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Would a fly without wings be called a walk?

This month I start off talking about unsound wood but I carry the topic in a number of directions. I touch on the benefits of sound techniques and process, green wood advantages, chucking methods and lathe speed.

Keep on the lookout for new YouTube clips. Go to YouTube.com and search for my channel, if you subscribe you will get an email when I post new videos. I have been using the Mike Hunter Carbide Cutter on my boring bar since Mike developed the nanograin carbide tools for turning. Mike has become a sponsor for my YouTube productions. Thank you Mike! I will be using some of Mike's hand held carbide cutters in future videos.

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TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Topic of the Month: Turning Structurally Unsound Wood

Is there anything that can be used to hold a turning together so it can be safely turned at higher speeds? Are some woods less structurally sound and shouldn't be turned as fast? Mark

Mark, I prefer to take another course of action. I want to prevent the possibility of mishaps from using structurally unsound wood. I want to prevent any problems rather than try to find a fix. To follow your train of thought, first there are many, many ways to strengthen unsound wood. Any kind of strapping, packing tape, rubber bands, hose clamps, and on and on will help. Anything to hold it together would be better than nothing. Some have used hot melt glue and braces to bridge problem areas. All of these fixes come with a down side of limitations and obstacles due to the fix. Some obstacles would be putting the turning out of balance, bridging desired voids, obstruction for design considerations when doing in stages. The fix will not help with vibration and vibration can hurt you, fixes in place or not. I choose not to turn with any vibration.

Now let's find ways to prevent the need of turning unsafe wood. Start with sound wood. Be willing to say: "This might hurt me, it is firewood". The frugal gene in all of us does not want to waste wood but wood is a perishable product. It grows on trees and will start to self-destruct as soon as it is cut. A tree will either crack or rot over time. If either happens it should be discarded and move on to wood that is safe and a lot more fun to turn. Store your wood in larger lengths than needed knowing we will waste off the cracked parts to get to solid safe wood in the middle of the chunk of wood. If we waste off the ends of a turning blank and there are still cracks in it, you just discovered firewood. John Jordon is known for the statement: "Life is too short to use crappy wood". The species of wood is not much help. Any wood is structurally unsound if it has cracks in it or it has become punky or rotten.

This might be a good time to experiment with turning wet wood. It's fun, it's easy, it's safe. I only turn wet wood mainly because I do not like to turn dry wood. Dry wood is dusty, harder, and requires more sharpening of tools. I turn from wet wood to finished wall thickness in one setting. The keys to preventing cracking are: do not start with a piece of wood with cracks in it and turn to a uniform wall thickness. It does not have to be paper thin, just uniform top to bottom. I am drawn to pieces of wood with character like voids or interesting natural edges or that are worm infested. I have turned some suspiciously fragile pieces. If I see a risk I am willing to take, I have had enough experience to know I am treading on thin ice. So, I test the ice thickness as I go and slow the process down and make every move deliberately to keep it safe.

A local turning friend of mine had a mishap recently. He was turning a burl that looked solid on initial inspection but as he roughed it down, a large chunk of it came off and hit the wall behind the lathe. It bounced off the wall, hit the ceiling and came down and took a little chunk out of the back of his head.

Nothing serious, just a little blood but what is the lesson here? Some things are not predictable, especially for beginners. Could I, as an experienced turner, been able to prevent this accident? Possibly, I might have inspected the blank frequently to see any cracks or voids, or punky spots, or faults, or flaws in the wood. Maybe not, wood is a natural element that has hidden dangers.

This leads me to the process and/or techniques that could lead to mishaps. I never use chucks. Chucks are not a very secure way to hang onto wood. In your next turning club meeting, ask the group how many turners have had a piece come out of the chuck. Next ask how many have had a piece come off a faceplate with a lot of screws in it on a concave surface. Here we have to be willing to waste a little, ¼ inch of wood away to be safer with a faceplate. Strapping will not stop a turning blank from flying off the lathe. Have you had help to master your tool control? If you understand the basic rules, when a sharp edge touches the spinning wood on a lathe you will never get a catch again. Catches are not routine things that everyone experiences. Catches are totally preventable and should never happen. If you are getting catches, should you push the envelope of safety by using unsafe wood?

Speed is an issue. I turn with the lathe speed fast but I have had the experience to have all the ducks in line before I start. I have secure chucking methods, good tool control, no vibration issues, no catches, sharp tools, tool rest in the proper place, etc. There are a lot of pieces to the puzzle. A flying object catapulted off the lathe at 500 RPM can hurt you just as much as a chunk coming off at 1500 RPM. So the chosen speed of the lathe is not what will necessarily hurt you. The error in judgement or experience to use crappy wood or use poor processes is what will likely hurt you.

