

# Mainiac Woodturner

Monthly Newsletter of the Maine Chapter of the AAW  
June 2006

## SATURDAY, June 17 9 a.m. Al Stirt Demo: A real treat

If you were to start a list of woodturner's woodturners—those artisans who have the respect and admiration of others in the field— I would expect to find Al Stirt at the top of the list.

From Vermont, Stirt has been turning, and carving and painting woodturnings, and teaching others about woodturning, for over 30 years. His work is in museum collections everywhere, including the White House permanent collection. He likes to think of himself as a “bowl maker” rather than a woodturner, and says this about his work: “From the earliest times bowls have had meanings for people beyond the purely utilitarian. The bowl as vessel has a resonance deep within the human psyche. I have always thought of each piece that I make as a composition utilizing elements of pattern, line, weight, texture and form. Even in the most simple pieces I try to find a harmony of grain and shape. I seek a balance



in my work between the dynamic and the serene. By playing with the tension created by combining the circle's perfection with the energy of pattern I am trying to make pieces that have life. I use patterns, whether created by grain structure or organic fluting & carving or repeated geometric shapes, to develop harmony in each of my pieces.

For a chance to learn from someone in the top of the field, be at Erskine Academy Saturday June 17 at 9 AM

### Club Officers

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# The Three Amigos!

## By Andy Hoyt

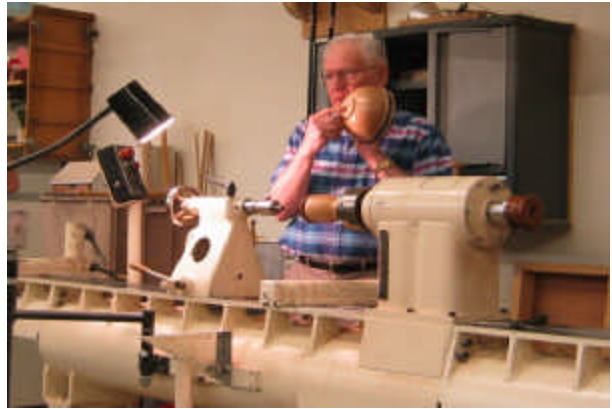
*Our chapter was treated to special tag team demo last month by an assemblage of high local repute. Incoming president Peter McCrea and Secretary Tom Raymond joined outgoing president Mark Irving for an evening discussing and demonstrating various approaches to the often-difficult and logistically awkward task of mounting and finish turning the bottom of our bowls.*

Despite their varying techniques, there were a number of common denominators. For example, while the use of a vacuum chuck system was acknowledged as a successful mounting method for finish turning of bowl bottoms, none of our demonstrators utilized this method as it was presumed to be somewhat exclusionary due to its initial cost. Another commonality was that each bowl shown to us still had its original tenon from the rough turning process attached and – this is critical – each had the original centering mark still visible. Additionally, each turner was also dealing with a bowl that – other than the bottom – was totally completed including sanding through the grits and the application of a finish.

Mark Irving stepped up first and began with showing us his home made Compression Chuck. Essentially, this is a piece of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood mounted on a faceplate or glue-block and that's been sized to match the swing of his lathe. It had some fine grit sandpaper glued to the inboard face for traction and four tee-nuts around the perimeter. The bowl is set rim down on the sandpaper and another piece of plywood with a large chamfered cutout in the center is set on the bowl. Add a few carriage bolts through some holes and hand-tightened into the tee-nuts and you're ready to mount the assembly on the lathe.

By bringing the tailstock up to the center mark on the original tenon Mark was able to get

the bowl centered in short order. The carriage bolts were then tightened an equal amount and he was ready to turn his sample elm bowl.



*Tom Raymond first makes sure everyone knows what a bowl bottom is.*

For safety Mark kept the tailstock in use as long as possible while he removed the old tenon and shaped the bowl bottom to a subtle concavity perhaps an eighth of an inch deep. He formed a small band at the rim for detail and then hand-sanded through 400 grit with the lathe running on a slow speed. By feathering out a bit farther with successive grits Mark was able to blend the newly sanded surface with that which had previously been finished and oiled with clear Watco Danish Oil. At this point Mark said something unintelligible like; “This ought to be Easy Peazie on my Stubbway”.

