

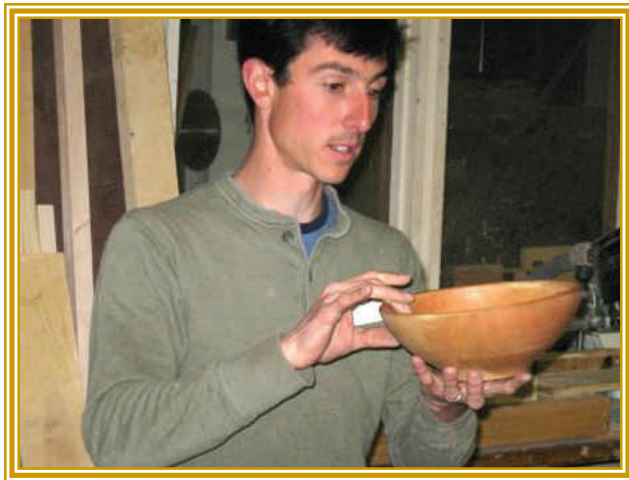


*A Maine Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners*

**FEBRUARY 2009**

## *Ralph Tursini — Tursini Woodturning and Bowl Works*

*Green log to finished product in one session !  
February 14th Demonstrator*



As a forestry student at UVM, Ralph Tursini worked in an internship with the Shelburne furniture makers Bruce Beeken and Jeff Parsons. After graduation, with a degree in forestry, the internship turned into his first woodworking job.

He moved on to Woodbury's, a woodware company in Burlington, where he worked for about two years. There he learned from a turner who had been at it for most of his life and had turned thousands of bowls. Ralph got his own lathe and learned how to turn green bowls — as opposed to the work he was doing

there, which was more production-oriented. They were using cut and dried lumber. Ralph was interested in going back in the process and starting from the tree.

This led him to form his own one-man business, Tursini Woodturning and Bowl Works, which produces 100+ bowls a year, and also produces architectural turnings. He does many workshops and also forestry consulting. Ralph is an Adjunct professor of conservation at UVM where he teaches a course in which each student makes a bowl as part of the University of Vermont's Green Forestry Education Initiative at UVM's research forest in Jericho, Vermont

Ralph is very active in the Woodchuck Turners of Northern Vermont, a chapter of the AAW, where he is on the Board of Directors, is a Mentor and is also past president.

*Plan on attending this demo—you will not be disappointed !*



## *Speaking Of...*

BY ANDY HOYT



### **GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS!**

I dunno about you folks, but the Michelsen demo was a barnload of fun and information for me. I had the good fortune to watch it again a week or so later on DVD and the details I missed the first time around came pouring in. Things clicked. Make use of our Library!

I spoke with Ralph Tursini last week and he's all set for the February demo (actually, this coming Saturday) and he's promised to get us back to some bowl basics, but with an intellectual twist. He says that there will be chainsaws, gouges, and natural edges involved.

Admission to the event will cost \$20 for current members; and \$30 for nonmembers. New nonmembers attending for the first time will automatically also get a free year's membership in the chapter. And as always, Honored Members enjoy free admission.

Moving forward into March, it appears that Peter McCrea and Mike Chase are going to tango around the lathe with spurtles and spuddles. When I asked Peter what a spurtle was he launched into an hour-long dissertation that included faxed diagrams with flow calculations and turbulence vortex analyses. I then called Mike, asked him, and got a slightly more understandable answer – round stirring sticks. Figuring that I was finally on to something, I then asked about spuddles. All I can say is that he dabble dabbled around that for so long I just decided I'd go to the demo and find out. Hope you can too.

Our Portland area partners in crime have come up with "Southern Maine Woodturners" as their official name and have also established the initial management team. More info can be found on their temporary site (<http://santerre.us/woodturning>).

I've been trading emails with Fred Armbruster about the demo that we hope to hold in his shop – his Rose Engine Shop, that is. Looks like Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup> at 1PM is the when. Stayed tuned for the how and where.

