



**MAY 2016**



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Speaking about design:

“Nobody tells this to people who are beginners, I wish someone told me. All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple years you make stuff, it's just not that good. It's trying to be good, it has potential, but it's not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase, they quit. Most people I know who do interesting, creative work went through years of this. We know our work doesn't have this special thing that we want it to have. We all go through this. And if you are just starting out or you are still in this phase, you gotta know it's normal and the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. Put yourself on a deadline so that every week you will finish one story (turning). It is only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap, and your work will be as good as your ambitions. And I took longer to figure out how to do this than anyone I've ever met. It's gonna take a while. It's normal to take a while. You've just gotta fight your way through.”

Ira Glass, writer

### **SOMETHING NEW!**

I am very close to being able to provide live, remote demonstrations. What happens when you have a demonstration going at your club meeting? Participants are sitting around looking at a monitor and listening to the demonstrator who is using a microphone and amplifier. When I am there in person the participants can not all get up and stand behind me

and look over my shoulder to see my techniques, they look at the monitor. They are not all sitting in front of the lathe so they can see the shapes develop, they look at the monitor.

How can I be in your shop without being there? I will have multiple cameras and live audio and video with a good quality production. You will be able to see the lathe, the workpiece when I zoom in close from multiple angles and me when I address the participants. You will see and hear me, I can see and hear you and your club members. We can ask and answer questions live. When I am done you don't have to sweep up the shavings. In fact, you don't need a shop at all, no lathe, no grinding wheel, no compressor, no chalk board, etc. You can have a meeting in a school, church basement, or somebodies living room, or wherever there is an internet connection. The equipment on your end is minimal and likely already handy. No software or computer expertise necessary. All you need is a monitor and access to the internet and somebodies' laptop computer.

If you are a turning club chair person or president give me a call for more details.

### **Reminder:**

If you are thinking about upgrading your lathe, just give me a call to chat about what a Robust lathe can do for you. **New:** just off the presses, Robust has designed a new lathe with a 14 inch swing, mid-range price and same Robust quality. Give me a call and I will introduce you to the new "Scout" model.

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### **TIPS & TECHNIQUES**

**Topic of the Month:** Chucks, why not!

I will use a question from my Heart Shaped Bowl YouTube video comments by James to start off the topic. I have had a flood of questions about the glue block method recently. I have talked about this topic many times in past newsletters, YouTube clips and my Bowl Basics DVD. Many

of you still use chucks. Don't believe me? Have too much money in chucks to let them collect dust?

James' question:

"Why would you use a glue block instead of a tenon Lyle?

I make over 100 bowls a year using my strong hold chuck and have never lost one. Some of my bowls are approaching 20" in diameter and some of my burl bowls start out weighing 50 or 60 pounds so the use of a glue block scares me a bit. I start with a face plate, then turn my tenon before hollowing the bowl blank. Then I kiln dry them before truing up the tenon and finish turning. Not sure how a glue block would work after the kiln and the wood distortion that takes place, I guess it would have to be re-trued as well." James location unknown

The chuck is not a good way to hold wood, a glue block and/or faceplate, with many screws, is a much, much stronger holding method. Chucks are good, precision instruments so it is not the chuck that fails; it is that you are grabbing a sponge. The wood fibers compress and the chuck fails to transfer the strength and stability to the workpiece. With a heart shaped bowl this size and the wings flying around this stability is critical.

Please let me paint a picture for you. Draw this line in the sand, a fuzzy line at that. Now on one side of the line a chuck works fine. For small things like lidded boxes or Christmas ornaments they will work. Now, on the other side of the line you get vibration problems sneaking in there. Most people exceed the limits of their chuck. Many do not know the correct way to prepare the blank when using a chuck. The tenon should be 40 percent of the bowl diameter. Why not use the best possible holding method all the time and not worry about the fuzzy line in the sand where limitations cause problems?

If you have a large strong lathe you can exceed the limits of your tools a bit and get away from it. But what about those of you out there that are turning on small mini lathes, or starter lathes, or old lathes? You may have weak bearings, small spindles, or poorly designed lathes, or weaknesses from the made in China quality clones. Now, you start with a weak lathe and add a weak chucking method. What is the typical result? You double your troubles!