Listen to your instincts. If that little voice in your ear is saying: “watch out”, pay attention and back away and find some other way to have more fun at the lathe. When in doubt, don’t!

Reprinted from More Woodturning Magazine Q&A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

HOW TO TAKE THE BOWL OFF THE GLUE BLOCK

Lyle,

I had great success using glue blocks the way that you explained in both videos, but I had a tough time getting the bowl off the block. (I turned concave surfaces on the block and bowl bottom, so the amount of glued surface was limited a 1/4 inch or so on the edge.). Do you have any suggestions about the easiest way to separate the bowl from the block?

Thanks so much, Keith

Keith, on YouTube, location unknown

Thanks for the feedback Keith. The glue is brittle so it is easy to get off by just breaking the glue line. Use a chisel and mallet and with the glue line supported very well on the edge of a tree blank standing on end on the floor. The key is to have a solid mass to absorb the strike of the mallet. Tap with the chisel right on the glue line. You will hear a CRACK, not a thunk sound if you are on the wood. It might take a few blows around different locations on the glue line but it will break off pretty easily.

WHAT IS THE GRIND ANGLE FOR THE HSS BORING BAR CUTTER

Hi Lyle,

What angle do you grind the HSS 3/16 inch cutter for the hollowing system? I'm set up for 73° on my handheld scrapers.

I have your system set up and I am working on my second hollow form. Everything seems to be sweet. Jim

Hi Jim from Florida,

Nice to hear from you, thanks for the feedback. The angles are not important. 73 degrees will work fine. There has to be an undercut for both the tip and the side angles so the heel does not rub on the wood especially in the entry hole or pilot hole. I sharpen them by hand so the angles will all be different, it does not effect the cuts for the angles to be different.

HSS VERSUS CARBIDE CUTTERS

Lyle,

I was wondering if there is any reason at all to forget about the scraper attachment used with your hollowing system and just use the carbide cutter.

Is one more 'forgiving' than the other? Better for beginner versus advanced turners?

I do not currently own a hollowing system, but have pretty much settled on yours. It seems to be the system of choice around here, whether bought from you, homemade, or hybrid.

Thanks, Dave

Hi Dave from Minnesota,

Thanks for the feedback. Yes, word-of-mouth sells a ton of tools for me. I use the carbide cutter for almost everything I do. There are a few rare places where the carbide placement might be problematic so I would not discard the HSS cutters. You will fall in love with the carbide cutter once you learn the rules and master the three cuts I use with it. For "beginners", I would start with the HSS and get the process down and laser use mastered first and then graduate to the carbide cutter. Give me a call if you have any questions.

PITH LOCATION IN CROTCH BOWL

Hi Lyle,

I'm new to turning and find your videos very helpful. I have been reading "Understanding Wood" by Bruce Hoadley hoping to get the most out of the wood and avoid as many problems as possible. In your YouTube Crotch video you mention getting rid of the pith, which I understand is a good thing, but I am having trouble visualizing how you do that. It looks to me from your drawing that the pith will be part of the bottom along with the crotch feature. What am I missing?

Sam

Sam, on YouTube, location unknown,

Great question Sam! From the side view the pith seems to be in the bowl blank but from the top view the bottom of the bowl will tuck down in between the pith lines for a big bowl and for the smaller diameter bowl I suggested the piths are cut away completely with the further chain saw cuts. The only way to get the pith in the vessel would be to do a very large diameter platter with a flat bottom. Take another look at the drawings and I think you will see what I mean.

GRAIN ORIENTATION FOR HOLLOWING

Lyle,

I am an amateur woodturner who purchased your hollowing system at Totally Turning in March. I have not yet tried it because I played golf a lot but I am now retuning to my shop and wish to start using your system.

However, I have listened to your Hollowing Techniques DVD and you left me under the impression that your system would only be appropriate for end grain turning. Is this correct? I have been using a Munro articulated hollowing system in the past for end grain only.

Jean

Hi Jean,

Nice to hear from you! The fun is just about to start. Sorry for any misrepresentation in the DVD, there is no "only". Hollowing of any kind, any wood, any grain orientation, end grain or side grain all work well with my system. You will have a ball with it. When referring to grain, I always pay attention to the direction of the cuts. It is easier to make the hogging off cuts into the side of the tree, rather than toward the end grain of the tree. It will cut both ways but I like to go the easy way. The direction of the cuts on curved surfaces will usually be easier when moving across the tool rest with supported fibers or downhill to the fibers. Downhill will change if you are doing an end grain vessel vs. a side grain vessel. If this is not clear to you give me a call to trouble shoot your process.

