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Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing.

(The month of February finds me not traveling and having fun in my shop!
If anyone is interested in doing a class let me know,
I always enjoy sharing all the fun!)

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TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Topic of the Month: Hollowing through small openings

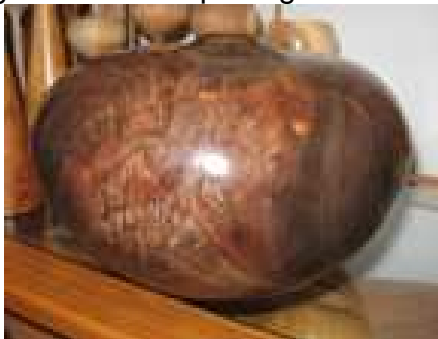
I had the good fortune to come across a very large walnut tree nearly 30 inches in diameter with a crotch. I thought I could do a 30 inch platter with the crotch figure in the middle or I could do a heart shaped bowl with the three legs of the crotch as high points for a natural edge bowl with the crotch figure in the bottom of the bowl and 25 inches in diameter. Both ideas would make an impact with the large scale and crotch figure but what would I do with a 25 or 30 inch piece? Where would I store it? Trying to find a buyer would be tough for the same reasons. The market would be rather small for this type of work.

I decided to go for the spectacular rather than just think big. In this case, smaller is better. I cut away everything with a chainsaw but the essence of the crotch figure. I cut down the piths of each of the branches. The wood outside the piths is nice straight grained bowl blanks. I set them aside for the moment. I cut a couple inches off the remaining center area of the crotch on the trunk side of the crotch and took a look at the grain on the end to see if the crotch flame is visible. There was not much character at the trunk end of the blank. Cut another inch or two off the trunk end and looked again to find the crotch figure. The figure was getting bigger and I could tell I had the start of something good. With the chainsaw again I wasted small amounts off each leg end of the blank until I could see the figure. Now I had a kind of triangle shaped blank with the pith in the middle. From there I cut the three corners off and made a six sided blank with bark on both sides of the tree still there. I trimmed a small area off the bark so I could mount it on the lathe between centers with the grain parallel to the bed. Grain direction is the same as with a bowl blank because I want to do a side grain hollow form capturing the best the crotch has to offer.

Now the fun starts! Turning between centers puts me in an information gathering mode. I start on the balance point, not a geographical center. To make the balance point and the geographical center match and come close to being the same point I trimmed a little of the weighty parts off with the chainsaw, with the lathe off obviously. This will allow me to get the speed of the lathe up. The faster I can turn the easier it is to rough out the blank and get it round. I'm not into "tunka-tunka" turning which is not fun. Next I start turning the waste away in small increments. This is not a race, I take a look at the surface as the waste wood it is removed slowly. In this piece I changed the center points and moved the axis multiple times before I captured the best figure I could find. In fact .at one stage I turned the blank upside down and made what I thought was the bottom the top. I wanted the flame of the crotch to spread across the top of the vessel and down both sides.

When I had the axis in the best possible position and the shape roughly turned, I stopped turning between centers and made a concave flat on the bottom for a glue block. Once mounted with a glue block process,

(Check out my YouTube clip on the process- <http://youtu.be/rbZXEBIHVOU>) I refined the shape and sheer scrapped the surface to prepare for sanding. The wood was too wet to sand yet. There is no way to dry a 30 inch diameter tree. The finished vessel was 9 inches in diameter and 5 inches tall hollowed through a 7/8 inch opening and a uniform 1/8 to 3/16 inch thick wall.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

TEARDROP SHAPED SCRAPER CUTTER

Lyle,

Do you still sell the radius scraper blade?

Regards,

Gary

Hi Gary from Colorado,

No, I don't make or sell or use the teardrop shaped scraper. I use my carbide cutter to get a better surface than scrapers. If you want the scraper Packard has them. The broad radius of the left hand side of my correctly sharpened 3/16 HSS cutter gives me the same clean up surface as the teardrop shaped cutter and it is already on the swivel holder if you are not using the carbide option.

I do sell the replacement 3/16 HSS cutters.

SQUARE BORING BAR FOR HOME BUILT SYSTEM

Lyle,

Referenced to the October's article in American Woodturner, about home built systems, I am in the planning of making one for myself.

But then I had a thought, seeing as how one wants to keep the turning/cutting surface (normally) at right angles to the wood, and a laser pointer would be very useful to have and it would have to be on top of the bar therefore

is there any technical reason why one shouldn't use a square piece of stock as the bar?

I tried to think of reasons not to but there are some good ones for it i.e. if one uses a tool brace at the rear of the lathe bed, a square bar between another couple of square bars in the brace would make it have a lesser tendency to twist

Please give me your opinion on this.

