

Woodturner n. A person who enjoys the art and process of shaping wood into various forms

“ask not what your guild can do for you; ask what you can do for your guild— you get back what you put in”

LOCAL AAW CHAPTER

MARCH 2007

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Message from
Richard Pikul, President



President's Comments— March 2007

Spring will be here shortly, with warm weather and early spring blossoms only a couple of weeks away. This issue of our newsletter has some good reporting on what has been happening in our area, both within our guild and our nearest turning neighbours, the Kawartha Woodturners Guild. We have some members that belong to both groups, which not only benefits them by enjoying the different types of programs which each group offers, but benefits both groups by the exchange of ideas.

We had the good fortune to have Eli Avisera come last month for demonstrations and all day hands on workshops. I missed out on this wonderful opportunity due to some health problems; next time I will have to schedule my problems around such events.

During the first weekend in March the WGO again manned a booth at the annual Toronto Woodworking Show with members demonstrating woodturning. The WGO has taken part in this woodworking show now for over 10 years. It has been an interesting way to showcase our skills to woodworkers unfamiliar with woodturning. Many of our new members over the years (myself included) were ‘turned on’ watching demonstrations during this show and followed up by joining a woodturning group in our area.

Our first annual Salon competition will take place during a regular meeting night on Thursday, May 10. All members are encouraged to enter up to three pieces. This event is more than just a competition. We would like to see a good cross section of our members’ level of experience and capabilities. If you are a beginner, don’t be shy or embarrassed about entering your work. All of us know exactly how you feel about your abilities – we have all ‘been there’ – so bring in your work. Seeing the complete skill level status of all members is important! This helps the executive see what type of projects members are most interested in making, which members need a little help to boost them to the next level and to decide where to focus future skills development.

This is an executive election year for the WGO. The annual business meeting on June 14th will include elections for positions on the executive. The executive includes the following positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Past President (non-elected post) and a minimum of two members at large. The member at large positions serve two functions; a special interest or job function can be placed on the executive and a member who is unsure of taking on a formal executive position can gain some experience before committing to a formal position.

All positions are open for any member to apply for, talk to Michael Bonnycastle if you have any interest in helping to decide what our direction and program should be, and how to have your name placed on the ballot. We are always looking for new executive members. The position of President can only be held for two terms and we also encourage that other positions have new people introduced as needed. This way we will always have different people introducing new ideas to improve our guild. Think about how your life skills can benefit our guild, you could be the spark to ignite a new fire.

Richard Pikul rpikul@sympatico.ca

Multiple Memberships More Than Double the Fun!

As told to Penny McCahill



A number of our WGO members are also members of the Kawartha Woodturners' Guild. On a regular basis, these fellows make the trek from Peterborough to Pickering to share their passion and their expertise with their more westerly comrades. In fact, they did share a quick overview of the project described below at our November meeting when they brought some of their turnings to our Show and Tell! This story elaborates on that presentation as it outlines the wherefores and where-bys behind this group's endeavours. In doing so, this story becomes a lesson in creativity to turners and club leaders at all levels!

At the September, 2006 general meeting of the Kawartha Woodturners', club President, Art Deboo, gave the founding members a project. He was looking to get these long-time members excited and to challenge them. He wanted to "get them back into the swing of things in the guild" because, "after you are a member for a long period of time, it is easy to become complacent and to sort of sit back and blend into the surroundings of the club". Art wanted to light a fire under these talented turners and to get them thinking! If successful, many more turners would benefit by their examples!

Art gave these guys guidelines and the rest was up to them. Here's Art:

"I wanted these turners to think outside the box and have fun. Our club still has seven of the original eight founding members as active participants. Six of these guys took up my challenge; the seventh was willing but he was in the process of moving and so his equipment was packed away. The guys were given two months to complete this project."

Guidelines:

- Use the piece of exotic stock that you have been given to create a functional moving object. (Everyone was given an identical piece of wood 1.5 inches square by 10 inches in length.)
- Cut up the stock up and re-glue it, if you wish. Do not add any other wood to your creation.
- Add power in the form of an electric motor, wind power, or even an elastic band. What powers your invention is limited only by your imagination. In the end, the finished product must move in one way or another, whether by human power or an outside source. Bring your project to the club meeting two months from now. At that time, your creations will be judged by you peers.