I always start between centers. Even if I used a chuck I would start between centers to be in control of the axis. I want to get information about the wood as I rough it out. You miss a lot of design possibilities and work a lot harder if you don't start between centers. I can get the lathe speed up on the balance point. Slow speed would result in a "Tunka-Tunka" cut. That is not easy, fun, quick, or efficient. When I have the bowl blank on its final axis position, I put a shallow concave recess in the bottom to secure the faceplate or glue block. I want to make sure there is solid contact around the rim and have no hump in the middle. Use thick or gap filling CA glue on the wet wood and accelerator on the dry glue block.

When working with this crotch I wanted also to use all the wood and not waste the depth of a chuck tenon or screw holes as waste wood. With the

glue block I can use nearly all the wood. The flame of the crotch is captured in the bottom, not turned away in the waste wood.

As I said, I never use chucks, especially on bigger stuff. Even though you mentioned "loosing" a piece, and that is certainly possible with chucks, my issue is with efficiency, strength, and stability. It is a vibration thing. When I hog out a big bowl I want to pour the coal to it, take big aggressive shavings and the chuck is a weak point. A 5 inch glue block on a 5 inch faceplate prepared correctly will hold any bowl you can turn. When using a glue block with wet wood it is necessary to remove the glue block, if the blank is held for any length of time. The wood shrinking as it dries would weaken or break the glue line. Re-mounting is the same as you would do for a chuck but clean up the glue line instead of the chuck tenon.

I would use a faceplate for both roughing and finishing large bowls. Even a faceplate can fail if it is screwed to a flat surface or a chain saw cut. Prepared between centers, as I do, a faceplate is stronger than both the glue block and chuck. I suggest you check out my Bowl Basics DVD for all the details on the entire process, you will save time and energy by fine tuning your techniques. It is all about the fun! Why hassle with unnecessary vibration. I prefer – fast – and – easy – and – fun!

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **BOLT THE LATHE TO THE FLOOR?**

Speaking of lathe vibration, is your lathe bolted to the floor?

I really appreciate your YouTube videos, and have learned a lot from them as well as your DVD's.

One thing that I think is extremely important is learning how to balance the piece on the lathe before starting to turn. The techniques you teach make for more efficient cuts and a better outcome ... thanks!

Tom from YouTube

Hi Tom location unknown,

I do not bolt my lathes down to the floor. I have a number of things I do for lathe set up and stability. A large footprint, leveling bolts correctly adjusted, and sand added for increased weight/mass. The lathe set up is described in my Bowl Basics DVD.

### **ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW**

Hi Lyle,

In a recent video, you were using a Remington electric chainsaw.

Dragging logs out into the back yard is a pain, and not practical during winter months here in Wisconsin, so I need to add an electric to my arsenal. Do you have any advice, observations, or recommendations that might help my decision-making process?

Gerry

Hi Gerry from Wisconsin,

Thanks for writing, I appreciate your comments. There are two ways to go. You can buy a top of the line electric chain saw that will last the rest of your life or you can buy a cheapie saw and think about it as disposable. It will have plastic parts and the oiler will not be well engineered etc., but I use mine for a few years and buy another. I watch for a sale for any brand name, just looking for a \$59.00 to \$69.00 price. It depends on how much wood you cut with it as to how long it will last. I try to do most of my cutting with the bigger and faster gas saw outside. You noticed, I used fast-forward on the YouTube editing.

### **NEGATIVE RAKE SCRAPERS AND GLUE BLOCK FOR CORING**

Hi Lyle,

I sent the message below about a week ago and wanted to know if you had a chance to read it, or if it wound up in your spam folder.

“Good morning Lyle, I saw a YouTube video recently on negative rake scraping and wondered if this was just a different approach or technique to shear scraping? “

I have another question. I just roughed out a very large maple bowl blank, about 15 “and 30lbs. It is still quite wet even though the tree was cut last fall. I was considering coring it out in order to get about three bowls from it, but I am not sure if a glue block will hold. I’m using the Woodcut Bowl Saver and turning the blank at about 450 rpm. With that weight and no support from the tailstock, I was not sure if I should just make the one bowl, and use the tailstock to help support the blank as I hogged out as much wood as possible.

