

# The South Central Penn Turner

Newsletter of the South Central Pennsylvania Woodturners, May, June 2002



6" w x 12" h Sassafras Vase by Dale McCoy



6" w x 11" h Camphor Wood Hollow Form  
by Dave Barkby

## Future Meetings:

### May 7, 2002

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Place:** Jerry Kopenhaver's workshop  
50 Warrington Ways (**NOT** Warrington Road),  
Wellsville, PA. (717) 432-2753

**Directions:** From York, take RT. 74 north to the traffic light at Rossville (about 5.3 miles beyond Dover). Turn left (still RT. 74 N) and go 1.4 miles to stop sign just beyond Lynn's market on the right. Turn right at stop (still RT. 74N) and go through Wellsville 0.6 mile to Warrington Ways on left. Jerry's home is the 3<sup>rd</sup> house on the left. (Note: there are several Warrenton Ways off RT 74. The first is 0.2 mile beyond the stop. You need to take the second, which is 0.6 mile beyond the stop)

**Program:** Short business meeting, show-and-tell and program on wood turning safety

### June 4, 2002

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Place:** Valen Frye's workshop  
535 Conewago Creek Road, Manchester, PA.  
(717) 266-6062

**Directions:** From York, take exit 28 (old exit 12) off I-83. Go east on Susquehanna Trail (about ¼ mile) to a right onto Conewago Creek Rd. Go approximately 0.8 mile to 535 Conewago Creek Rd. on your right (Look for Valen's red barn)

**Program:** Making and tempering tools. Todd White will have his forge at the meeting and will provide instruction on tempering tools. Bring along any tool making materials, such as old screwdrivers, you want to forge into a tool.

### July 2, 2002

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Place:** Valen's workshop

**Program:** More tool making and hands on turning instruction.

## President's Column

*Valen Frye*

**Wood Turning Since 1930** opened to the public March 15th at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, 17th & Pennsylvania Ave NW in Washington DC.

This exhibit closes July 21st. A paperback edition of the exhibition catalog "**Wood Turning in North America Since 1930**" is on sale in the Renwick Gift Shop (The Renwick shortened the name for their showing of the exhibit). The 130 works in this exhibit document six decades of wood turning in North America. The show celebrates the variety and beauty of turned wooden objects while providing the first critical history of the craft, from the 1930s when artist-craftsmen began to experiment with the age-old technique of the lathe turning, to the present.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual AAW Symposium takes place June 28-30, 2002 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI. Thirty-eight demonstrators, scheduled on a rotational basis over three days, will display an array of international, national, and local talent. The program also includes an instant gallery, trade show, Chapter Collaborative Challenge, and banquet/benefit-auction for the Association's educational fund. This is a great opportunity to meet woodturners from around the country and see outstanding turners demonstrate their skills. In addition it is the last symposium in the northeast US for several years. The symposium in 2003 will be in Pasadena, CA and in 2004 (tentatively) Orlando, FL.

You can find a registration form in the Spring 2002 issue of the American Woodturner. If you are not an AAW member, talk to an AAW member about getting a copy. Registration by May 15th is \$225 for AAW members and \$260 for nonmembers. Single day and spouses register at lower rates. It is important to make your hotel reservations soon!

### Lancaster Exhibit

The **ALTURNatives: Form and Spirit** exhibit, on display at the Lancaster Museum of Art through June 2, is an annual exhibition of  
(See Lancaster Exhibit, page 3)

## SCPA Woodturner Information

President: Valen Frye	717/266-6062
Vice-Pres.: Dave Barkby	717/292-0173
Secretary: Glenn Zepp	717/337-9571
Treasurer: Jerry Kopenhaver	717/432-2753
Librarian: Dick Becker	717/755-0794

The SCPA Woodturners is a Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners (AAW). SCPA Woodturner membership dues are \$20/year. For membership, send a check, payable to "SCPA Woodturners", to the treasurer, Jerry Kopenhaver at 50 Warrington Way, Wellsboro, PA. 17365. AAW membership information can be found at [www.woodturner.org](http://www.woodturner.org).

