

*A Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners*

**MARCH 2009**

## *DEMO DUO*

*Peter McCrea and Mike Chase*

**SPURTLES AND MORE**

March 18, 2009



*chiefly Scottish :*  
a wooden stick for stirring porridge

Though uncommon in North America, the spurtle is a traditional Scottish stir stick that dates from the 16th century. The original spurtles (also spelled "spirtle") may have simply been small branches with the bark removed.



Typically used for stirring porridge (it is oat based), where its small-diameter shaft easily cuts through the thick material to keep lumps to a minimum. It is equally useful for stirring thick sauces, soups or stews.

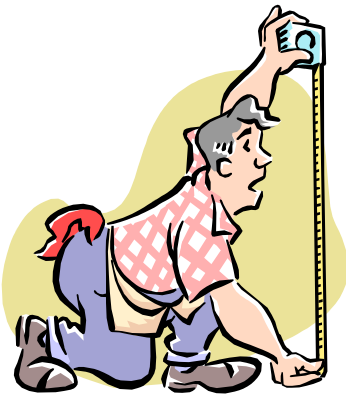
A simple but effective kitchen tool, the spurtle is normally in the region of 12" in length and about 1" in diameter.



Mark your calendar for Wednesday, March 18  
where two "Local Boys" will share their  
knowledge of woodturning

## Speaking Of...

BY ANDY HOYT



Howdy Mainers!

As always, I'm writing this just moments after the much anticipated email from Brian Libby surfaced asking me the same question he's asked each month since last fall – "Where's your column, bub?" So while I readily admit to being a slacker, I'd like to devote this month's column to commending a few folks who aren't. This includes the aforementioned Mr. Libby, as well Chuck Seguin and Gary Kitchen.

The piece of this, which brings a warm smile to my otherwise grouchy countenance, is that element common to each of these guys – they're all brand new members of our chapter, having signed up at various points just last year. And while they're certainly junior members, each has (and continues to) earn senior bonus points as contributors to our group.

Early last summer, and totally out of the blue, Brian approached me and asked if I thought there would be any interest in a revised newsletter. It's the only numb thing I've ever heard him say; and I eagerly gave him the green light to proceed. And proceed he has! I've a bit of experience with this sort of thing and I can tell you that it's no small feat to perform design, editing, and layout services all on one's own for something that will be shared widely. And it hasn't stopped there, either. Each month, I discover new tidbits of turning information that I'd otherwise not come across and goes far to enhance the overall product. Stand up and take a bow, Brian!

There's one component to the newsletter that could easily make the entire enterprise less fulfilling. And that's the demo write-up Chuck Seguin has been preparing since he attended his very first meeting last September. They're not only well written, but each seems to have a flavor of its own highlighting elements that those of us also in attendance could easily have not heard correctly. Written – and hence read – as though through the eyes of a novice woodturner (yet from one who has complete command of our lexicon) they are indeed a treasure. Well done, Chuck!

And lastly, we have Gary Kitchen. Imagine my surprise when I was cruising through the Kennebec Journal last week and came across a neat article about the Eagle Cane Project that showcased Gary as a recipient of one of Marcia Berkall's canes. I thought that was most cool. But even far better was the phone call I got yesterday afternoon from Gary. He was asking for some specs on the cane adapters so he could Pay It Forward to other equally deserving veterans. Next thing I know, he's in my shop and we took turns producing a few adapters. That's citizenship, and I salute you sir – even if those injuries did involve KP duty and a potato peeler.



Gary spent the better part of the afternoon at our house and we had a fabulous time while turning the adapters. We talked up tools and sawdust and projects along with a slew of other stuff. So why do I mention this? Because I see no reason why this can't be expanded somehow so that we can both enjoy and benefit from the camaraderie we experience each month but on a more frequent basis. Going a step further, Gary says he's got a couple of massive maple logs on the ground in his Oakland backyard that he's willing to share with all members. Who's up for a Chainsaw Massacre (Maine Woodturners style) this spring?