"November came and to say that I was 'blown away' would be an understatement! Almost everyone went *way outside the box* in terms of their comfort level."



Figure 1- The Competitors: (left to right) Martin Groneng, John Madill, Jack Close, Vince Way-Nee, Joe Werner, and Bill Usher

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WARNING ! Woodturning is an inherently dangerous active activity. Readers should not attempt any process or procedure described in this publication without seeking proper training and detailed information on the safe use of tools and machines.

Multiple Memberships More Than Double the Fun -

Continued from page 2

Art continues: "I did take a bit of flack from three of our founders for putting this kind of pressure on them. Three of them threatened to ... well, never mind; you get the idea! At any rate, I was totally impressed with their creative efforts.

"The founders' reward for this project was to create a club challenge of their own, one that they could give to club members of their choice. However, we are still waiting to hear what this next challenge will be.

"I look forward to repeating this type of club project. I truly believe that having fun and challenging each other makes us all better turners."

The results of the challenge speak for themselves but for the sake of helping less-experienced turners understand the thinking/working processes of the experts, a quotation from each turner has been included below the photo of what he turned.



Figure 2—Jack Close

Jack Close: "With consideration for two types of movement, I created the scales of justice. My project was designed to incorporate both physical movement and also to reflect the influence on justice as political parties exercise power. Therefore, my scales were designed with wheels on the base to facilitate movement to the left and right.

Captive rings were cut into the balance beam to represent the impact of a variety of influences that may cause tremors in the balance of justice. Examples include geographical and political differences in Canada such as the east versus west, urban versus rural, French culture versus English, and varied interpretations of biased media.

The red stop light below the Canadian flag at the top of the central post represents the Supreme Court of Canada which intercedes when movements swing too far right or left. A missing spoke in one wheel reminds us that when we miss or ignore our opportunity to vote, we miss our "spoke", thus affecting the balance of justice in our country and negating responsibility within our society.

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"My 'snowman bell ornament' is 3 1/16" long with a 1 1/2" diameter. It was turned in four pieces.

The head and hat are one piece, the bell is another, the nose is a third, and the bell's ringer is a fourth. The two 'ends' of the scarf were carved. The bell's clapper is actually a 3/8" turned ball that was 'cyanoed' to give it hardness so that the bell sounds when shook. The bell is very thin. It was hollowed through the top "scarf" where the 'ball' was later inserted, the head glued on at an angle and the scarf ends attached. The finish is lacquer." martsarts@cogeco.ca



Figure 3
Martin Groneng



Figure 4
Bill Usher

"I stewed over this for close to a week as my project had to be useful and mobile and made from the wood provided. I came up with a birdhouse ornament that would sit on a revolving electrical base."

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Continued from page 3

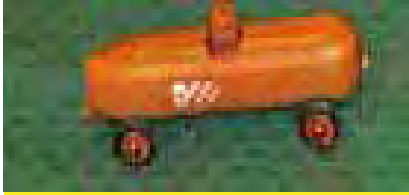


Figure 5—Joe Werner

“I made a small antique race car with a front crank. I had the idea of what I would do the first day and just went and did it. The front wheels turn independently and the rear wheels are on a fixed axel. They turn at the same time. I left the wood a natural colour and included a little driver made from the same wood. The car’s large muffler was turned separately and then inserted into the car’s rear end.” (705- 749-1671)

“For me, the motivation in this challenge was to create an object that contained many parts, that when assembled, would beg the question, ‘Did all this come out of that one block?’ The locomotive engine achieved my goal.”
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Figure 6—John Madill



Figure 7
Vince Way-Nee

: “I thought first of icicles as in tree ornaments, and then that Art was trying to force me to think outside the box. Art wasn't going to get me on this one! Those who know me know that, almost exclusively, I turn hollow vessels and so I turned six miniature hollow forms and hung them in a wind chime fashion. It was fun and a humbling experience as I saw what the other members had created ... simply amazing!” (Vince is the brother of WGO turner, Valerie Way-Nee.) vince.waynee@sympatico.ca

If you have any ideas for a club challenge at any level, please contact Penny McCahill at 905-508-2969 or e-mail Penny at penny@technolinks.com. Penny will pass your ideas on to the appropriate people. Meanwhile, WGO members who participated in one of Bob Rolling’s two Turning Parties should remember that they have committed to bringing a creation inspired by Bob’s instruction to the June, 2007 meeting – or before! Carpe diem! Seize the day!