## Thank you, Jan

A special thank you to Jan Barkby, our immediate past secretary, for all her hard work in helping to establish and guide our club during its infant years. Jan has started a new career and has asked that others carry forward her work as club secretary. Jan's leadership as an officer will be missed but we look forward to her continued participation in club activities. Thank you again, Jan.

## Robert Rosand Winner(s)

At our April meeting, we drew raffle tickets for the day of instruction with Robert Rosand. The winning numbers were those ending in 161 and 164. The owner of number 164 is Larry Laughman of Lancaster. However, the owner of number 161 remains a mystery at this time. Would the person holding this lucky number please contact Dick Becker (717) 755-0794 by the time of our meeting in May. If unable to identify the mystery person, we may have to draw an alternate winning ticket making 161 just another unlucky number.

## March Program Notes

Master woodturner, Don Jones displayed his work and talked to the club on shape and design at our March meeting. Jones turns both functional and decorative pieces and participates in a number of wood shows in Pennsylvania and surrounding states.

Don offered the following comments and suggestions:

- Put pedestals on your turned bowls. Bowls show better when elevated.
- Jones likes to turn spalted wood because of the potential for unusual patterns. See the accompanying picture
- Keep your tools very sharp when turning spalted wood. Don's preferred tool is the gouge. He tries to bring a vase to nearly final form with the gouge. He does very little sanding (perhaps some touch-up with 500 or 600 grit) to avoid the piece going out-of-round in the softer, spalted areas.
- Turning at higher RPM helps avoid creating honeycomb effects in heavily spalted wood.
- Wood with a history adds value to a turned object. Customers like to have things made from wood of a famous tree or wood taken from a famous building.
- Don uses all local wood. He prefers to cut wood in the fall just before dormancy, but will cut anytime during the year when the right tree is available. He puts the wood in a barn for 1-2 weeks, then cuts it into 16"-18" pieces, waxes the ends and stands the pieces on end in his heated shop. He leaves the bark on to reduce cracking. Trapped moisture causes the decay (spalting). He lets the wood set for 1-3 years, never more than three years before turning. The spalting doesn't always turn out the way you would like. You have to always be experimenting to find a better technique for spalting wood.
- Don says he never works from a template. He develops the image of the shape he wants as he is turning. He says he may "walk away" from piece a number of times before he is satisfied he has the "right" shape.
- He doesn't consciously think about what he should make from a piece of wood. He waits for an idea to click.
- Don says that turning technique is skill. Developing shape is art.

### April Meeting Notes

Following a business meeting and show-and-tell, members had the opportunity to practice their turning skills under the guidance of some of the



Don Jones displays spalted maple vase with eagle image

club's premier turners. Thank you, David Reed Smith, Dick Diehl and Dean Swagart for providing instruction.

### Lancaster Exhibit-continued

works produced during the Philadelphia Wood Turning Center's International Turning Exchange residency program. Every year ITE residents spend eight weeks producing works of art with the wood lathe. This year the artists in the exhibit represent four countries: Jason Russel, Canada; Marc Ricourt, France; Louise Hibbert and Stuart King, England; and Doug Findel, Mark Gardner, and Brock Jobe, United States. The exhibit includes both collaborative and individual pieces of art.

The exhibit consisting of 60-70 turned pieces runs through June 2, Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. Noon-4 p.m., Lancaster Museum of Art, 135 N. Lime St. Phone (717) 394-3497 for directions and parking instructions. There is no charge to visit the museum.

## **IMPROVING YOUR TURNING: WHAT DOES IT TAKE?**

By: John Penrod (North Florida Woodturners)

It is doubtful that you will be fortunate enough to have someone tell you precisely what is required to make significant improvements in your turnings. That would require a detailed analysis and critique of the full range of your completed turnings, and would cover areas such as basic design, shape, proportion, balance, consistency of wall thickness, sanding, finishing, surface treatment, bottom treatment, use of grain or pattern, etc., etc. It would probably also be necessary to critique your "shop performance" with a variety of tools and procedures. Following such a rigorous inspection and evaluation of skills, definite recommendations could be made designed to stimulate improvement in those areas judged as needing improvement.

