

Northwest Woodturners

A Chapter of
The American Association of Woodturners

Volume 11 Issue 2

February 2007

Northwest Woodturners meets on the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. See website for details and map.

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503-538-5325

Next Meeting:
February 1st
Don Derry

Turning Challenge:
Turned Box



February Demo with Donald Derry

Donald has been a woodworker for 35 years and has made everything from fine furniture and cabinetry to rock and roll guitars. In 1993 Don made the decision to change his job status from cabinetmaker to full time stay at home dad. Fatherhood gave Donald time to reconsider his career and go into woodturning.

His interest in color was initiated due to an observation he made at an AAW Symposium in '94. When viewing the instant gallery he asked one question, "What do I *not* see represented in this exhibition?" Donald noticed that vibrant color and optical-quality finishing were two attributes being neglected by modern woodturners and he set out to exploit both to the highest standard of optical brilliance possible. So successful was his quest that his work is frequently thought to be fine art-glass rather than finely crafted wood.

Presently Donald is working in Chinese elm because the open grain structure and neutral wood tone lends well to the coloring process he is developing. The pigments are hand rubbed into the unfinished wood, sanded to the appropriate contrast, blended with solvent and sometimes enhanced by air brushing. Each hollow form is then sprayed with 7 to 10 coats of water white lacquer followed by a 6 step and very intense hand polishing routine until the surface is optically perfect. Donald states that, "Coloring, finishing and polishing easily takes more time than the woodturning."



Alcohol Soak:

The Hangover (part 1) by Chris Dix

Several sources have inspired me to try soaking my rough-turned green wood in alcohol (articles on the web, a recent reprint in our own newsletter, and other club members). I must admit that for Western Maple the procedure works fairly well - almost like magic the wood dries out. It warps a bit but does not split. The green wood cuts easily with an electric chain saw and turns very nicely on the lathe. I have soaked several bowls and spindle blanks. The largest rough turned bowl was one inch in thickness and about 18 inches in diameter. The spindle blanks have been 2 to 3 inches in diameter and about 12 to 16 inches long. They were all soaked in denatured ethanol (available from your favorite paint departments) for a period

of up to 48 hours then allowed to dry uncovered in the garage for about a month or more. The large bowl was sanded to 600 grit and finished with a mixture of bee's wax and mineral oil. This bowl won first prize at the Washington County Fair, as it was the only entry. Then it sat around the house attracting dust waiting for me to give it away or use it somewhere. Then one day the dust was just too thick and some cleaning had to be done. I used a cloth moistened with water to wipe off the dust

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Above: Fred Kline demonstrates how he makes his duck calls during the January meeting.

Free Wood Isn't

by Andy Johnson-Laird

One of the few advantages of being simultaneously a novice woodturner and British is that here in Portland, other Northwest Woodturners club members smile gently and tolerantly when I say something really dumb or ask a question that to them is stunningly silly. In part this is because the British, I'm told, actually do sound smart even when we say stupid things, and in part, because, even though everyone I've met in the club seems to have been turning wood for more than fifty years, club members realize that I really am a novice and can not be expected to know certain things. I'm not sure how long this honeymoon state of affairs will last, especially after this article gets published, but I'm going to use it for everything it's worth.

I have been woodturning for about a year (with a six month time-out while I tested the ability of Emanuel Hospital to take my health insurance money), and I'm still making all of the mistakes that other club members did back when Richard Nixon was in office: I've bought wood at retail from local stores, I've turned green wood and been amazed at how quickly rust builds on gouges, I've learned how to use a grinding wheel to shorten gouges without actually sharpening them, I've learned creative new ways to use a skew to generate spectacular catches and firewood kindling (I'm with Fred Kline—skews are great for opening sealed plastic bags), and I'm still a sucker for "free wood," when someone fells a tree. Can one ever have enough wood? Or woodturning tools

for that matter? What *is* the difference between want and need? It really should be the same word: "wanneed."

So, it was with a certain amount of glee, ok, greed, that I read the following email message:

Subject: NWWT – Fwd Maple in the 'Couv Details



Check out the Burl !! 48" X 48" tapers to 36 towards the top end.