Mark then went on to demonstrate another method with a slightly less technical approach. He mounted a traditional jamb chuck in the lathe and placed an ash bowl on it (inside towards the headstock) and cushioned with a piece of rubber drawer liner. He brought the tailstock up and had it centered and secured quite quickly.

He then used a small gouge to remove as much of the tenon as possible and shaped and sanded the bottom as noted above. He then dismounted the bowl and used a Ryobi rotocarver to nibble away the remaining tenon and smooth up the bottom. A few quick strokes with some sandpaper and the piece was done. Thanks, Mark!

Next up was Tom Raymond – our resident master of the lidded segmented bowl. Tom began his portion of the demo by setting up a jamb chuck much like Mark had just done. But Tom prefers using carpet pad as the cushioning material; and he gets his from the local savings bank. Don't ask!

With tailstock in play, the lathe running around 1,000 rpms, and a short toolrest set in place Tom removed the tenon from his sample segmented bowl with a pulling shear cut and a small bowl gouge. He then switched to a 1/2" skew held scraper style. The leading end of the skew allowed him to nibble away at the underside of the nub substantially reducing it in size.

With the bowl still mounted, Tom worked his way through various grits on a two inch sanding disk. He then took the bowl off the lathe and pared the nub off with a few passes from a shallow carving gouge. A few passes with some finer grit paper and the piece was ready for more Minwax Wipe-on Poly.

Short, quick, and to the point. Thanks, Tom.

After a short break for Showing, Telling, Bragging, and Exaggerating; Peter McCrea took over the demo and showed us a few neat things. To begin he mounted a sample ash bowl on a jamb chuck by eyeballing the line up and securing the bowl with the tailstock. But first, he removed the point from the live center so that subsequent minor adjusts in alignment could be easily made.

He then brought out his secret weapon – a Dial Indicator on magnetic base (Grizzly model # G9849 for \$19.95) – and set it up even with the spindle height to read variances in the



*Mark Raymond, departing President of Maine Woodturners, waves goodbye.*

*Photo by Andy Hoyt*

bowl bottom's tenon diameter. What happened next looked and sounded very complex and awkward, but after trying it out at home, I discovered it to be a snap.

Start by marking the two highest spots on the tenon. In this case "highest" actually refers to the spot on the tenon that's farthest from the spindle axis. Determine difference between them and move the bowl half that difference from one spot to the other. Repeat this procedure for the "low spots" and your bowl will be perfectly centered.

Peter then brought a "box scraper tool rest" with polished edge into play. He set it up so that the polished edge just barely rubbed the bowl bottom. He said that the contact should be light – so light that sometimes you hear it rubbing, and sometimes you don't. The purpose for this becomes clear quite soon. As the tenon is pared down to a nub and then ultimately separated from the bowl the toolrest takes up pressure and keeps the bowl mounted and centered on the jamb chuck. But just barely.

## Three Amigos Continued!

Peter does that paring down with a small spindle gouge creating a nub that's about one eighth inch or so in diameter where it contacts the bowl bottom. He does this with a bevel rubbing cut towards the center. At this point, his old method was to use a 1/16" parting tool and separate the nub. But today he uses a long detail gouge with a wide shallow flute and a 20 to 22° bevel. With one hand on the Off Switch and the other holding the gouge he slowly cuts through the nub and hits the switch.

Nothing falls apart because the gouge is still in between the nub and the bowl bottom with just enough pressure and friction to keep everything aligned. Remove gouge and everything will stay in place just long enough to grab the bowl and move the tailstock away.

Peter saved the best for last however. He mounted a Wecheer flexible shaft tool to a chuck in the Oneway, thereby creating an 800-pound power sander. At home, he has the shaft permanently mounted in an old Jet lathe dedicated to power sanding.

Thanks, Peter! Most informative.



*Peter McCrea takes a dignified, presidential approach to the subject.*

*Photo by Andy Hoyt*

### Announcements

**Don't forget** the Klingspor 10% discount on all non-powered merchandise to all members of the Maine Woodturners.

**Round Top Center** for the Arts in Damariscotta is offering classes in woodturning. Taught by some of our own members! Check out their web site at [www.roundtoparts.org](http://www.roundtoparts.org).

