is close enough that it will be within the foot of the piece.
- If you want translucence, the vessel has to be thin. How thin depends on you. I aim for 1/16 to 3/32" on the smaller pieces, proportionately thicker as the piece gets larger. Don't go too thin, you'll be surprised how translucent a 3/16 to 1/4" wall can be.
- Getting the inside smooth without ripples is a trick I recently learned from Ron Kent, who started the whole NIP thing. Turn the outside to roughly your desired shape. Then finish turn the inside to the desired shape, leaving the wall thickness about 1/2" or even more. You'll be able to avoid the ripples because the wood is stable enough to avoid vibration of the thin-walled vessel as you turn the inside. For some reason, this problem isn't nearly as great as you turn the outside thin. Ron says this has to do with centrifugal force – the wood is going away from the tool edge on the inside, but is coming towards the tool edge on the outside. This plus bevel support makes the outside easier to turn smooth. In any case, it works.
- I keep a spray bottle of dilute (10:1) dish detergent in a spray bottle handy. If you get tear-out as you go deeper, spray generously as you turn, it really helps.
- You then finish turn the outside to the thin-ness you want.

■ As you turn at the level of the knots, go very slowly – take smaller cuts with the lathe running slower to avoid tearing out portions of the knots. If you do, sawdust and super glue can repair the knots so you almost can't see the damage. I keep a collection of many colors of sawdust for this purpose. Be sure you mask off the surrounding wood with spray lacquer or sanding sealer to avoid the thin glue from staining the wood – there's no way of hiding this in the final finish as the oil/varnish cannot displace the cured glue. Similarly, if the pith looks a little punky, stabilize it with super glue.

Finishing with Oil/Varnish

Linseed oil cures by polymerization. "Boiled" linseed oil isn't boiled any more, it is chemically treated so that it will cure more rapidly. Varnish (alkyd or urethane) also cures by polymerization. It is held in solution by the linseed oil. Both the oil and the varnish are penetrating finishes, going into the wood rather than coating the wood as lacquer does. The oil penetrates deeper than the varnish. NIP allows complete penetration, which is why we can get it translucent. I initially tried to make my own mix, using equal parts of oil, polyurethane and a solvent. It worked some, but nowhere near what the Hawaiians obtained. They use Danish oil (Natural), either Watco or Defoil, which has driers and other magic stuff in it that give the desired result. So, if you're going to do this you need to make a one-time investment in a vat of Watco. Here are the steps I use – this is a combination of the techniques of several Hawaiian turners plus a few things I've learned along the way:

■ Sand the piece to 320 grit. Then immerse in the Watco for 3 days. At the first soak, the wood will float, so I put a couple of pieces of dense wood on top to keep it submerged. These pieces take up oil, so keep them for this purpose – when they have taken as much as they will, they are heavy and take up no more. After the first soak, the piece will have taken up enough oil to sink on subsequent immersions.

■ Remove and wipe clean with shop towels. (Remember to dispose of these carefully – remember spontaneous combustion). Let the piece stay out for 1 day.

■ Then immerse for one day, remove, wipe dry and keep repeating the cycle until you see that it's "done". The end point isn't hard to tell. Usually takes between 15 or 20 cycles – about a month and a half. If you're going to be away, leave the piece in the oil, not outside. For some unknown reason, it's the number of cycles, not the total time in the oil, that determines when you're done.

■ After the piece is dry, you'll find that there are nibs of finish on the piece, and it will not look smooth. I then wet sand with oil and 600 grit cloth by hand with the grain until it is as smooth as I can get it.

■ Next (this is the last step), prepare a mix of 4 parts Watco or Defoil and 1 part gloss polyurethane. Brush on a heavy coat, wait until tacky (usually 10 minutes or so), and then wipe as dry as you can. Wait 1 day then buff (I use Tripoli from the Beall kit). One word of caution: the piece is light and can easily be grabbed by the buff if mounted on a 1725 rpm motor and will fly across the room. After a couple of disasters I now mount the buff on the lathe and turn at 500 rpm and buff a little longer – much easier on the coronaries.

■ Repeat this cycle until you get the shine you desire. Usually takes about 5 cycles. Sometimes you get little bits of finish coming out between applications – usually because you haven't dried well enough between applications. Sand smooth and keep finishing.

■ You can show the piece now. However, don't wax it until a month later – let the finish cure completely.

Turning NIP takes a fair commitment of time and money. You can't turn out a whole bunch of pieces, but in my opinion it's worth the effort to get a smaller number of beautiful vessels.