Appreciate any advice, Ray

Hi Ray from Massachusetts,

Sorry I did not get the first note so I will try to answer both questions.

Coring will work fine on bowls that size. A larger 5-6 inch diameter faceplate with glue block will work as long as you do it all in one setting. Don’t leave the glue block on wet wood for any length of time. If you need to go to lunch put a plastic bag over it so it will not dry out.

A better method would be to use a 4 or 5 inch faceplate with lots of screws. Prep the blank between centers and make the concave surface to attach the faceplate. Plan a little extra waste wood for the screws.

The negative rake tools are to protect you from violating the 90 degree rule whenever scraping. The 90 degree rule is the angle the sharp edge is touching the wood as you push the cut forward. It relates to scraping of all kinds. Shear scraping is a different issue and uses a scraper twisted on a 45 degree angle to the rotation of the wood. You can shear scrape with a negative rake scraper, a regular scraper, or a bowl gouge for that matter. This is hard to describe in text. I will soon be able to do live interactive demonstrations and this type of subject would be great to show you and members of your club.

### **GREEN WOOD HANDLING**

Hi Lyle,

I was wondering how you go about storing green wood

I am cutting them in half and sealing the ends with little success they seem to still crack from one end to the other.

Thanks, Kirk

Hi Kirk from Pennsylvania,

Nice to hear from you, thanks for the question. I think it is an attitude thing. We have to treat wood as a perishable product. Green wood is going to do one of two things when you try to store it in thick log sections. It will rot or it will crack, both are undesirable.

There are a lot of variables so it is hard to be very specific on how you should proceed. Climate, seasons, and wood varieties will all need different handling techniques. Give me a call to be specific to your circumstances. In Pennsylvania the frozen wood will hold for a while in the winter but the summer heat will destroy the stockpile quickly.

Some suggestions to help extend the shelf life: Store the wood in long sections knowing the ends will check and split over time. Be willing to waste some wood from the ends when you cut your bowl blank out of the tree. This stuff grows on trees☺. There are trees coming down every day, the supply is endless. Waxing the ends will only slow down the drying process. Cover the pile of wood loosely or put a piece of plywood over the pile. You want circulating air around the wood but keep it out of the rain or sunlight. You can stop the drying process by putting the wood in a plastic bag but it will soon mold and rot quickly, not a good idea. So you want it to dry out, but slowly.

The trick is sharing. If you have a large stash of walnut, it will just self-destruct over time before you have time to turn it. Call some buddies from your turning club and give it all away except what you will turn in a reasonable time. The next time your friend finds some cherry and you share in the bounty, the next time the other club member finds some maple, ash, or elm you all end up with usable quantiles of a variety of tree species.

Use up the green wood while it is still green and throw it away when it rots or cracks because there is always more wood to harvest.

### **ADJUSTING LEVELING BOLTS**

Lyle,

Is there a reason that you can't drop the fourth leg to accomplish the same end? It might take a few tries but it seems to me that it would be more stout.

Gil

Hi Gil from YouTube location unknown,

Yes, that would get close, but not exact. The bolt method gets you the perfect balance and reduces vibration. It is surprising, very minute adjustments quiet the normal vibration in every lathe. Robust instructions use all 4 pads and a "wiggle" method to get closer to perfect. I suppose it might get to the same result. I have used the bolt method on every lathe I have had for decades and it works. The 3/4 inch head bolt is plenty strong enough. Think about the square pad of the leg sitting on an uneven concrete floor, it will be sitting on one corner. The bolt is doing the same thing.

### **TWISTING THE BED WITH LEVELING BOLTS**

Lyle, your process is just for level what about incurred twist that may put the tailstock out line with the head stock or does this remove that problem too? Marcus

Hi Marcus from YouTube location unknown,  
The leveling bolt process only puts equal pressure on each foot, no twisting going on. The important part is not for leveling but for stability to stop vibration. You have a valid point with some mid-range/price lathes. That is why some discourage bolting the lathe to the uneven floor that would twist the centers off axis. The Robust is strong and resists any twisting.