So, with my hat raised in praise of these three gentlemen, I only ask that you consider their example. See you Wednesday night – and don't forget, we're finally having another Show and Tell session, come early.

*Andy*



## *RALPH TURSINI*

February 14, 2009  
Demonstration

### **BACK TO BASICS**



Oh to be like Ralph Tursini, First of all he's young. He's talented. He's educated. He's hands on. He's enthusiastic. He's energetic. He's insightful. He's engaging. And he's human. He's human in the sense that he's willing to experiment and fail.

His beginning into woodturning started not from the cradle, but from a college course in woodworking. While studying forestry at the University of Vermont he made two candlestick holders and was bitten with the bug to turn. He may not have the 30 years or more of turning experience that many of the master turners in our association have but he brings into his work the educational resources and the techniques of a seasoned educator. His apprenticeship with furniture makers Bruce Beeken and Jeff Parsons, and employment with Woodbury's of Vermont have given Ralph an introspective understanding of the nature of the craft and art of woodturning.

"Our instincts and sensibilities as craftsmen extend to every aspect of making furniture. Care and thought are required to integrate forestry, sawmilling and drying processes with shaping, steam bending, joinery, sanding, finishing, assembly, and, of course, design. When we make furniture, we start at the beginning, with the tree; or really, with the forest that the tree grows in."

"Forestry...involves silviculture, the art and science of growing trees. Selective cutting and timber stand improvement balance the present value of a harvest with the long-term value and health of the stand. Just like weeding a garden, a certain amount of what grows can be removed to invigorate, or in forestry terms release, the remainder.

"The natural beauty of wood is found in features such as knots, heartwood and sapwood, and mineral streaks. We highlight rather than eliminate these characteristics; they give our furniture soul..." <http://www.beekenparsons.com/forest/index.shtml>

Ralph's wood choice for the day was ash. Recently cut, in the dead of winter.

"They say the Iroquois hunter would look for a standing ash tree in the dead of winter when he needed fire. Of the deciduous trees that grow in the Northeast, ash is the one that stands the driest. He (the hunter) fashioned his bow and arrows from its wood and split out ash pieces for his bent snowshoe frames. A notable feature of this species is an excellent strength-to-weight ratio. It is for this reason and its willingness to be steam-bent that ash has been so important in traditional boat building. These properties are important in our shop too. The long, strong fibers lend strength to the chair parts we steam bend and the mortise and tenon joints we cut. We love the sweet smell of ash when it's sawn and its warm color that ranges from bone to honey. This is a ring porous wood, sometimes referred to as open grained, with strong grain patterns that appear as parallel lines or swirls and waves." <http://www.beekenparsons.com/forest/index.shtml>

**Continued on page 4**





Using David Lancaster's electric chain saw Ralph took his time to select the focal point of his template. He explained his thought process as looking for the warp before turning, looking for the way the tree was stressed during its growth periods. This was a teaser into the drying process of green wood. Well before he touched the chain saw to the log we received a detailed mini lecture on why, how, when and where the wood drying process starts.

Passing around his own work to demonstrate the once turn green wood bowls we saw that in his turning and design of the bowls the symmetrical warping that took place. If looked at from an angle the piece looks out of round and unattractive, however, in holding it so that aligning the eye to gaze across the lowest arch of the rim a soft uplift on both sides is evident, as if the warp naturally made handles for the bowl. The nature of the wood is allowed to express itself in form and function.



Tursini shaped the log into a blank and used a drawknife to remove the bark from the blank. In removing the bark he saves himself from the grit, moss, fungi and nails during the roughing out process. It exposes a clean edge to apply a faceplate, drive center, or a screw center. Several of our 30-year masters nodded and murmured in agreement at this insight.

When was the last time you were stung with a chunk of flying bark or sprayed with the wetness of moss during a rough out? Neat idea.