*Andy*





## Turning a Wooden Hat

Master Turner: Johannes Michelsen  
January 17, 2009  
By Chuck Seguin



Johannes Michelsen is recognized worldwide as the expert on turning wood hats. His rich baritone voice echoed across the room as he asked the 45 or so members gathered this brisk cold Saturday morning if they could hear him. Oh yeah, did we hear, and cheer him, as he walked us through his primary method of making a Range Rider hat. Make sure that you all go to his website, <http://www.woodhat.com>, for all the details on how to make a 5 ounce hat from a 100 pound blank of wood. Also, borrow from our library the two-dvd set on this demo. In addition to those resources, view the January photos of this demo that are posted on our web site. There are a number of web sites, video and text, which walk through the process of making a wooden hat. These sites share all the jigs and gouges and chucks and woods to use.

Listening to Johannes talk about his work process and how he started and where he's going with the wooden hats is a retelling of the past twenty or so years in woodturning. Where the artist meets the production turner and the sawdust flies. Creativity is the word when hearing the evolution of the turned wooden hat. But, the devil is in the details and Johannes has mastered them. His story of how the first wooden hat came to be was interesting, but like Keith Tompkins and David Lancaster and others in our group, the seed for the idea started long before the bevel touched the grain. Somewhere at sometime in someplace a sight or sound or touch of a material sparked a notion of interest. And the journey begins. With 19 years of hat turning and 1600 signed hats this demonstration lead him through a number of different techniques and tools that seemed foreign to our group. Or maybe just to me.

Is it odd, that starting out with the notion that a blank of wood 100 pounds in ice-cold wet weight could be turned to a delicate and detailed five ounce flexible hat with leftovers to make wooden frames and a smaller mini-hat.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJT-eIq5dhA&eurl=http://www.woodturning-videos.com/video/jJT-eIq5dhA>

Is it odd, that in just a few hundred hats the work process comes down to creating new tools to do the grunt work.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFtNiZTp\\_AI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFtNiZTp_AI)

It is odd, that a person so invested in his art and the craft of turning should help create a different cutting edge, the Michelsen grind.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wevTPeJoOrs&feature=related%20http://www.expertvillage.com/video/1...nnes-gouge.htm>

As I watched Johannes work I checked off my own mental list of the things I knew how to do and wrote down those things I didn't know.

My written list starts out with a homemade template that works for all hats: a one size fits all template. It's a simple looking piece of plywood with some markings for the direction of the grain and the rough shape of the blank. From the woodpile, to the bandsaw and to the lathe Michelsen lets the blank dictate the placement of the template and its rough shape. Then the usual happens, trimming out the blank to make it easier to balance on the lathe and preparing to rough it out. He seems to inspect the blank by touching the ice-cold wood every time he stops to feel the texture and eyeball it for micro cracks or checking.



Next we see the tools, with their long green handles, weighed down with lead shot to add the heft needed to turn through hard frozen green wood. The grips are contoured to accept the fingertips, palms and the thumb in a relaxed position. The grooves in the handle add a greater sense of feeling to the tool as well as better ergonomic positioning for the wrist. When you hold it your thumb is in a groove that is in direct line with the flute of the gouge. Making it easier to know where the tip of the gouge is in relation to the wood.



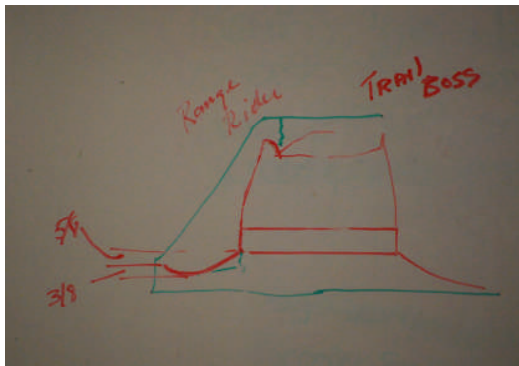
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### Michelsen—Continued from page 3

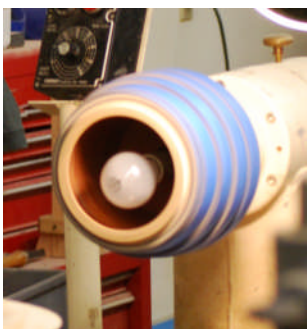
Another tool Michelsen invented was the CONE BONE. It is held under the arm and locked in with the elbow tight against the body. Then it's pushed straight into the thick blank acting as a parting tool. Its purpose is to cut away and save material that would usually be just shavings, thereby not wasting wood and gaining resources for a future project.