### **WHAT SHAPE FOR HOLLOW FORMS TO START WITH?**

Lyle,

I'm so excited about your system, anxious to receive it. Do you mention on your DVD what forms should we start on? Don't want to start with the most difficult ones... I'm guessing leave an opening of at least 4 inches or so for a while....

Aloha from Maui, Emiliano

Hi Emiliano from Hawaii,

I suggest you start with some relatively small and simple shaped hollow forms. Use the HSS cutter for a few until you get the process and laser measuring under your belt. Use a mouth opening about 2 inches or more at first so you can get it done without fighting shavings than graduate to the carbide cutter. Go back to the DVD, and read the article about the carbide cutter I included and note the rules and three cuts to learn with the carbide. Even put a piece of scrap wood on and give yourself 5 minutes to practice with the carbide cutters three cuts. You will fall in love with it but it has a learning curve all its own.

### **GREEN WOOD BOWL CRACKS**

Hi Lyle,

Last week I turned green, a lovely tiger maple bowl, thickness is uniform, about 1/4 inch. I've been letting it dry for a bit so that I could finish sanding, and was ready to do that this morning when I notices this crack. The crack does not go all the way through to the inside. I thought that it was unusual in that it seems to be going across the grain. I filled with CA for now and wanted to know if there is anything else I can do? I've dealt with cracking on the edge of a bowl, but this one is something that I have not come across.

Ray



Hi Ray location unknown,

That is rare if it is a uniform wall thickness all the way down to the bottom. The crack might have been there before you started. I might have tried to get the wall a little thinner to give it some extra elasticity. In any wood variety the thinner you are the stresses of drying movement is reduced. Doing a thicker bowl, it would help to slow the drying down with a paper bag for a week or two.

One method to dealing with a crack like that is to do nothing. Sometimes the crack will close back up and be less visible when the entire bowl comes to moisture equilibrium.

### **ANOTHER METHOD USING A STEADY REST**

Lyle,

I appreciate your newsletter and the comments from readers. I think you will like your Robust American Beauty..... I've had mine for about 5 years and turned two friends onto Robust as well. I would like to address a couple issues.

First, I'd like to say I agree with you that using a faceplate is much safer than a chuck. I use a faceplate for hollow forms "much" of the time. However, I feel there are advantages to a chuck in some applications. You normally turn green right to final shape. I never do that. I do not like out of round objects and I want my wood really dry before I apply my finish. I know this is just "my" way of doing things. When I use a faceplate I start between centers with a large 4 point drive and a cup live center. I turn a tenon on the bottom "and flatten off a section for a faceplate. Why both? I try to use the faceplate for turning while it is large, green and heavy. The faceplate comes off before I set it to dry. When dry, I true up the tenon and use that for turning the final shape (most times...sometimes, for really large pieces, I will reinstall a faceplate.) OK....before you object....I have found that even with a faceplate, a large hollow form will move and is not really safe when held by a faceplate alone. On any hollow form longer than about 6 inches (which is most of the stuff I do), I always use a steady rest both for initial turning when green and for final turning.

My procedure is as follows.

1. turn between centers enough to square off the bottom enough for either/both a tenon and a faceplate.
2. mount by faceplate on drive end (or tenon) and cup live center on tailstock. Turn entire outside of vessel.
3. mount steady rest. Drive by faceplate or tenon (preference for faceplate...especially for large vessels) but hold securely by steady rest as added support.
4. remove cup live center and hollow (using your laser hollowing system). I use an AC laser instead of your battery version because it is much lighter in weight which reduces vibration (square root of "k" over "m" for you engineers). Sometimes the laser system isn't needed for rough turning but I like to keep the walls uniform in thickness to help avoid cracking during drying.
5. after drying remount between centers and true up the tenon.
6. mount between centers by the tenon in a chuck "and" a live cone center in the tailstock. Turn the outside to final shape, and final sand.
7. Use a steady rest to support the hollow form as close as possible to the tailstock.