You are correct the Monroe cutter would have a tendency to clog up in a side grain vessel. The majority of hollow form vessels are usually end grain but my system will work for both. I usually talk about end grain hollowing when I show the benefits of the carbide cutter, but that too works well with any grain orientation.

MULTI-AXIS SPINDLE SAFETY

What about safety tips for off axis or eccentric chuck turning?

Vince

Vince from More Woodturning magazine,

I think the best advice would be to slowly sneak up on multi-axis. Practice, practice, practice! Make sure you learn good holding methods. Take it in incremental stages. Start off with slight off-axis or slightly out of balance and move to more severely off-axis work slowly. It is almost always necessary to turn multi-axis as fast as possible to get the air spaces going by the tool as fast as possible and minimize the bouncing from the cut. Eccentric chucks are great for repeatable holding and positioning but are not a very secure way to hold the wood, so having good tool control to take very small cuts will help a lot. When possible use the tailstock for support. All the same cautions I talked about in the above response to Mark apply here too. Have fun and stay safe. Multi-axis work is not something you want to do when you are tired, in a hurry, or are impatient, or it is late, or you have a deadline looming. It takes complete concentration. Have good adjustable light sources to be able to see the surfaces and ghost images clearly. Sound is a big feedback element so turn in a quiet shop.

I have often heard advice to just play with multi-axis and see what happens. I prefer to do considerable planning. How many axes (interestingly, **axes** is the only word in English that can be the **plural** of three different singular noun forms--ax, axe, and **axis**) will be used? What distance is between each axis? Do I move the axis on one end or both ends? Barbara Dill has a new book out that outlines the possibilities and takes much of the mystery out of multi-axis spindle turning. In my figurative sculpture I do multi-axis hollowing. The axis of each leg and the body must be planned out before starting. Most of my torsos needed days of planning before I even touched the wood.

REVERSE CARBIDE CUTTER FOR BOWLS

Lyle,

I just received my order of a jumbo bar, reverse angle cutter and bent swivel assembly, thank you. Yes, the reverse angle cutter does take some getting used to; do you have any information on it? I have gotten good cuts but starting at the top of the vessel is a bit problematic, not all failures but enough to not want to start using it on an item for sale.

Sam

Hi Sam from California,

OK I did some experimenting. As I mentioned before I do not usually use it for bowls and when doing the inside rim of hollow forms I use the standard carbide and scrape out to the mouth opening. My

bevel supported cuts always start in the middle of the inside shape. Make sure you are using the correct cutter, right or left, to cut in the direction that is downhill and in the direction of supported fibers.

My Carbide Cutters are not designed to be used in bowls, and they are difficult to start at the edge of a bowl. What happens is, if the bevel is lined up for a cut, and then start out in midair at the edge of a bowl, the round leading edge starts cutting before the bevel can get support, causing a catch, or best case scenario it will skate across the edge. Not good! I found two ways around this problem. One is to start the bevel support out on the edge of the rim and quickly push the handle away from you to direct the bevel down the inside shape of the bowl. This is hard to master and leaves a rounded inside edge on the rim of the bowl. Not ideal either. The second solution, and one I would use, would be to start the inside rim of the bowl with the HSS scraper or the left facing standard Carbide Cutter, in scraping mode. Just the first ¼ inch of the inside rim needs to be done with something other than the Reverse Angle Carbide Cutter and now that I have a small finished section I can “pick up” and line up the bevel supported cut on the scrapped surface with the Reverse Angle Carbide Cutter and proceed downhill to the fibers with a slicing cut of the carbide cutter. The slicing cut will always be superior to a scraping cut. The down side is the first ¼ inch surface will need more sanding. The good news is the rest of the bowl will be sooooo clean with no torn out grain it will need very little sanding. To do a bowl shape it will be necessary to do the inside shape in stages. See my Bowl Basics DVD for the same process I use with the bowl gouge. As you go from stage to stage it will be necessary to swivel the cutter to keep the bevel supported cut. It is necessary to swing the handle in an arc to guide the bevel around the rounded surface on the inside of the bowl. I tried this method on the nastiest piece of dry ash I could find and surprised myself on how clean the cut was and how much control I had of the shape and transition between stages.

This sounds pretty complex but it is not as hard as it sounds. If you are good with the bevel supported cuts from a bowl gouge you will pick this up quickly. Take some scrap wood and get some practice perfecting the process before you try it on one of your glued up segmented pieces. It will take a little time but your efforts will be rewarded with an unbelievable surface left behind right off the tool that needs little sanding. Especially with dry wood, especially with segmented pieces, this will help a great deal.