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A WGO Newbie (musings from Tucson) Pete Kaiser



Since my wife and I retired, we have traveled south every winter. For the last four years, we have been going to Voyager RV Resort in Tucson, AZ. Two years ago, I took a short woodturning course here that resulted in a rather nice ballpoint pen. This course was like acquiring a serious addiction. I became hooked on woodturning.

When we returned to Thornhill, I quickly set up the rudiments of a woodturning shop in my basement and started turning. My first efforts were not too bad, I thought. I eventually found Woodchuckers and every time I bought something John asked, "If I belonged to a club." My answer was always "no." However, after a while I started thinking there must be a club some place.

I finally found the Woodturners Guild of Ontario. By now, it was almost time for our return to Tucson so I did not join. Upon our return to Thornhill in March 2006, I did join and started attending meetings. What an eye opener! I was immediately impressed with this great organization. I've belonged to other organizations but none that were as well run, offered so much and were as reasonably priced as the WGO.

There was only one downside, sort of. I had already produced quite a few woodturnings and was starting to feel very proud of my achievements. Then I saw the work of WGO members. Oh my!!! I now realized I had a long way to go before my woodturning would be considered OK; at least in my eyes. The up side is that I found that the WGO has as one of its main goals the teaching of wood turning skills. Through demonstrations, skills nights and woodturning parties I started to learn quite a lot.

I still have a long way to go compared to WGO members. But I was surprised at my skill level compared to many woodturners here at Voyager. These are new skills for me and they were learned through my interaction with the WGO. Thanks people!

I can give one example. A man, here at Voyager, was turning a wood belt pulley. It was about 12 inches in diameter. I do not remember exactly what turning tool he was using, but he was rubbing away at the wood, not taking off very much as he went along. I offered to give him a suggestion. He told me he was doing what one of the woodshop supervisors told him to do. I said, "Would you mind if I gave it a try". He said, "Sure go ahead." I took his tool and started riding the bevel as I was shown at a WGO meeting. The wood just started peeling off and was he surprised. I showed him what I was doing and he quickly finished his job.

I look forward to improving my skills much further by attending WGO meetings. Maybe if I improve enough I will feel sufficiently comfortable to submit something to the Annual Salon 2008.

E-mail; peter-kaiser@rogers.com

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Oleaceae Syringa – Lilac

Richard Pikul



This article, about the Lilac, is the second in a series about wood species that are not often (if ever) referred to in books and literature about trees. The species I will write about have interesting characteristics that make them useful in woodturning projects.

Twenty species of Lilac are found from Southeastern Europe to Eastern Asia. Various cultivars have been transported to North America and are grown for their profuse and aromatic blossoms. Lilacs are primarily classified as a shrub, growing to heights of about 12feet (5m). Lilac species which grow with a single trunk, rather than multiple stems are common, sometimes sold as "French Lilac". These have trunks up to 6inches (150mm) in diameter. Multiple stemmed shrubs tend to have smaller 'trunks', rarely exceeding 4inches (100mm) in diameter. Single trunk type Lilacs are preferred for woodturning, as they are slower growing, have more colours and the wood is dense.

Lilacs with single trunks have a relatively short life span in a garden setting. After about 30 – 40 years, they tend to have very few blossoms and thus are usually removed and replaced. This is also the best time to harvest the trunk for woodturning projects as the wood is mature, hard and most colourful. This is also the time when the wood is most prone to crack and split, sometimes splitting along the entire trunk while the tree is still growing.