There were very few specific measurements used. The three-curve sweep of the brim and its relationship to the shell was very specific. The math for finding the outside diameter of the hat where it meets the forehead was simple. Just average the length and width of the head and add ½ inch or so depending on the dryness of the wood. The proportions of the brim to the hat and the flexing of the wood as it sets in the hat bender to dry are mostly common sense (golden ratio) and sight lines on both axes. Remember Johannes was sharing his in-depth details that are based on 19 years of experience. As you look at the chalkboard drawing you can see the proportions and the math having been worked out long before he gave our demonstration.



One of those learned lessons he points out twice. The lesson is when shaping the brim from the outside of the hat be sure NOT to go straight where you meet the bowl of the hat. The most common error for the turner is that the cutting is going great in shaping the outside bowl near the brim (the red lines) that the curve is missed and a square corner (the green line) happens. This creates a weak point in the structure of the brim and it fails during the next phase of the turning or during the drying period. Stated another way: the outside of the brim has three curves before meeting the body of the shell. More errors occur in shaping the nearest curve to the shell flat (or square). This makes a breaking point for the brim when the hat is in the jam chuck and you are turning to a light.

Speaking of light, making this is a labor on the eyes. Michelsen was constantly looking over this blank checking for cracks and flaws. But, the most eyestrain was in cutting the brim and shell down to the width of a matchbook cover; 3/32". This required back lighting the blank and working from the dark side. As the lights were dimmed in the shop, the wood was peeled away from the brim and became a glowing transparent form. Using a 100-watt light bulb and slow cuts, Johannes moved across the brim by two-inch increments establishing two points of light and then connection them. This keeps the brim from distorting. He is trying to find the shade of red that tells him the wood is thin enough. He is also listening to the sound of the wood. A *kerr* or *gerr* sound means the wood is still thick. A *hsst* or *tsst* sound is the wood just thin enough. Between the sight, the sound and the calipers he arrives at the correct thinness for this hat.



The specifically designed jam chuck with its interior light bar raised some interest with the group. Just some “hanging around the shop electrical parts”, a threaded rod with a bearing that fits into a mortise in the chuck allows Michelsen to turn top of the shell into its flexible thinness. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKLJe6ctBWI>

Or see Chris Ramsey's site <http://www.knot-head.com/removed/plans/BendingHat.htm>. All of these web sites acknowledge Johannes Michelsen as the inspiration of these jigs and ideas.

Continued on page 7

# **The Sixth New England Woodturning Symposium**

**May 23, 2009**

**Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH**

**Sponsored by**

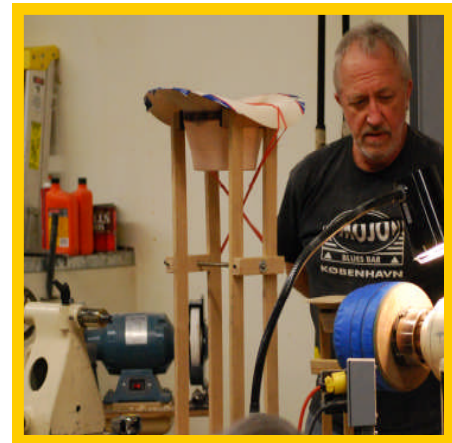
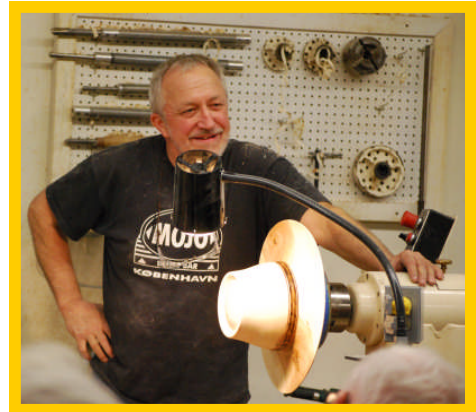
**“The Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers”**