Sorry I had an urgent...Anyway here are the pictures I am EXTREMELY EASY TO GET TO...1 mile north of Jansen Beach...Exit 1D FOURTH PLAIN EAST...AS soon as you get on to 4th Plain East you will see a GRAVE YARD TURN LEFT...O Street to...LEFT on 29th STREET...to LEFT on K STREET...

Several photographs accompanied this ransom-note style email, one of which showed a monster burl.

Ohboyohboyohboy... Even I could visualize the magnificent bowls that are trapped inside this monster. So I emailed back immediately to Owen

Lowe and Tom Reiman (who were also recipients of the email message): "So what's the plan guys? Do we send out a group of club members on a tree raid?"

Tom replied shortly thereafter that he and Darrell Davis would be heading out to Vancouver on Saturday and, if I cared to help, they'd be there at 8:30 am. Wood lust got the better of me. I admit it. My lovely wife of 30 years smiled knowingly when I told her what I was planning to do—it was that same knowing smile she has when

she sees me walking in with Yet Another New Gouge, that smile that says "I'm not going to ask you why you bought Yet Another New Gouge because I know that you do not know why." (She uses a similar smile to communicate such things as "What are you going to do with that?" "Do you really need that?" Amazing how she communicates this with just That Look.)

A cold and rainy Saturday dawns. My first reaction is "Tom! You've got to be crazy to want to do this on a day like today," but I realize This

Is A Guy Thing. It's probably Tom testing me. I must go. I load up my barely-used Stihl chain saw (quick look in the manual to remind myself how I start it), my Stihl safety helmet (must remove price tag otherwise Tom and Darrell will laugh), and my Kevlar chaps (what on earth is a forensic software analyst doing with a chain saw, anyway?).

A quick drive along I-5, follow the directions, and there, it is. My tree. OK. Our tree. OK. I might get a piece of it for free if I'm lucky.

"So," I enquire casually of Tom,

Photo above: Darrell Davis sections the main trunk using his 42" bar Stihl; while Tom Reiman muscles portions into his van, opposite page.

“should I fire up my chain saw?”

Tom smiles that NWWT Old Hand Smile (the one that says, I'll be gentle with this idiot, after all he *is* British), “No,” he says, “only Darrell will be using his chain saw today.” My crest is visibly fallen.

Tom explains: “It’s for safety reasons. We only want one person working on the tree with a chain saw at any one time. Can you imagine what would happen if there were several chain saws in close proximity?” Images of dudes in hockey masks with chain saws come to mind, but I say nothing reasoning that if I keep my mouth closed I might be thought a fool as opposed to saying something further and proving the point.

But, suddenly, I start to realize how little I know about the Free Wood concept. A slight chill runs down my back as I realize how truly ignorant I am about the whole process. This chill is caused in part because of my ignorance, and also in part because it’s raining like crazy and the rain is running down the back of my neck into my shirt. Pull the hood up over the safety helmet, Andy!

Darrell then starts preparing three or four different-sized chain saws, checking their chains, topping up the chain oil, putting gas into them, and checking the chain tension. He obviously has the same problem with chain saws that I have with gouges, but I’ll wait until I know him better before I mention this to him. Tom emerges from his 14-ton panel van with various pry bars and vicious looking pointy things that I presume he’ll use on Our Tree.

Darrell then grabs a metal detector from his truck and spends more time than a TSA guy at PDX checking out my wife, going over the trunk inch by inch, with the detector yowling disapprovingly in a couple of spots about

four or five feet above the root ball.

“Looks like a wire fence inside the tree,” said Darrell to nobody in particular.

Huh? How could people leave a wire fence inside a tree? There goes another one of those questions from me. Back comes That Smile again. “If you nail a wire fence to a sapling, the tree will grow around the fence.” Really? Wow. My level of ignorance drops to a new low.

By now, Walt Brown, Tom Reiman and I have been standing around watching Darrell at work for about two hours—and Darrell hasn’t yet dis-



turbed the quiet of the neighborhood with a chain saw.

Eventually Darrell fires up the smallest chain saw and starts limbing the trunk. Tom, Walt and I assume our initial roles of Amtrak porters, using hand carts (who brought the hand carts?) to move the smaller rounds into a pile near the sidewalk so that the residents could burn the bowls and platters contained in them. It hurt. They could have been My Bowls.