I want you to be happy and satisfied with your purchase. Please give me a call if you need to clarify or fine tune the uses of the carbide cutter. Go back to the In-Depth Hollowing DVD and look at the three cuts and rules of the carbide. Look at the written Carbide Cutter article that explains the cuts in text. It is essential you understand and get some practice using the bevel supported cuts for success inside of bowls.

WHAT SHARPENING SYSTEM WORKS?

Hello Lyle,

Your gouges and DVD are scheduled to arrive here on Tuesday. I really am looking forward to both! I have been amusing myself during the wait by going back through your newsletters. I am on the second time through - still picking up useful nuggets.

My question for you right now though is, will my sharpening set up prove OK or will further investment be needed? I have been using a fixed ‘Ellsworth’ original type jig with a six inch ‘blue’ wheel on the grinder. <http://www.peterchild.co.uk/grind/bluewheel1.htm>

I am hoping that the grind angles will be close (or could be made closer) and the slightly more concave grind on the bevel will not prove too problematical.

I see you use an eight inch wheel with the TruGrind system.

What are your thoughts?

Thank you and best wishes,

Chris

Hi Chris from England,

Great questions! The Ellsworth jig will only work if you use David's 2-4-7 formula. It also has a repeatability problem because of the likely sloppy fit where the inside of the jig is slightly bigger than the bowl gouge. I would prefer to use a Wolverine or Truegrind jig for more accuracy, either will do the same job very well. As far as the base and sliding arm, I prefer the Wolverine so I can use my Angle Adjustment Blocks for other tools without ever moving the basket/arm position. The Child wheel is good too. I prefer the 80 grit wheels but others will work OK.

Make sure you set up your jig to the correct tip and side angles before you start sharpening so the angles stay the same. My YouTube clip will show you the methods. <http://youtu.be/0zUph9zEjck> If you get the Wolverine system do not let the instructions confuse you, they will not work for setting it up for the angles needed.

The 6 inch wheel will work fine. The difference in the bevel radius is negligible in use.

HONING QUESTION

Used spalted ash, followed your DVD. Love the glue block method. Will you be in Pittsburgh? What are your thoughts on honing an edge on tools between grinding?

Steve

Hi Steve location unknown,

I only hone my skew. The honing will get a sharp edge, sharper than a grinder's edge but the advantage is very short lived in the turning world and I don't bother honing. The honed edge is gone in a heartbeat when hundreds of feet go by the edge in seconds. Honing is also difficult to do correctly.

PARTING TOOL ADVICE

Lyle,

I was also looking for a parting tool that I could use to get a deep cut, (2 to 2.5") and be about 1/8" to 3/16" wide. I was looking at the Easy Wood Tool 1/8" carbide insert parting tool and wondered if you had any thoughts on it.

The cuts need to be consistent and true and the blade should not flex when I open the cut more than the original kerf width, which I have experienced with the tools I have presently used, Sorby narrow parting tool and Henry Taylor.

Thank you in advance for taking the time, if you have, to answer these questions.

Sam

Hi Sam from California,

On the parting tool, I do not think the Easy Tools would be satisfactory for your needs. The ET carbide is the old carbide and not like mine, made by Mike Hunter from the new nanograin carbide. All the nanograin carbide tools are round and not suited for parting tool applications. Because the Easy Wood tools are not as sharp they will tend to leave a rough torn out grain surface. I would look at any standard HSS parting tool or bedan type tool for a wider kerf. The Packard Catalog has a good variety of sizes and strengths. I'd also look at the Thompson tools for a better quality of steel parting tool and they are made in USA.

FINISH THE BOTTOM

Hi Lyle,

Thanks for adding me to your newsletter, really good stuff. I'm still a little unclear about how to finish the bottom of a bowl. Do I shape the outside and bottom of the bowl, **then** attach the glue block, and finally complete the inside of the bowl before parting off the glue block? What I am unclear about is how to finish the bottom. So I am assuming that the shape of the bottom is done *prior* to putting on the glue block. If that is not the case would you use a jam chuck and use the tailstock to hold the piece while you finish the bottom?

Lastly, you said you use CA. Have you ever tried hot glue? I've seen both demonstrated on YouTube.

Ray

Hi Ray,

Nice to hear from you and thanks for the question. Your questions and statements about your process lead me to believe you have been getting and using some conflicting information and confusing methods. Please see my Bowl Basics DVD for the whole picture. Most turning clubs have it in their libraries.