**and**

**“The Granite State Woodturners”**



## **THE HAT TURNING PROCESS IN PICTURES**



# *Demonstration Schedule*

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February 14, 2009 (*Saturday*) 9AM

*Ralph Tursini*

**A Bowl from green log to completion**

***SATURDAY DEMO—\$20.00 MEMBERS \$30.00 NON-MEMBER***

\$5 will get you pizza and soda for lunch

No Show and Tell

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March 18, 2009

*Peter McCrea and Mike Chase*

**“spurtle ?”**

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April 15, 2009

*Gary Swinton*

**Using a lathe duplicator**

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May 20, 2009

*Members night*

**OPEN MIC NIGHT**

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May 23, 2009

*Sixth New England Woodturning Symposium*

*Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH*

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June 26 - 28, 2009

*23rd Annual AAW Symposium*

*Albuquerque, New Mexico*

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**MEETINGS ARE HELD AT THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS SHOP**

**ERSKINE ACADEMY**

**309 WINDSOR ROAD (ROUTE 32), SOUTH CHINA, MAINE**

Our regular meetings are the third Wednesday of each month  
(except July and August there are no meetings)

**Show and Tell @ 6:30**

**Demo @ 7 PM**



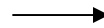
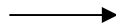
### *Michelsen—Continued from page 4*

The bending of the brim and how it gets its final flexible shape is in the drying process. Johannes explained his first complex steps in making the cowboy hat curve and how the compaction of the wood in one direction caused the elongation of the other direction this formed the oval shape needed to fit the owner's head. Not rocket science, but experience in observation, trial and error. Michelsen's hat bending jig allows the wood to work out its shape in all three dimensions.



Finally, The Michelsen grind. The DVD and his website explain the how and the to do process of making the grind. What I came away from this demo was the need of the turner to keep the tool edge sharp, but sharper still when making the final cut. Don't allow a flaw to happen because of a less than perfect sharp tool. Sharpen the grind and make the cut and leave it.

So, how do you make a 100 pound block of ice into a 5 ounce cowboy hat?



***Practice, Practice, Practice.***

Enough said, I've got to sharpen my tools.



The "mark" inside the Michelsen hats

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### Western Mountains Woodturners

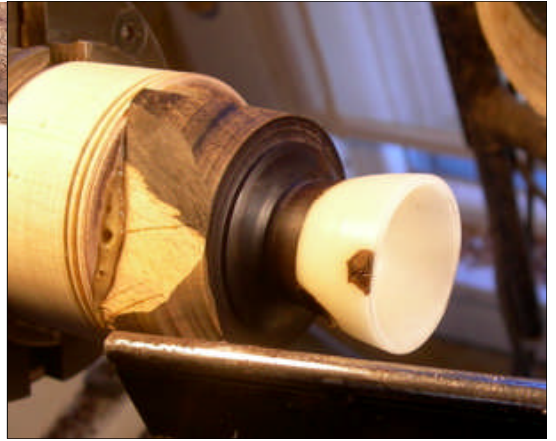
Our friends in the Western Mountains meet the second Wednesday of each month at Dirigo High School in the woodshop, located at 145 Weld street, Dixfield, Maine  
Their meetings start at 6PM and end at 9PM.

## “ A NUTTY CHALLENGE “

Gary Kitchen, a new member from Oakland, recently gave me a large (2"long) Tagua Nut and suggested that I turn a miniature from it. I had never worked the material, sometimes referred to as "vegetable ivory", so I gleaned some info from the web and past issues of turning mags and started to work. The articles referred to "a small void", so I guessed that the void would be on the axis of the stem on the long axis of the nut. I attached this part of the nut to scrap dimension pine with hot glue and made several crosscuts on the table saw, revealing a not-so-small void in the center. I glued (PVA) a half-nut, void up, to a chunk of African Blackwood as I hoped to "hide" the defect where the stem emerges from the nut at the base of the turning.

