



# BAY AREA WOODTURNERS ASSOCIATION

A CALIFORNIA NONPROFIT CORPORATION  
LOCAL CHAPTER AAW

## Leo's Corner Leo Lichtman

### TOM'S DAUGHTER AND THE LATHE

Those of you who follow Rec.Crafts.Woodturning may have already read this, but I was so charmed by it, I wanted the rest of you not to miss it. It was posted by Tom Baker. Initially, he was having doubts and regrets about an impulse buy he made on E-Bay. The responses he got were encouraging, and this is where it led:

"I mentioned in an earlier post this old Craftsman lathe  
<<http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=2307264133&category=632>>

I impulsively bought off Ebay, and afterward read a lot of disparaging things about it in various woodworking forums, and concluded that I might have made a mistake. Several people here (in the woodturning news-group) made me feel better by telling me the Craftsman isn't all that bad a machine, especially for a beginner, and some people have actually worked wonders with them. Well I got the thing set up and it works quite well,

and I really can't find much fault with it. You might think that I just don't have anything to compare it to, but actually I do, now. What happened was that after I got the old lathe running in the garage, my ten-year-old daughter happened by and became fascinated watching me turn beads and things on some practice spindles, and she wanted to try it too. (Up until now she had never paid much attention to my woodworking, but I never had a lathe, and she was never ten). After I made sure everything was safe for her, and got her properly equipped with eye protection, her hair tied back, no loose clothing or other items etc., she went to work and made some interestingly shaped turnings which she took to school the next day, and found her schoolmates to be equally intrigued. So she wanted to learn more. I checked with a local woodworker's supply store called Woodcrafter and found that they offer beginner's classes in woodturning, so I signed both myself and my daughter up for one.

"The store in which a half dozen Jet mini-lathes were arranged in a circle, one for each student, and the instructor demonstrated

the lathe and its tools and then talked us through some simple woodturning projects, the first one being a spurtle. (Until then I had never heard of a spurtle, and I thought it sounded like something accidental that you had to clean up).

It turned out (pun!) that a spurtle is just a fancy stirring stick for stew and such. My little girl, the only child in the group, finished her spurtle first and it was the best-looking one in the class, eliciting a lot of praise from the instructor and the other adults, and she went home even more excited about woodturning than before. Her mother liked the pretty cherrywood stirring-stick too.

"So a few days ago we went to a pen-turning class in the same store, and both of us ended up with a quite lovely looking pen made of tulipwood. Suddenly I have a little woodturning fanatic on my hands. She wants to make pens for all her relatives, to start with. My wife was so impressed by this creativity that she suggested we buy our girl her own little Jet mini-lathe, and the store owner cooperated to the extent of giving us 25% off on the machine continued on page 3



The Bay Area Woodturner's Association is a local chapter of the American Association of Woodturners. Our purpose is to provide a meeting place for local turners to share ideas and techniques and to educate the general public regarding the art of turning. The Association meets the second Saturday of each month at the Senior Center in San Ramon. The Association periodically sponsors exhibitions and demonstration by local and internationally known turners.

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### Board of Director's Meeting Notice

BAWA Board of directors meetings are held at Denica's Cafe ( in the same center as WoodCraft) 8AM to 9:30AM. On the day of the scheduled club meeting. Board meetings are open to all members. Contact Harvey Klein if you would like to be on the agenda.

## Presidents Challenge 2003

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**January:** *Pen*

**February:** *Turned box*

**March:** *Candle sticks*

**April:** *Plate or Platter*

**May:** *Members competition*

**June:** *Segmented vessel*

**July:** *A pair of hair sticks*

**August:** *Natural edge something*

**September:** *Small blank shal-  
lenge. Each person starts with  
the same size blank and we see  
what he or she can come up with*

**October:** *An inlay of something  
other than wood.*

**November:** *Members competi-  
tion*

**December:** *Ornaments*

The President's Challenge is organized to prepare members for our club competitions. The challenges prior to the member competition are the same as the categories in that competition. The demonstration/workshop will correspond to the subject of the next month's challenge. This schedule offers you an opportunity to see one, make one, and compete.

## Club Meeting Dates & Topics 2003

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**January 11:** Turning a box.  
*Robert Whitworth*

**February 8:** Wood finishing.  
*Ron Ashby*

**March 8:** Thread Chasing.  
*Dick Jessing*

**April 12:** Stave bowl construc-  
tion. *Jim Rodgers*

**May 10:** Vacuum chucking.  
*Richard Sherry*

**June 14:** TBD

**July 12:** TBD

**August 9:** TBD

**September 13:** TBD

**October 4 (1st Sat.):** TBD

**November 8:** Christmas Orna-  
ments.

**December 6 (1st Sat.):** Christ-  
mas party

Leo's Corner cont.

plus the chisels and pen-making equipment we bought with it, because he said that he liked to see children getting into wood-working at the same age that he did (10). In the last couple of days we have found that telling our daughter that she cannot turn wood until her homework is done is the best way yet of getting her right onto her homework after school, no more foot-dragging. Last evening before bedtime she made her mother a "honey-dipper," and this evening she turned another pen, or rather a mechanical pencil of tulip-wood to match the pen she made in the lathe class.