Assuming that the previously described critique is unavailable, what are your options? Of course you have heard the old adage "Practice, practice, practice!!" or that the difference between a beginning turner and a master turner is about 5000 hours. There is a certain modicum of truth in the fact that you must practice. There is no substitute. You must spend a great deal of time in front of the lathe, not just standing there but working! Every piece is definitely practice and that means the opportunity to refine current skills and to acquire new skills. However, a word of caution is necessary. You must attempt to practice only appropriate procedures and not inadvertently practice incorrect or undesirable methods thereby establishing or reinforcing bad habits that will make them more difficult to eliminate.

Practice implies knowing what your goal is and then taking the steps necessary to achieve that goal. Nothing is to be gained by forming bad habits. If you are unsure of a certain procedure, get advice from a knowledgeable source before proceeding.

There are many things that you can do each time you turn which will result in improvement. I will list and discuss a number of them in this article. It is by no means intended to be all-inclusive and the items I will discuss will not appear in any particular order. Hopefully, this will stimulate your thinking and you will come up with new ideas or new twists on the items presented here to assist you in your quest for improvement.

**Be safety conscious:** If you have done even a minimal amount of turning and have had at least some contact with more experienced turners, you are probably well aware of the fact that there are certain dangers associated with woodturning. A lathe is not a toy. Yes, you can seriously injure yourself while engaging in this most desirable activity so form good safety habits and practice them on a regular basis. This includes no loose clothing to catch on a spinning piece of wood, appropriate eye and/or face protection, mask or respirator for dust and fumes and, at times, hard toed shoes to protect feet and gloves to prevent hand and finger injuries. I even know of one turner who wears a baseball chest protector when turning burls and woods with voids and bark inclusions. After having a piece of turning stock hit him in the chest traveling roughly 50 mph, he decided to take measures to protect himself. Keep in mind that the possibility of something going wrong increases with size and speed so pay special attention when turning larger items.

**Master the Basics:** If you have ever played any sport you have probably already heard this one a million times. Woodturning is no different than tennis, bowling, badminton, football or hockey. If you have not mastered the basics, then improvement will be extremely difficult. Having a firm command of the fundamentals is not only desired but also an absolute necessity. Being able to use only "some" of the tools or being able to make only "some" of the cuts means that you will be severely limited in what you can achieve. And remember, the fundamentals involve not only tools and cutting but preparation and selection of stock, chuck up, sanding and finishing to mention a few.

**View every piece as practice:** Although this sounds simple, my experience has been that it is far more involved than it appears at first glance. Realize from the beginning that not every piece you start will end up as a finished piece. Some will not meet your criteria with respect to any number of factors and will be abandoned, others will have flaws or deformities that may prevent the piece from being completed or render it unattractive, and some may break, crack during drying, or actually fly off the lathe.

**Too many turners are too concerned about getting a piece off the lathe and applying finish and stop far short of what is necessary to make it a good piece. If you know that the wall thickness is not consistent or that the bottom is too thick....don't stop. When you recognize that something needs to be done to**

improve the piece, that is the time to do it. You will not have a chance to correct it after it is cut off. Whatever the flaw, it will exist FOREVER.

An excellent time to practice and seek mastery of what you no doubt view as "difficult" is immediately following recognition. Recognizing that something needs to be done is the first step. To avoid addressing the issue is paramount to admitting failure. Try a new mindset. Instead of the negative mindset of "I can't do it", view it as "I haven't done it before." Obviously it is true that you can't do it if you never try. The simple truth is that you will probably break a few pieces in your efforts to improve. In fact, if you don't break a few pieces somewhere along the way, you are probably not trying hard enough to improve. The fear of losing a piece should not stop you from attempting to make a piece as well as you know it should be made. Or as a friend says: "its only wood! Get over it!"