I am not sure what the question means, "How to finish the bottom of a bowl?" I can't tell if you mean the outside of the bowl or the bottom where it sits on the table. The bowl blank is prepared for the attachment of the glue block prior to turning the bowl shape, outside or inside. The bowl is turned with the glue block attached as far as the outside shape can be reached, with some waste wood left over under the glue block. After the bowl is finished completely, the glue block is taken off, not parted off, and the bowl is reversed, between centers, with friction drive, not jam chucked, to have access to the entire bottom of the outside shape and the bottom of the foot. Here are some YouTube clips of parts of the process only. YouTube clips do not give you the whole picture just a small section or snapshot of one area.

<http://youtu.be/DfZcQ3xFnI4>

<http://youtu.be/y8b35iq4LTA>

<http://youtu.be/t93ThXidf5Y>

Thick CA glue is the only glue that will work for this process. Hot melt glue is rubbery and would limit your turning because of vibration issues.

If this does not answer your question give me a call so we can trouble shoot your process and get you up to speed.

HOW OFTEN TO REMOVE SHAVINGS FROM HOLLOW FORMS

Lyle,

I think that you did a nice job on your first YouTube video; it might have been a good idea to show cleaning out the shavings when deep in the vessel when you mentioned it. I like your videos as you explain things as you work like a good teacher should.

The only reason I mentioned that was to show the timing of built up shavings and interfering with the cutter.

Robert

Hi Robert location unknown,

It is a constant struggle to edit the videos. The whole process is in my DVD, In-Depth Hollowing but that takes hours to get through. The YouTube format has to be short or a lot of people will not even start looking at it.

You are correct the shaving relief is important and is needed frequently. The shape of the vessel and size of the entry hole will dictate the frequency. When you feel any resistance to the cutting action, clear it out. Do not let the shavings pile up in there until they start grabbing the tool and bouncing the boring bar around. The kitchen utensil caddy was about as easy as it gets and I only needed to blow the shavings out a few times.

FEEDBACK

Wanted to let you know I received my boring system a few minutes ago.

Thanks!

Like you mentioned - I've only unwrapped to the point of removing small parts, DVD, instructions, and informational sheets. I'll view and read before I attempt to use.

Appreciated and enjoyed your demonstrations - very informative! It was great to be able to see system in operation up close. Thanks for the personal "Q&A" informational discussions at the booth - everyone answered my questions.

Thanks Again,
Gerald "Jerry" Location unknown

My turning/learning curve has been pretty steep thanks to your long-distance mentoring. Much appreciated.

Keith, YouTube

Well Lyle I am impressed, the whole unit is now set up as per the instructions, as said by many before me a pleasure to use. I find myself still hanging on due to years of hollowing with free hand tools, guess there is still some muscle memory there.

Stuart from England, VB-36 owner

Good morning Lyle,

I just wanted to drop you a thank you for the advice on glue blocks. I simply followed your directions, and turned a really large oak yarn bowl. I had a few catches that normally would have knocked the bowl blank out of the chuck, but it stayed rock solid. Also, I could not believe how easy it was to complete the outside bottom. The bowl parted off with a "crack" and was very easy to reverse remount using the cleaned up glue block.

I also used it on a 1 inch square of wood which I was using to turn a finial for a Christmas tree ornament that was too small for my chuck. It also worked great. So again thanks for the advice and keep producing those terrific YouTube tutorials.

Ray location unknown

Lyle,

I wanted to thank you again; the class of instruction was wonderful and the lessons learned, particularly the little nuggets that will make me a so much better artist are invaluable. I truly enjoyed myself.

Thanks again.

Regards,

Marc from Virginia

Lyle,

I am very impressed with the attitude you have to your business and although it is that, a business you obviously take great pride in customer satisfaction, and even if not a customer you go the extra mile to help, educate, guide and support people. In my world that is a very valuable and extremely limited resource. You have put my faith back in mankind.

To put that in perspective I have still not heard from the local fabricator if he received my order for the adaptor plate, let alone a projected completion date or price of that item.

I look forward to my latest delivery arriving and getting to play with my toys, I will keep you updated of progress and a couple of pictures when all set up on the VB. If you wish to use my journey of trying to source items in the UK and circumnavigate the import etc., please feel free and if anyone in the UK suggests a similar tact, send them to me... I will put them straight.

Thanks, and I'll let you know when it arrives.

Stuart, from United Kingdom

Lyle,

Enjoyed your YouTube video even though I own several of your DVDs!

Thank You!
Ches from New York

CALENDAR

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

June, 2015 – Pennsylvania

August, 2015 - Texas

September, 2015 – Georgia

October, 2015 - Ohio

November, 2015 – North Carolina