"So anyway, now I have a Jet mini-lathe in the house and have been helping my daughter operate it (and I drilled and prepared her pencil blank for her today before she got home from school), so I am getting pretty familiar with the Jet. And I think I can say that the thirty-year old Craftsman lathe from Ebay compares fairly well to the Jet, although it is not quite as rugged (smaller bearings, thinner spindles etc.). The Craftsman has a longer bed than the Jet mini, which is how my relatives in years gone by were able to turn long chair legs and such things on an identical old Craftsman (which is still here, useful for parts). I can't figure out how the handwheel on its tailstock works, though, since nothing seems to happen when I spin it (just like on the old one my relatives

had), so that remains a mystery-- I just ram the whole tailstock hard into the wood. I tried turning some practice chessmen on the Craftsman and they came out pretty well, with the wood blanks being attached by a screw to a plywood disk, which in turn I screwed to a faceplate. However I think I'll switch over to the Jet for little projects like that (at least while my daughter is at school!) since the Jet is a bit easier and quieter to operate and has more speeds. But I'll keep the Craftsman around for any longer turnings I may do someday (or for times when my daughter bumps me off the Jet!)

"I have a one worry, though: my little girl hates wearing the paper dust masks I was trying to get her to wear (she says they "smell bad"), and I am concerned about the possible bad effects of wood dust on young lungs. The new chisels she is using don't create much dust yet (but lots of shavings!), however she has been sanding her wooden pens with super-fine sandpaper as she was taught, and I can see dust rising off them like smoke. Should I insist that she wear one of these paper dust masks, or even get her something better to breathe through? What's current medical thinking on the effects of breathing wood dust?

"(Sorry for the length of this but I can type fast, and I tend to get carried away.)

"Thanks again to all who advised me on the Craftsman lathe, and if anyone has suggestions

for fun turning projects for children I'd love to hear them.

Best Wishes,  
Tom"

Tom got a lot of wonderful responses from the rest of the Newsgroup, as you can well imagine, but if anyone here wants to send him ideas or advice, he is at [jaybird@nmia.com](mailto:jaybird@nmia.com)

### Book Review Jerry decker

**Turning Green Wood**, by Michael O'Donnell; published in 2000 by Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications Ltd, Castle Place, 166 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XU; 140 pages, 8 ½ x 11 inches, soft cover.

The first 48 pages of this book are devoted to "Planning and Preparation". Chapter 1 is devoted to the tree. Ever wonder why that newly acquired piece of wood does all of that splitting and twisting and things that can make it better firewood than a turned piece; here are the explanations, subjects such as Reaction wood, Wood and moisture, Shrinkage, Distortion, and Stress and Splitting will help you understand what really happens once the tree is felled and why you need to take care of that beautiful piece of timber.

Chapter 2 is the primary reason I purchased the book. This chapter covers the "Bowls in the tree". Continued on page 4

## Book Review cont.

Now I understand why someone will stare at a tree about to be cut or stare at that newly acquired log before they ever consider their next move. This chapter starts with where “bowls are in the tree,” cross-grain and end-grain bowls, grain and color, crotch wood, ripple, burrs, burls and spalting. Once you have the log sections, the multiple illustrations and pictures will help you visualize what the finished piece can look like. Many of the illustrations will make you want that odd shaped piece; it’s surprising what you can do once you can visualize the result. The last half of the chapter covers the natural edge, shrinkage, stress and distortion and finishes with a section on the drying process; for those of us who can’t wait to show off the finished piece.

Chapter 3 begins with a section on harvesting green wood and storing it. There is a discussion of turning tools and holding methods; with an especially interesting section on wooden jaw plates. The chapter finishes with sanding and finishes which is pretty straight forward, with a minimum amount of information. There are many other sources that cover this subject in greater detail.

One of the surprises, was chapter 4. I had always thrown a piece of wood on the lathe and “let it talk to me”. Maybe that is why in my early days of turning I had so many pieces of round firewood. This chapter talks about the five stages of the plan:

1) design, 2) planning the process, 3) sizing the blank, 4) material selection and 5) making the piece. Since reading this chapter I have cut down on the “round firewood.”

Part 2, covering chapters 5 thru 11 is focused on turning bowls and goblets. Each chapter takes you through the 5 stages of the plan with many photographs to illustrate each step. The chapters cover, “Translucent cross-grain bowl”, “Natural-edge cross-grain bowl,” “Translucent end-grain bowl,” “Natural-edge end-grain bowl,” Natural-edge end-grain goblet,” and “Part-turned functional bowl.” As Michael says at the beginning of part 2; “Repetition is one of the best ways of developing manipulative skills, so make at least three of each, but cut 25% more blanks than you need bowls, so that when something goes wrong you have a spare blank ready to use.”

All-in-all I have been very happy with this book. It has given me a new perspective on what I can achieve with that funny looking piece of green wood that my friend across town just dropped off, because they knew I was a turner; or the offer from my neighbor to take what I want from the tree they are removing from their yard.

# Ads

Ad Space is free to BAWA members. Please contact Jerry Decker, @ jnjdkr@aol.com no later than the 20th of the month to place your ad in the next issue of the newsletter.

## **For Sale**

Delta Wet or Dry Grinder with extra 10" wet wheel.  
\$100 or OBO

Porter Cable Plate Jointer with #10, 20, 30 biskets.  
\$125 or OBO

Contact: Gene Pitkin @ (925) 828-6936