8. Remove the tailstock and hollow the inside to final shape. The steady rest gives support and additional protection in case the object flies apart (due to cracks or hollowing too thin). With the steady rest I have “never” had any item come off the tenon....the vessel is held much like “between centers” and the tenon is mainly used to provide the rotation...the steady rest takes care of any cantilever forces.

9. “Never” hold an object (especially a large or long object) by one end (faceplate or tenon) without support by a steady rest unless absolutely necessary....and then take only very small slow cuts. OK... sometimes you can't use a steady rest on a platter or shallow bowl.....then definitely use a faceplate....the larger the better.

I would like to mention that this requires a “good” steady rest. While I love my Robust American Beauty I originally had a Robust steady rest as well. It wasn't effective. It didn't hold the vessel firmly and vibrated “way” too much. It also had three wheels with one directly over the work (restricting access to your laser system). My friend and I designed a much better steady rest. We are putting together a “how to” article so anyone can build one. It uses off the shelf aluminum extrusions, brackets, and parts from 80/20 and rollerblade wheels. It can be built for about \$200 and is rock solid. I've sent you a picture before but will include another one. It is essentially a “U” structure of 1.5 X 3 aluminum extrusions (15 series) with two moveable 1.5 X 1.5 aluminum extrusion bars containing the 4 wheels. You can probably figure it out by looking at the picture.

Cameron from CT

Hi Cam from Connecticut,

There is more than one way to skin this cat. Usually there is not a right way and a wrong way. Your method would surely work for what you are doing. It would not work for what I do; many of my pieces have voids and natural edges. I very seldom use a steady rest and never do the outside shape in one setting. I prefer not to live with the limitations of both of those methods.

## FEEDBACK

Lyle,

We did a one day some years ago as you will likely recall. One of your comments that day, after looking at my reconditioned lathe, was you are going to want to upgrade that lathe and not too far in the future. I do not know if I ever shared with you how much that influenced me but it did. Within months I purchased the American Beauty and have enjoyed it from the day it was set up. After reading your newsletter I am realizing that I am not using it to its fullest extent - which I likely will never do. It did challenge me to move ahead with some of my turning. I am still working my way to the 2000 bowl mark and turning other things along the way - possibly a little A.D.D. in that regard. I always think that Judy and I will be getting out more - traveling north etc. but the truth of the matter is that I am pretty much a home body, no AAW this year but there are possibilities for the next (Atlanta in June - they must be smoking something!!). Keep up the great job. I would like to learn some of the videoing that you are picking up now even if it is painful it is beneficial.

Ken from Michigan

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Hi Lyle

I've been turning for about three years. At first, I did lots of pens and stoppers (acrylic), and then ventured into bowls.

Over the years, I've used scrapers (as a crutch!) a lot for bowls. Much more than bowl gouges. Catches spook me and I tend to get them quite a bit. After watching and studying your videos repeatedly, I've figured out the causes. The pencil trick, your examples of the different cuts, body position, sharpening, etc. have helped me tremendously!! I also found that my tool rest was just wrong. I'd had a round Sorby model, so it was nearly impossible for me to get the bevel at 45 degrees. I've since bought a Nova tool rest and ground down some of the post so I can raise and lower it as needed, depending on the tool I use.

I also spent an evening with the president of my turning club and we corrected the grinds on my bowl gouges. They were "beak" like in the grind. Now, they all have nice fingernail grinds. I've got my sharpening station and jigs set up so I can maintain the grinds and never go back to the pointy ends. :-)

I still have a ways to go to become a decent bowl turner, but I'm on my way, thanks to you. I still get catches, but not nearly as much as before. I'm very determined to not have the fear of catching defeat me from learning. Feel free to use any of my email in a video, newsletter, etc. I simply cannot thank you enough.

OOPS!! Sorry I lost the name in editing

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## CALENDAR

Check out my website calendar for more specifics. I am doing classes in my studio/workshop in Traverse City, Michigan continuously.

[\(http://lylejamieson.com/calendar/\)](http://lylejamieson.com/calendar/)

June, 2016 - Georgia

July, 2016 - Illinois

August, 2016 - Texas

September, 2016 - Pennsylvania

November, 2016 - Virginia