To harvest Lilac with the most success, I have found that the log must be cut lengthwise, removing the pith, as soon as the tree is felled. (Refer to picture of cut logs). Even a few days in the 'round' can cause cracks, which start from the pith and radiate out to the bark. The log must also be cut to the length of the project in mind. Sections of half logs longer than about 12inches (30cm) can split within a week or two of harvesting. I do not use end seal – seems even short sections of half logs split if the ends are sealed. This does not mean that you will have 100% yield! I find that even with the short half logs, there will still be some sections, which will split. Picture of two half logs shows no splitting after one year's drying. These logs were cut from the same 'tree', but cut in half along different axis. Note the bottom log has dried and the cut line has curved in an expected manner as the outer growth rings have shrunk. The top log has dried and the cut line is still straight. The tree grew with an 'oval' trunk. The bottom log was cut in half on the long diameter axis and the upper log was cut on the short diameter axis. I'm not sure how to explain how this contributes to the different drying characteristics. I have found that both methods seem to work equally well, and losses due to cracks during drying are about the same.

Harvesting the multiple stemmed Lilac 'shrubs' requires the same care; they split and crack just as quickly as the single trunk Lilac species.



LILAC LOGS: 4" (102mm) diameter



LILAC
80
x
160
mm

Some older specimens suffer from pockets of rot, especially near the root. In some cases, this can be incorporated into the finished pieces, but if the tree was invaded by carpenter ants, these sections will be riddled with tunnels and must be discarded. The picture of the 80 x 160mm vase shows what can be made with a piece that has grown over cracks and some pockets of rot. This vase has a wall thickness of 1/8 inches (3+mm) down to the wider area, where the bark inclusions and grown over cracks made a thicker wall necessary.

The joy comes when turning Lilac. The aroma of the wood is a reminder of the flowers in spring and fills the workshop. The wood cuts clean, even when completely dry. Shapes with very thin walls can be made from dry or wet wood. If turned wet, further cracking is almost assured, especially when turning with the pith included.

The colour of the sapwood varies from a creamy white to almost a yellow white. Heartwood is usually a fairly solid colour, from a dark orange/brown, brown and sometimes violet. Any violet colour soon changes to a dark brown similar to the upper log half in the first picture after exposure to air and light.

The picture of the 35 x 130 mm vase was turned green from a shrub Lilac stem. The pith is in the middle of the piece and wall thickness is approximately 3mm.



LILAC 35x130mm

You can also notice that the grain is not straight, but winds around the pith in a slow spiral. This is a common occurrence with Lilac and must be taken into account when cutting blanks. When this vase dried, it did crack (crack shown from lower centre, slightly spiralling upwards to the right). I think that the cracks do not detract from the overall appearance. *Continued on page 7*

Richard Pikul—continued from page 6

Placing a 'waistline' in the piece accentuated the different colours of the heartwood and sapwood, creating a painted effect.



Picture of the two lace bobbins shown is my primary use for Lilac. Note that I make bobbins of my own design, with tapered square ends and an internal weight, which eliminates the need for spangles.

Lilac is also a fine wood for making pens, the colour variations shown in the bobbin picture can be the same when making pens.

And now for more than you really wanted to know. . .

Botanical Name: Oleaceae syringa (Oleaceae (Olive family), syringa (Lilac Family)).

Common Names: Lilac (Oleaceae syringa vulgaris, Common Lilac)

Distinctive Features: A multi-stemmed, suckering, tall shrub (some cultivars trained to single stem) reaching up to 15 feet (4.5m) in height. Common Lilacs are large, round headed, somewhat coarse shrubs that are planted as single specimens or as background screens. Lilacs are noted primarily for showy, fragrant blossoms. There are over 1600 Lilac cultivars organised into five distinctive varieties: Wild, Single French, Double French, Hyacinthiflora and Preston. Lilac are false shrubs. *Syringa reticulata* (Japanese Lilac) grows to 15 metres, with feathery white flowers that are the last Lilac blooms of spring, appearing in late June (above 30 degrees latitude). Also known as "Ivory Silk" Lilac, it is a Canadian selection used as a small street or yard tree. Note that the wood from the Japanese Lilac differs considerably in colour and texture from the rest of the Lilac family, and would require a separate article for this series.