Plan ahead: To the best of my knowledge, speech and language are uniquely human characteristics. Despite rumors to the contrary, wood does not talk. It never tells you what shapes to turn or what shapes to avoid. It knows not whether it will best be presented as a bark-on bowl, an open form or an endgrain vase. Under no conditions will it provide explicit directions regarding what you should do with it on the lathe. Any decisions made will be yours and yours alone. Granted, there are times when surprises and unseen flaws such as voids, knots, soft spots, rot, etc. will dictate a change in your plans (Please note that I said "your plans"). But, again, the decision of how to change is one you must make based on your evaluation of the situation. I can only imagine that a considerable amount of good turning stock is wasted by chucking up and turning with no idea of one's ultimate goal.... simply waiting for the wood to "talk" to you.

Know what you want to do when you chuck up the stock and start the lathe. How else will you know what tools to use or what shape to seek? A little advance planning can be an awesome thing. Try it. You'll like it.

Do not try to advance too quickly: Nothing will frustrate you quicker than attempting to complete a project which is not within your skill range. Like it or not, we must acquire new skills gradually and build upon them to move on to successfully complete more difficult tasks. Initially, work within your capabilities, adding and acquiring new skills a little at a time. You cannot make quantum leaps in your skill level so it is best not to frustrate and

disappoint yourself by trying. Like the tortoise and the hare "Slow" and steady wins the race. Keep in mind that as you acquire new skills, they will be constantly practiced and will be yours, hopefully, forever.

Maintain proper set up and appropriate tools: When starting any projects, pay careful attention to your setup. Be sure your work is firmly chucked and free of defects. Make use of the tailstock for additional support whenever possible. Be certain that the tool rest is at the proper height and maintained as close to the work as possible. A world of difference can be encountered in making a clean, efficient cut if the tool rest is not set properly. Always have adequate lighting and an uncluttered work area.

Use tools, which are appropriate for the work you are doing with respect to both the type of tool and the size of the tool you select. Whether a tool is "appropriate" for a particular task can best be judged on three factors: 1) Safety, 2). Efficiency of cut, and 3) the user's familiarity and comfort using the tool. Choosing tools which are too small for the job or extending a tool too far over the tool rest can be dangerous. Be certain that your tools are well supported and will not be overpowered by the stock. And above all, be certain that your tools are sharp.

Don't be in a hurry: This one is a lot more important than it sounds. Excellent turnings often require a greater investment of time. This is especially true when you are still practicing newly learned procedures and honing your skills. As you become more proficient, you will find that less time is required. An initial investment of time will reap big dividends down the road. Also, it is much safer to proceed at a slower pace when practicing new skills. Make it a point to stop the lathe frequently and carefully check your work to ensure that it is progressing satisfactorily.

Pay attention!!: The value of attentiveness to the task cannot be overstated. Don't just go through the motions of turning. Pay careful attention to all the little details that you know are important. Be watchful of your tool presentation to the surface of the stock, not only the angle and direction of the cutting head but the angle, direction and support of the handle. Keep a careful eye on shape, proportions, dimensions, support, lathe speed, etc. There are many things happening of which you should be keenly aware and forming good habits initially will serve to reinforce them and make them an automatic part of your turning repertoire.

Learn from others: Be sure to closely inspect the work of other turners whenever you have the opportunity, especially those whose work you feel is a step or two above yours. Pay careful attention to designs, shapes, proportions and finish. If you have the opportunity, talk to the maker of the piece and ask specific questions about tools, procedures, etc. Attend seminars, view videotapes, ask an experienced turner for an honest critique of an example of your very best work...and listen objectively to what is said. When critiquing your own work, try to honestly and objectively evaluate

your efforts. As stated previously, one of the first steps to making improvement is recognizing exactly what it is that you want to improve upon.

As you can see, the items presented above are not mutually exclusive. Nearly all of them are interrelated and it is difficult to isolate a single item and practice it to the exclusion of all others. Keep this in mind as you practice and you will be well on your way to becoming a better woodturner.

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