Thank you,

Joe

Hi Joe from Canada,

You can hold the laser with anything, but practically, in use, you'll discover you want to do it right. The laser dot does not stay over the cutting tip. It moves in all directions. Some people set the laser on a dedicated cutter and get close. But the limitations of this process will drive you crazy down the road and you will wish you could move the laser to work more accurately and do any shape your vessel and your skill level might grow into. You might use multiple boring bars and need to adjust the laser back and forth and side to side. I use moving cutters and work with a gap between the cutter and the laser dot. This gap needs to be moved/changed often. My round bar laser holder is designed to move easy, fast, and accurately. If you can make a square bar do that, go for it. I don't see how it can be done.

My Hollowing DVD uses the laser and you can see what is needed by viewing that. I will use the laser in the next YouTube clip I am editing now. Hope to have it posted in a few weeks. There are articles I wrote on the laser use on my web site that might help you in your design.

I don't understand your terminology in your note. There are no twisting forces on the laser when in use. If the above is not helpful give me a call so I can understand what you want to build.

FOLLOWUP

Hi Lyle,

Thank you for the reply. I understand about moving the laser tip as required (and often) when boring. On the whole I was more concerned about using a square boring bar as opposed to a round one.

The forces I mentioned are the ones associated with the cutting action of the cutter tip. Would it not make more sense to have a square bar rather than a round one? Or is it simply because they (the squares) might not be readily available?

Thanks,
Joe

Hi Joe from Canada,

Now I'm even more confused! You talk about the laser and you talk about a boring bar. They are two different things. My previous note was about the laser measuring holding apparatus.

The boring bar can be made of anything strong enough to dangle off the tool rest without vibration while hollowing. I use THICK WALLED square tubing for the giant size or bigger bars I produce and use, you can see them on my web site store. Most people use round boring bars so they can get into smaller mouth openings. A square bar means the vessels will need larger openings to maneuver. If you are thinking of a square bar to resist the torqueing forces, others do that. In my opinion, that is not a successful way to manage torque. A square bar in a captured slot will bind up when significant twisting forces are applied. Just when you need control of the cutting tip, it binds up so it is difficult or next to impossible to clean up tool marks or make thin walled vessels. This is why articulating arm, or bars with flat spots on them, or platform backrest systems fail to work easily and efficiently.

This conversation leads me to believe you will ultimately make something that will not be very versatile, have multiple limitations, and create obstacles that will someday drive you crazy. As mentioned in the article from AAW, you might even make something dangerous. This is no time to be blazing new trails and experimenting. There are sound reasons for the design of my tools and most popular manufactured tools have been tested over time.

It's the chicken and the egg scenario. We need experience to engineer a good hollowing system but where do we get experience if we don't already have the system.

FACEPLATE AND SCREW PROBLEMS

Lyle,

I know your view on chucks but don't recall the reason you favor faceplates.

Also I've had a problem with my faceplate screws binding up partway into the green walnut I've been working with. I pre-drilled and used wax. In some instances I've been unable to withdraw the screws. I use square drive. Could you recommend the best screws to use?

Thanks,
Ken

Hi Ken from California,

Here is the YouTube clip on chucks and screws etc. <http://youtu.be/VIZ81aDfcxc> My DVDs would be even better to see the whole process. I exclusively use faceplates because it is the best way to transfer the power and stability from the lathe to the wood without vibration. I don't like square drive screws because I use an impact driver. The two don't work well together. I use #12, pan head, sheet metal screws, 1 ¼ inch long I have never had troubles with screwing into wet wood with sheet metal screws. I screw the screws into wet walnut without drilling pilot holes. I only drill pilot holes in dry wood. If the wood is dry and the screws don't go in, I use a little larger pilot hole drill. I wonder, what do you use to screw in with? Not by hand? A good electric drill or impact driver will put screws in any green wood.

Now, getting the screws out is never an issue either. But, that assumes you are following my process of preparing the blank and I never leave the screws in for very long. (Again, see my DVDs) If you will not be finishing the turning in a day or two, take the screws out and re-mount it between centers to start over. It will not be running true after it has time to dry out. You have to remember the wood is in constant movement as it shrinks during the drying process.

LATHE SPEED AND SAFETY WARNING

Hi Lyle,

I have a question that has always bugged me regarding lathe speed when turning a vessel. I usually turn vessels around 6 - 8" in diameter and not longer than 12" off the headstock. The woods I typically use are local semi-hard species and can be either wet or partially wet. I often turn at about 500 rpm but I think that I could easily increase the speed to as high as 800 rpm. What would be your recommendation of speed when using the 3/16" carbide tip cutter?

Thanks again for all your help in the turning community and Happy Holidays,
Al

Hi Al from California,

Speed is hard to figure. It's a moving target, 3000 rpm is good for a finial and 500 rpm could be too fast for a 16 inch bowl. I turn faster than most turners. The faster the wood goes by the tools the cleaner the cuts will be. Turning at faster speeds makes it easier to make sweeping sweet shapes. On the outside of the hollow form you describe I will likely be up at 1200 rpm to 1500 rpm at least, maybe more. On the inside of the same vessel for hollowing I slow it down a bit maybe near 800 rpm.