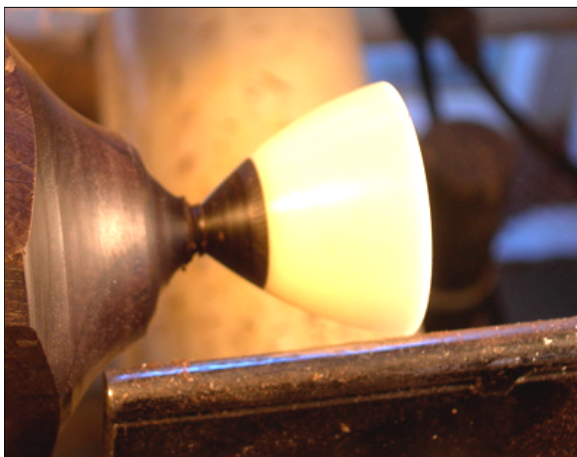


**Tagua Nuts**



The nut hollowed quite nicely with a sharp round scraper, unfortunately leaving a trace of the "small void" at the bottom of the cavity. I turned the exterior with the sharp corner of a bedan with a slicing action similar to that of a skew. The material has no perceptible grain and seems to respond well to sharp tooling. I sanded to 400 grit, but later wish I had gone to 600 and 1000. I used pen polish as a finish and later read that 0000 steel wool with wax is a preferred finish! The material has an ivory-like appearance, but the void places a limitation on what forms could be turned - perhaps a bit of fancy sawing and remounting could result in workable chunks. Craft Supplies sells the nuts by the pound.

Thanks to Gary for the challenge! *Peter McCrea*



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**Editors note**—Description from Craft Supplies Catalog...

Tagua nut ivory is a seed from a palm which grows in South America and has been used for carvings, jewelry and buttons since the time of Queen Victoria. Relatively new to the turner, this intriguing vegetable ivory nut offers another dimension in material and technique. Nuts vary in size and shape.





## Tee Shirts & Sweat Shirts

Tee shirts and sweatshirts are now available at our meetings. A cabinet has been secured so that storage is now possible at Erskine Academy. All sales are cash or check. Most sizes and colors are in stock.

The tee shirts come in four colors: Sport Gray, Cardinal Heather, Honey and Indigo Blue. Each is available in sizes ranging from small to triple extra large. The shirts themselves are from the Gildan Company and qualitatively comparable to the familiar Hanes Beefy Tees.

The price for all shirts regardless of size is \$12 for members and \$15 for nonmembers. This price includes Maine's 5% sales tax.

Sweat shirts are now available with the same size range. The colors are almost identical too. We have Sport Grey (same), Honey, (same), Carolina Blue (nearly identical to Indigo Heather), and Cherry Red (which is a bit more vibrant). The price for these sweat shirts is \$24 for members and \$28 for non-members.



**Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes.  
Art is knowing which ones to keep.**

**Excerpts from the**

## **January 2009 AAW Board Letter**

Happy New Year from Board Member *Malcolm Tibbetts*.

How quickly a year flies by. With the passing of '08, your AAW board looks to the future with the same economic concerns that everyone seems to have. These are scary times for sure, but we are very fortunate to have a strong association, filled with very dedicated and passionate members. Our future remains rock-solid; we don't need a "bail-out."

With the New Year, there are many changes. We say goodbye and extend a big thank you to out-going board members Corey Anderson, Al Hockenbery, and our past president Angelo Iafrate (it's not really a goodbye, for I'm sure they will all continue to contribute to the AAW mission). And we welcome newly elected and very qualified board members, Dale Larson, Binh Pho, and Cassandra Speier. In addition, Betty Scarpino has taken over the editorial duties of our journal and this will be Mary Lacer's first full year as our executive director. Board member, Bill Haskell has "stepped up to the plate" and by unanimous board vote, taken the reigns of our association presidency; we are in very good hands. We're going through almost as much transition as Washington, but without nearly as much controversy. The future looks very bright indeed.