Onto the lathe and some roughing out and shaping the blank and more sharing about drying green wood. The next hour or two Ralph handled a few questions on the type of ash, the grain of the wood in relation to the cutting angles and keeping the wood damp while turning.



*Continued on page 5*

His hints on keeping the wood moist included storing it in a plastic bag (not paper), raising the temperature - because warm air holds moisture. However the suggestion he made on using concentrated lemon juice drew the most interesting conversation in the session. Several members suggested other water-soluble products and Ralph gave careful thought to them. Any astute observer would note that Ralph had switched his brain into the teacher mode. Listening and thinking of an answer at the same time. He gave textbook-like answers as to why each suggestion wouldn't or couldn't work, but he stuck to his training and turning experience, a bath of lemon concentrate that was his final answer.



After lunch we were treated to a slide presentation on his home-work process. Nested within this presentation were slides of trees containing blisters, fungus runners and purple stains. Ralph's extensive knowledge of forestry helped us walk through each of these imperfections came about and how the trees growth is affected and how the grain reacts. He discussed how to use them in design and function of a bowl or art work. When the slide show ended it felt like we had gulped a large ice cream cone too fast. BRAIN FREEZE. Here was a lot of knowledge in a very short time.

Then, Ralph returned to the bowl, sanded it and passed it around. His tip on using a piece of 2" leather for a backing to his sandpaper made a lot of sense. Using 3M spray adhesive, a supply of sandpaper from 80 to 320 grit and the leather are all that's needed to make these finger savers.



Our time with Ralph Tursini was all too short. Over the next twenty or thirty years we should have him back a few times just to see how much more he knows and has learned. Remember first of all he is young.

Enough said, keep cutting the short fibers into the long ones.

*Chuck Seguin*

*Ralph discussing how grain orientation and drying affect the bowl*



## *Demonstration Schedule*

March 18, 2009

*Peter McCrea and Mike Chase*

*“spurtles and more”*

April 15, 2009

*Gary Swinton*

*Using a lathe duplicator*

May 20, 2009

*Members night*

*OPEN MIC NIGHT*

May 23, 2009

*Sixth New England Woodturning Symposium*

*Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH*

June 26 - 28, 2009

*23rd Annual AAW Symposium*

*Albuquerque, New Mexico*

**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 Photos @ 6:30**

**Demo @ 7 PM**

### *More Maine Woodturning Clubs*

***Western Mountain Woodturners***

**2nd Wednesday @ 6—9PM**

**Dixfield High School**

***Southern Maine Woodturners***

**1st Wednesday @ 6:30-8:30 PM**

**Rockler, South Portland**



# *Dutchman Inlays Enhance Edge-Cracked Bowls*

*By Peter McCrea*



While one expects all sorts of natural defects in burl bowls, sometimes prominent cracks need “something” to enhance their quality and perception of permanence- that is when I apply a dutchman inlay (Photo #1). An article in the fall 2004 Woodturning Design Magazine got me started and then I evolved the technique that I presently use.

An ideal rough-turned bowl candidate for this procedure has a finish-turned exterior with a prominent edge crack that penetrates through the wall of the bowl at a right angle to the surface (Photo #2).



Photo #3 shows a router template hot-glued with supporting wedges onto the location where the inlay is to be installed. The pattern of the template is made from the profile of the actual inlay stock created on a tablesaw, with instructions that come with the router template guide set, shown in photo #4 with the 1/8” solid carbide down-spiral bit installed..



Photo#5 is after the initial 1/8" deep plunge cut. Subsequent cuts are in 1/8" increments to avoid bit breakage. Note the rounded corners which will have to be chiseled sharp to accomodate the inlay profile



Photo #6 shows the 1/2" deep cavity with chiseled sharp edges ready to accept the inlay. Padauk inlay stock, created on the table saw, lies ready for use.



Photo #7 shows the inlay piece driven to the bottom of the cavity- a pencil line on the side of the inlay tells one when to stop hammering! Protruding stock is sawn off and the inlay receives thin CA glue.