Once the limbs are gone, we’re left with the trunk, most of which appears to be burl. It is close to the root ball and so another revelation of my ignorance is due—the root of the tree has a white-knuckle embrace on rocks, dirt, and chunks of concrete. It’s obvious when you think about it, but,

strange to say, I had not. Trees do not push the rocks, dirt and concrete aside, they just grow around them, establishing an intimate death-grip on the objects that requires the surrounding root to be cut free to release the chain-wrecking objects.

So, with the help of one of the residents, we start attacking the root ball with spikes and axes, trying to liberate all of the non-tree objects that are lying in wait to trash Darrell’s chains—as I learned later, a new chain for his 42” bar costs about \$47 each and it

only takes momentary contact with a chunk of concrete for it to go from chain saw chain to ex-chain saw chain. Not pretty—and the sound is like a banshee in heat when it happens.

The day rains on. After about four hours we still have not cut a single large piece of the trunk. We have managed to meet a few residents most of whom seem mildly curious as to why three aging guys wearing ear protectors are shouting jokes at each other and standing around watching one guy with a chain saw. The firewood pile has grown nicely, though, and Our Tree is

ready for serious cutting.

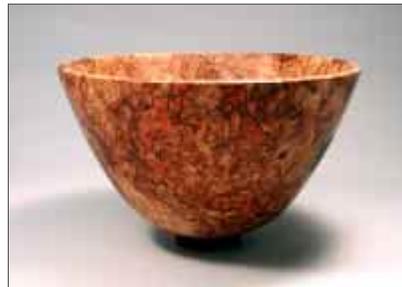
After a quick McDonald’s refueling, Darrell starts wielding the 42” bar chain saw trying to cut the top quarter part of the burl off the tree. It’s hard work; he’s sweating profusely, and having to stop and rest the weight of the chain saw on the trunk every so often. With a little help from us, some wedges, some pounding, heaving, and the additional forces exerted by four letter words, we break the first part of the burl free. We then all have to manhandle the burl chunk onto the lift-gate of Tom’s panel van, raise the gate, and manhandle the burl chunk into the cargo box. It takes all of us to do it, so who knows how Tom and Darrell will

Free Wood—Continued on page 5

A Tree

A tree. A tree. A tree lets us breathe.
A Tree. A Tree. A Tree has good stuff to eat:
Cherries, Apples, Peaches, Pears, and Plums.
A Tree. A Tree. People admire Trees.

- by Amy Lowe



From top, left to right: Segmented vasowl by Andy Johnson-Laird; the inspiration for Andy's vasowl - a segmented vase by Tom Reiman; David Williams spalted maple vessel; Steve Newberry's mortar & pestle; a lidded hollow form by Jim Hall; a second spalted maple vessel by David Williams; Maple bowl with friction detailing by Mike Meredith; and Bob Tuck's lidded bowl with eccentric-turned finial.

Free Wood – Continued from page 3

reverse the process when they get to wherever they are taking Our Tree.

We progress slowly, cutting the tree into chunks so large that we can barely roll them, pry them and cuss them on to the lift gate. The day wears on and I wear out. But, I reason I've been there for seven hours and must have shown that I may be ignorant, but I make up for it in sincerity, so I announce that I need to leave. I leave around 3:00 pm – we've all been working on the tree for about six hours—so that's 24 man-hours of work thus far. That doesn't include the additional six man-hours it took Tom, Walt and Darrell to finish cutting the tree and manhandling it into the panel truck, nor the unknown number of hours to drive to Our Tree's destination and unload the pieces.

Just as I was leaving Tom gives me a couple of small pieces of burl and says "See what you can do with these..."

My immediate challenge was just to carry them back to the van. What comes after "totally wiped?"

As I drive home, I start thinking about Free Wood. The one thing I have learned is that it ain't free!

In the days that follow, we have some further email exchanges and the true costs start to emerge: Tom paid \$75 for the tree, used his truck, paid for the diesel fuel for the truck, provided the tools for handling the logs, the spiky and pointy things, and the hand carts. Darrell bought the chain saws, chains (he went through three chains on Our Tree), gas, chain oil, chain sharpening etc., etc. Walt and I got off cheap... All we did was put in our time. Oh, and Walt bought the morning coffee and I shouted for the McDonald's for everyone at lunch.