### *25th anniversary book*

How about contributing a good story for the 25th anniversary book that is being created? This is going to be a fantastic publication, to be published prior to our 25th symposium in 2012. John Kelsey has been hired to oversee this project and he would love to receive short stories or essays from AAW members. Tell a funny story or recognize someone who has made a difference and try to include a photo or two. Send your best stuff to John at [editorkelsey@gmail.com](mailto:editorkelsey@gmail.com)

### *Segmented Turners*

A bit of a personal note... At the conclusion of the first "segmented symposium" held in November 2008, attendees expressed a desire to form an association. I am involved with the creation of a new "specialized" AAW chapter of segmented turners. I invite all segmenters to consider joining this new group. You can sign up at: <http://www.segmentedwoodturners.org/>

*Malcolm Tibbetts*  
**AAW Vice President**



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## **JOIN THE AAW**

**IT IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE  
FUTURE OF WOODTURNING**

### **Benefits of Membership**

- Local AAW Chapters
- AAW Journal: American Woodturner
- AAW Resource Guide
- AAW Symposium
- AAW Website ([www.woodturner.org](http://www.woodturner.org))
- AAW Forum ([www.aawforum.org](http://www.aawforum.org))
- Educational Opportunity Grants
- Insurance for Members and Chapters

## ————→ *New Member Profile* ←————



Gary Kitchen

Gary had a 20-year career maintaining railroad rolling stock, followed by 3 years as a steel fabrication manager and 10 years at the Hinkley paper mill. A lifelong woodworker, Gary first experienced turning in his Waterville High shop class, re-turning to woodturning last year as he was completing his new 18 x 56' shop. His new lathe is a Grizzly 16 x 42.

Gary has taken lessons at the Woodturning School in Damariscotta and is presently interested in sampling all types of turning. He is quite open for a shop visit, so give him a call at 465-7245. Welcome aboard, Gary!



***Southern Maine Woodturners*** is the newly formed woodturners group in the Portland area. They meet at the Rockler Store in South Portland. The Club is off to a good start with thirty people paying dues. Many of the members have only had a couple of years experience rubbing the bevel and they have turned some very nice items. They meet the first Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30.



### **OFFICERS**

**2008 - 2009**



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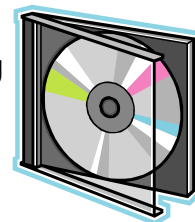
**bglibby@roadrunner.com**





Librarian Gene Beaupre needs your help! Do you have suggestions on new publications and/or DVD's that could be purchased by the club for our library? Gene would greatly appreciate your input. The Board of Directors have provided Gene with a budget for the purchase of new materials so that the membership can expand their knowledge of this great craft !

It can be a great savings for members to "rent" a DVD for a month rather than buying it yourself for \$30.00 or more. ( most rentals are free! )

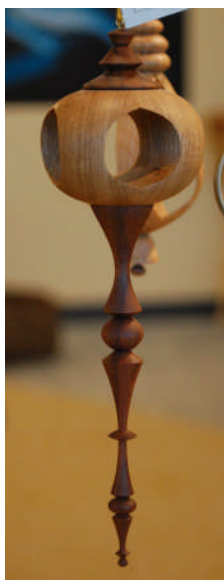


**Please contact Gene at [pixes@aol.com](mailto:pixes@aol.com) with your suggestions.**

## Center for Maine Crafts

**Gardiner Rest Area  
I-95 and I-295**

THE RECENTLY OPENED GARDINER REST AREA HAS A UNIQUE FEATURE. BEYOND THE TYPICAL FAST FOOD, IT ALSO CONTAINS A SHOP THAT HAS FOR SALE MANY DIFFERENT MAINE MADE CRAFTS, INCLUDING ITEMS FROM MAINE WOODTURNERS MEMBER AL MATHER OF PRINCETON, MAINE. PICTURED BELOW ARE SOME OF AL'S CREATIONS THAT ARE FOR SALE.



PICTURED TO THE RIGHT ARE TWO VERY NICELY DONE PEPPER MILLS BY KIM DAILEY, ALSO A MEMBER OF MAINE WOODTURNERS AND WESTERN MOUNTAIN WOODTURNERS. HE ALSO HAS SEVERAL HIGH QUALITY PENS.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO TURNERS REPRESENTED AT THE CENTER!