The resulting bowl exterior, when finish-sanded, is shown in Photo #8.



The Interior of the rough bowl is turned conventionally, revealing the dutchman as you proceed. (Photo #9).



I find that Padauk makes a pleasing contrast to Black Cherry burl or plain wood, even though the bright red/orange does fade to dark brown in strong light.





## 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.



### → FROM THE EDITOR ←

## Thank You

Thank you to Peter McCrea for the articles and the member profiles that he has contributed to the newsletter. It has added much quality to the newsletter.



Are there any volunteers out there that will step forward and contribute a short article for the newsletter? This type of input from our members improves the quality of the newsletter. Thanks, *Brian*

*It is better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing flawlessly*



*Betty Scarpino...*

## Spring 2009 - Letter from the American Woodturner Journal Editor



It is with much enthusiasm that I invite you to read my first issue as editor of *American Woodturner*. Thirty some years ago, Dabney Doty, shop teacher extraordinaire, introduced me to the lathe at the University of Missouri. Many years later and heaps of sawdust swept up, I've combined my solid background in woodturning with my interest in carving, coloring, and texturing.

In the early 1990s, I was editor of *American Woodturner* for three years. For the past four years, I wrote a regular column on woodturning techniques for *Woodworker's Journal*, where I honed my writing skills. Over the years, I've written dozens of articles, from basic instruction to design techniques while continuing to make things, teach, and demonstrate woodturning and related techniques.

I believe in mastering the basics, thanks to Mr. Doty, so I will be including on a regular basis articles on basic techniques. Many readers enjoy project articles. Those will continue. Others primarily read features that focus on artistic topics. This issue will certainly please that contingent. Profile articles will appear on a regular basis. Some articles you will enjoy more than others, but it is my hope that you sample everything with the same enthusiasm I offer them.

Perhaps my favorite piece in this issue is Keith Burn's, "Turning, Inspiration, and Friendship" in the Members Gallery. It sums up my feelings about the AAW: As members of this organization, we learn from each other and share friendships, all the while making exciting work.

American Woodturner Journal Editor

*Betty Scarpino*

### Who is the AAW?

- International, non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of woodturning
- Mission: Provide education, information and organization to those interested in turning wood
- 14,000+ members from around the world
- 301 local chapters in North America and around the world as of December 2008

### 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



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2008 - 2009



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# WAX FINISHES

## Benefits

- Reduces scratching, as it creates a slick surface.
- Reduces staining and water spotting under some conditions.
- Works well on oily or resinous woods (such as cocobolo, bocote, tulip wood, and ebony)
- As a clear wax, preserves the original color (especially on woods such as holly and hard maple).
- Fast compared to most other options for finishing wood.

## Weaknesses

- Even the best waxes don't hold up well to a lot of handling.
- The softer forms of wax, like beeswax or soft paraffin, smudge easily from handling.
- Even short contact with liquid affects the finish water passes readily through the wax into the wood or onto the finish below.
- Moisture vapors—the source of wood expanding and contracting— pass through a thin wax finish, which does little to slow this exchange. (The thick layer of wax used for green wood is excellent for stopping or greatly retarding moisture exchange.) Remember that even with these limitations, the finish, if there is one underneath the wax, will probably offer some added protection and even luster.
- Some of these downsides are not usually catastrophic.

Wax's three strongest benefits are that it is **reversible, repairable, and renewable**.

- Because it is easily **reversible**, you can strip it with several solvents, including naphtha, turpentine, xylene, toluene, and mineral spirits (in most cases).
- Because wax is **repairable**, you can re-buff or re-wax the surface. There are no bonding questions of the old coat with the new coat because the solvents in a new coating will usually reactivate the previous wax coating.
- Because wax is **renewable**, you can re-buff a surface that begins to dull. Or, you can add a new coat to regain the original



Information on this page is from an article titled "Wax and the Woodturner" by Alan Lacer that was published in the Fall 2006 issue of the American Woodturner Journal.