We must think safety when making the decision about the speed we use when turning. Under good conditions, I turn fast but if I have voids, vibration issues, or any weakness in the process at all, I slow it down and stay away from the danger zone in front of the piece. Turning fast requires good safe methods. Keeping the wood in balance, using secure holding methods both between centers and with faceplates, having a stable lathe setup, using sharp tools, and having good tool control are important. People that ignore my methods and use a chuck, for example, better slow things down.

TURNED SEGMENTED PIECE CRITIQUE AND LASER SETTING

Lyle,

I have watched the DVD of you turning the goblet many times now and I have this question. I see where you use the credit card to align the light, however, when does a person have to move the cutter at a different angle?

Attached is the vase that had taken me a week to glue up.

The inner core is Black walnut then I put on 4 sides of maple, then 4 sides of cherry, then 4 sides of black walnut again. Then the last part was 4 4x4 pieces of 1/8" cherry with 1/4" bloodwood glued to that.

Please tell me how I can make it better.

I made the base pretty narrow to show the inner core so I left a good base to it.

Thanks for your help,

Arlin



Hi Arlin from Iowa,

The laser needs to be set often. The long line on the card will line up with the wall vessel surface and the arrow line will tell you when to move it. Just keep checking it often to see the gap is 90 degrees through the wall. This is why I suggest you do some very simple shapes first to get a handle on how to use the boring bar and cutters and laser measuring. There is a lot going on here. You need to move the cutter to the left to reach the inside wall, and straighten it out again to do the bottom inside. Every time you move the cutter the laser must be adjusted again too.

The vase you glued up was a lot of work and holds a great deal of detail just because of the multiple wood layers. I would prefer to make a simpler shape without a foot or neck to show off all the work you did on the glue up. All the detail in the glue up is lost with such a complex shape. The complex shape is more suited to a plain grain piece of wood.

FEEDBACK

I've spent a week with Lacer and a week with Ellsworth at Arrowmont. I have DVDs by Raffan, Ellsworth, Lacer, McDonnell and Clewes. But, when I get hung up I always seem to find the guidance I need in your YouTube videos. Recently my gouge sharpening setup got out of whack. I knew how the profile of the tool needed to change but not how to adjust the setup. I watched your sharpening video and dialed it right in, no problem.

I hope to meet you at a turning seminar or class sometime to thank you in person.
Happy Holiday, Keith, location unknown

Lyle,

Thank you for the videos on your process for wood turning! I am new to wood turning and just received your videos. I had made only 2 bowls (no spindle turnings) and had many catches and they required a lot of sanding! After reviewing your videos the process was great! I had no catches and made a bowl well beyond my skill level!

Thanks again. I just received your delivery for the boring system.

Roger from New Hampshire

It was nice to talk to you today; it's really cool dealing with a real person while ordering something I really want! I am really excited to try this system in the spring.

Harold from New York

Lyle,

The gouges arrived on black Friday. It's amazing how much that storm crippled the area. No mail, trash pick-up, or even UPS deliveries for over a week. It gave me just enough time to turn the handles and get them mounted together.

My class ended up being with 6 people but only 5 were actively turning. I used techniques and teaching capacity that I learned from you, Al Stirt, & David Ellsworth. (What a pool that is!) I ended up having them all use my gouges so that sharpening was a breeze and didn't need 5 set-up adjustments for the wheel. All the feedback was great and it gave me such overwhelming pleasure knowing that I have learned from the best, done my homework and then taught them all as much as possible of the appropriate techniques to make the proper cuts safely, and have fun.

They all learned a bunch, but I believe I learned the most and had more fun than a human being should be allowed to have with a lathe and some wood!

I can't thank you enough for all that I have picked up from you these last few years at Totally Turning, in your videos, and in my shop. I look forward to your new YouTube venture to see what else I can pick up on. What a blast it's been!

I've had great response and now have some requests for all day private sessions. It's almost like just finding out where momma hides the cookies!

Joe from New York

Very good newsletter, Lyle! I am excited for you and for us learners about your new series of videos. You make our learning a lot more fun with your honest, practical approach.

Henry in Kentucky

I pray all is well. I am so very thankful for all of your help and friendship it means a lot to me. I have so much I owe you for teaching me the right way.

Have a Blessed Holiday!

Arlin from Iowa

Just wanted to take a moment and say "thanks" for the outstanding video's you have made and the very informative newsletters. When you make a statement you always back up what you said with very good reasons for why you said it. Your videos have really helped me become a safer and better woodturner. It is obvious that you really are trying to help people.
Sincerely, Ken location unknown

I am looking forward to reading your newsletter. Your reputation as a woodturner is top notch. While my interest is primarily focused on segmented turning, I believe you can offer me considerable insight into general information that will be of great help. I have already enjoyed your hints on waste block usage. I never use a chuck when turning my segmented bowls or hollow forms.
Pete location unknown

CALENDAR

Check out my website calendar for more specifics.
(<http://www.lylejamieson.com/information/calendar.asp>)

March, 2015 - Oregon, Washington, New York

May, 2015 - New Hampshire

June, 2015 - Pennsylvania

September, 2015 - Wisconsin

October, 2015 - Ohio, Georgia, Virginia