So, even though I have not been turning for 50 years like all of you other members, I learned a valuable lesson and a lesson about value today. Anyone who harvests a tree and thinks of it as free wood is deluding themselves. It isn't free wood, because Free Wood isn't.

– **Andy Johnson-Laird**

Challenges for 2007

February – a **box** for your sweet nookums - don't forget the sparkle rocks inside.
March – a **goblet, stein, cup**... anything to hold yer green grog!
April – Hummingbird to Ostrich... **Eggs, Eggs, Eggs!**
May - a **Vase** to hold the flowers that you're sure to get Mom.
June - the perfect wedding gift for the new bride - a **Rolling Pin**.
July – Batter Up! **Baseball bats** - any size, any wood.
August - Going, going, gone! **Wood auction**, no challenge.
September – It's National Honey Month, **honey dippers and honey treen**.
October – Something scary, a trick-or-treat. Something for **Halloween**.
November: Christmas is just around the corner, time to make some **ornaments**.
December: **Christmas party and gift exchange**, no challenge.

It's Dues Time!

The good news is that we've held the line and kept the annual dues at \$30. You may pay by cash or check at the next meeting or send it to the following address:

Northwest Woodturners
13500 SW Pacific Hwy, #185
Tigard, OR 97223



Both turnings, above and left, were made by Don Woodward and exhibited at the January meeting's Show'n'Tell.

Alcohol– Continued from page 1

thinking the wax-oil finish should repel the water. The water did not penetrate the finish in the typical fashion and change the wood color – rather it was absorbed on a microscopic level and the gloss finish that I had worked so hard to achieve turned into a matte finish. This is when I realized the Maple had a hangover from soaking in the ethanol.

A very long time ago, in a land far away, when I was still in college I had performed similar experiments: making my own ethanol (a by-product of sugar and yeast) and soaking other biological tissues (like my brain). After more experiments than I care to re-

member the outcome was the same; every soaking resulted in a very bad headache. I have since learned the source of the headache is the lack of water in the body – specifically the brain. Thus, I now moderate my alcohol consumption to sips and supplement them with drinks of water before and after. Which leads me to a theory that the Maple may respond well to a "sip" of water between each grit of sanding before the finish is applied. Next month – the rest of the story.

– **Chris Dix**

Classified Ads

Guidelines for Classified Ads: If you sell or find your item please notify the editor. Ads will only run for 3 (three) consecutive months. Please submit your ad to the editor by the 20th of the month. Editor makes no apologies or guarantees for spelling or grammatical errors. All woodworking items, for sale or wanted, are welcome.

For Sale: Delta Midi (mini) lathe with extension bed, spur drive, live center, 2 tool rests, wrench, knock-out, extra banjo, and extra belt. \$125. **Contact Owen Lowe, 503-538-5325.** (12/06)

Woodcraft® Classes with Fred Kline, Bob Tuck & Tom Reiman

Bottle Stoppers!

Sunday, February 4, 1pm - 5pm
Skill Level: Beginner/Intermediate
Instructor: Fred Kline

Beginning Lathe Turning

Saturday, February 10, 10am - 4pm
Skill Level: Beginner
Instructor: Bob Tuck

Off Center Turning

Sunday, February 11, 10am - 4pm
Skill Level: Intermediate/Advanced
Instructor: Bob Tuck

Pen Turning

Thursday, February 15, 6pm - 9pm
Skill Level: Beginner
Instructor: Woodcraft Staff

Basic Segmented Bowl Turning

Saturday, February 17, 9am - 5pm
Thursday, February 22, 5pm - 9pm
Saturday, March 3, 9am - 5pm
Skill Level: Beginner/Intermediate
Instructor: Tom Reiman

For more information and to register, contact the Tigard Woodcraft store. Call (503) 684-1428 or email <portland-retail@woodcraft.com>.



Above: This trio of duck calls is but a sampling of January demonstrator, Fred Kline's work. Right: The January Pen and Pencil Challenge winning entries using extensive inlay by Chris Niluka.



Editor's Note:

Submissions to the newsletter are due by the 20th of the month. Articles, tips, web links, classified ads, or other items pertaining to woodturning are welcome.

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There were so many January Challenge entries I couldn't include them all in the newsletter. Instead, I chose to highlight only the winning entry in print; however all of them have been posted to the photo library at the myfamily.com forum. – Owen