### Future Demonstrators:

Al Stirt - June 2006

Bob Rosand - Sept 2006

Malcolm Tibbetts—October 2006  
(unconfirmed)

Don't forget to check out  
the website at  
[mainewoodturners.org](http://mainewoodturners.org)

### Classified Ads

**OneWay Dealer:** For anyone who hasn't caught on through the jokes constantly being made at meetings, Dave Lancaster (445-4758) is a OneWay dealer and would be glad to help anyone interested in ordering tools or lathes carried in their catalog.



## **Making Chips and Good Stuff**

**By President Peter McCrea**

Believe it or not, I spent a fair amount of time coming up with this title for my future monthly newsletter blatherings. My able predecessor, Mark Irving, has likely trademarked "As The Wood Turns", so I wanted something catchy (better here than at the lathe) and yet all-encompassing. We all make chips in achieving the form of our intended articles and, I trust, we all strive to produce "good stuff", whether they are bowls, boxes, platters, wands, sculptural objects, ornaments, shop fixtures or even boat parts. I know my definition of "good" has changed dramatically as my tool handling, sanding and finishing techniques have improved over the past several years. Much of the credit for positive change in my own performance is learning from talented demonstrators, both from our membership and from away, as they help us set new standards on how

to achieve "goodness" in whatever "stuff" we do in our shops.

As I begin my term of office, I invite you to share your thoughts on how we, together, might improve our organization. The sharing of knowledge and technique, materials and sources, forms and finishes does not have to be a monthly catch-as-catch can experience, but can at times be best accomplished with a shop visit. I enjoy shop visitors and visits to others work spaces, but do call ahead as I spend considerable time at sea during the summer months, thinking about making chips and good stuff.

Al Stirt's day-long demo at Erskine on Saturday June 17 should be an eye-opener for many of us who have yet to carve upon smooth bowl or platter surfaces. See you there? Keep turning safely.

## **Secretary's Report**

**By Tom Raymond**

The may meeting of Maine Woodturners was held at Erskine Academy in South China Maine on Wednesday 5-17-06. Thirty nine members and guests were present.

President Mark Irving opened the meeting at 7 PM. He advised that the June meeting will be on Sat. the 17th and that Al Stirt from VT will be the demonstrator.

Tonight is election night for a new President and Vice President. Someone from the floor suggested to accept the March meeting nominations of Peter McCrae for President and Andy Hoyt for Vice President. Mark asked for a show of hands on the slate and it was unanimous to go ahead with the nominees. Another

show of hands indicated the new officers were voted in and the gavel was handed over to Peter.

Mark said he did not know who makes the coffee prior to the meetings. We should all thank Dave Barden for this fine service. There will not be a wood auction tonight.

The demo for tonight was the various methods of finishing bowl bottoms. Mark started the demo with two of his methods, followed by Tom Raymond with his method. "Show and Tell" was next at 8 PM and ended at 8:16. The final demo was by Peter McCrae which ended at 8:50.

Tom Raymond, Sec.



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85 Second St.  
Hallowell, ME 04347

Return address requested

### *Coming Events:*

## Al Stirt - June 2006

Bob Rosand – Sept 2006

Malcolm Tibbetts—Oct 2006 (unconfirmed)

Directions to Erskine: From Augusta, take Rt. 3 east for 12 miles. At the blinking light take a right onto Rt. 32. Go approximately 2 miles. Take a right at the end of the cemetery. The school is the first driveway on the left. The meeting is in the woodworking shop. (From the south and east take Route 17 to 32 N. In about 9 miles at the top of a hill, Erskine Academy will be on the left. Turn onto the street at the north side of the school grounds. The woodworking shop is the first building on the left.)

The club always welcomes new members. To join, send \$30 to:

Burt Truman

Maine Woodturners Treasurer

85 Second St.

Hallowell, ME 04347

**One good turn deserves another!**

*Or just introduce yourself at a meeting and pay Burt then.*

*Become a Member of the  
Maine Woodturners!*

*Name:*

*Phone:*

*Address:*

*Email:*