Leaf: deciduous, opposite, simple, broadly ovate, 2 – 4 inches (50 – 100 mm) long, 1.5 – 3 inches (37 – 80 mm) wide, heart shaped, entire, dark green to bluish green above, lighter below.



Flower: Flowers are borne on 5-6" long panicles and come in many colours ranging from white, pink, blue, lavender to reddish-purple. Double flowered forms available. Light purple, pink or even white (cultivar dependent), fragrant, flowers in terminal clusters, 4 to 7 inches long, appearing in late spring.

Fruit: Dry, brown capsules, 1/2 inch long.

Twig: Stout, angled (almost 4 sided) or ridged, lustrous brown, glabrous, numerous raised lenticels; leaf scars raised, crescent-shaped; buds large, green but turning purple in the winter.

Bark: Gray to gray-brown, smooth but becoming finely shredded when large. Smooth on new growth, ridges develop and deepen on older growth.

Cautions: The plant is said to cause dermatitis (Schwartz et al. 1957, McCord 1962). The odour of lilac can cause hayfever (Biederman 1937).

Range in North America: Widely planted as a garden specimen. Not native.

The Wild Lilacs: These shrubs are the wild ancestors of the lilacs we grow in our gardens today. The genus *Syringa* has 20 species growing wild in central and South-eastern Europe and the Far East.

Lilacs from the Far East: Oriental lilacs differ from European species in size, shape, and even scent.

The mountainous forests of China's vast interior are home to a number of lilac species. Most were "discovered" by British and American plant hunters in the late 1800s, including British adventurer Earnest H. Wilson, though some discoveries are as recent as the 1970s. Seeds, seedlings and cuttings from these plants were brought back to botanical gardens, especially Kew (England), Paris, St. Petersburg and Harvard's Arnold Arboretum. These lilacs revolutionized lilac breeding in the late 1800s by expanding the quantity and variety of species for breeders to cross.

European lilacs: Though there are 20 species of wild lilacs, most people recognize just one — the common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). This Balkan native travelled here with the early settlers and was planted near the door of homesteads and cabins across much of North America. Pale purple and sweetly scented, it is the parent of the *Hyacinthiflora* hybrids and the single and double French hybrids. Europe's other native is the Hungarian lilac (*Syringa josikaea*). Baroness von Josika is credited with discovering this lilac growing on her Transylvanian estate in 1826.

Wood Products Value: Useful only in small section and short lengths as even the Japanese Tree Lilac does not grow to any commercially viable size. Wood is primarily used in woodturning for small diameter spindles (pens, lace bobbins, ornaments).

Wood is dense and very close grained. Colour is mostly 'blonde' with streaks of yellow, dark blonde, lavender, purple and red. Excellent for working with tools. Cuts well, does not dull tools quickly.

References:

http://collections.ic.gc.ca/BotanicalGarden/varieties_preston.html

USDA Silvics of North America - USDA Plants Database

<http://davesgarden.com/pf/go/1443/>



CLUB NEWS & EVENTS

By Penny McCahill



Eli Avisera's Technique-based Lessons Appreciated by All!



After an impressive full-day demo in Peterborough, (*Thanks for the invitation, Kawartha!*) Eli Avisera racked up many more positive comments the following day when he worked with a few lucky turners during a seven-hour hands-on workshop. (*Thank goodness for the club's four new mini-lathes that facilitated the learning process!*)

The enthusiasm kept building that evening when Eli delivered yet another dynamic demonstration to a full house at a special meeting of the WGO. Eli's passion for turning, his abundance of energy, his incredible skills and thoughtful instruction proved admirable attributes of our internationally acclaimed guest!

(Left to right) Workshop participants included Ron Stuart, Penny McCahill, Eli Avisera, Steve Mushinski, Joe Houpt, Allan Cooper, Marc Solomon, and Keith Reynolds

Bob Rolling's Second Turning Party an Outstanding Success!



The only thing that we didn't understand was how he did what he did without our help!



More to follow on this amazing event!
Stay tuned

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