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APRIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

President of the Lake Charles Woodworkers Club, Bubba Cheramie was our host this month at his shop and our presenter was Bill Berry. There are lots of famous Bill Berry's around—R.E.M.'s great drummer, a great jazz trumpeter, even a MLB player. But this Bill Berry was the one we wanted to see and hear.

As we focused on turning this month, there were several bowls for Show & Tell. Gary Rock brought the "other half" of his spalted gum slab turned into a bowl—some 14" across. Gary also showed a couple of smaller ones he's turned this past month.

Kyle Andrepont brought a wonderful tool he made: a joiner's mallet in red oak. Not only was it good to look at, it was perfectly balanced and felt just right in the hand. Eltee Thibodeaux showed us a goblet made of pecan with a decorative strip of J-B Weld. Eltee also showed us the jig he used to make the two-layered trivets he showed last meeting. Lee Frazier had a great looking piece of scroll work—an American Indian figure plus a neat articulated toy in the form of an old fashioned oil field cricket pump.

Bubba Cheramie displayed his latest work chair. This one is for fishing. He also had a simple back-rub device—it really feels great. In addition, he showed a cypress box turning he's working on.

John Leonard Fontenot brought us a small bowl made from peach. It has a remarkable pink/red and figured color. An outstanding piece of wood.

Bill Berry has been woodworking for the past twelve years. He was originally from Lake Charles and still has family here. After leaving the military, he moved to the Houston area and now lives in Deer Park, TX.

At first he focused on cabinet making but once he had a lathe, he didn't "turn" back. He does both turning professionally as well as teaches turning to those who want to learn the craft. Unique to his teaching: he goes to the student. The advantage of this is that students learn on their own equipment, not someone else's, so they are ready to start serious turning quickly.

If you are new to turning, especially plate turning (bowls, etc.), it's best to start with what he calls "academic" turning. In other words, turning to learn or turning for fun. This gives you lots of practice without the pressure of "making" something specific.

Bill likes turning green wood. Not only is this easier but it also produces somewhat less dust. He espe-

cially likes to turn sycamore, pecan, silver maple, gum, chinaberry and even tallow. He generally avoids oak, cypress and cottonwood as being too stringy. You can certainly turn stringy woods but they take lots of patience and really sharp tools. And where does he get most of his wood? Off the curb. In fact, his list of preferred woods looks suspiciously like what grows around where he lives. It certainly makes sense to turn something destined to become landfill into a useful and beautiful work of art.

You've probably noticed that a power line between two poles sags. This curve is called a catenary curve. If you are hanging a cable, you want to know how much tension to place on the cable to keep it a certain distance above the ground. This is the most common use of a standard equation first described by Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens in 1690 and the one that also describes the curve of the St. Louis Arch. It is the curve a hanging flexible chain assumes when supported at both ends and acted upon by gravity. But looking at that curve another way, you can see that it is pleasing, that it would make a good shape for a bowl. It was from this perspective that Bill talked about bowl design.

Some shapes work and some do not and when you are planning a bowl, you should try to visualize its final shape. The way to do this is 'turning to learn' such as turning a sphere or a number of different bowls just to see their shapes and how they look. Bill demonstrated this with a simple jig on which he mounted a small chain to see how it would naturally sag. He also demonstrated the principle by having turned bowls of parabolic and hyperbolic curves and painted them black. This way, you could focus on the shape and not the wood. In fact, the jig is a great visualization tool, especially if hung at eye level above your lathe.

While Bill likes to get the tough part of turning behind him by turning wet wood, he turns many blanks to billets near final shape before putting them away to dry. Generally, he stores them in a craft paper grocery bag as this permits moisture to leave the wood in a con-

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Coming Up . . . Dick Trough will be our host next month. Saturday, 8 May, 9:00 a.m.



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trolled way. The key is to have a uniform thickness in the blank thus allowing the wood to dry as evenly as possible. In general, Bill turns the billet to about 10% of the final design. In other words, a 10 inch diameter bowl would have about 1 inch thick walls as a billet. So how does he know when the blanks are ready to remount and get their final turning? He weights them.

On the paper bag he writes the date cut (if known), the date turned to a billet and the weight. He then sets them aside, going back every week or so to weight them again. When the weight stops dropping, the billet is ready to turn to final form. He uses an ordinary electronic postal scale as they are accurate and low cost (about \$25 from many retailers). Once the billet has dried, it is remounted and shaped to its final form. You should expect some distortion in the dried billet and can expect to remove some runout when it is remounted.

For most bowls, Bill rough turns them and then coats the end grain with an end grain sealer such as Anchor Seal (a stable wax and water emulsion from a number of woodworking sources at about \$8 per quart). However, you can also use paraffin wax, PVA glue (reduced 10% with water) or even left over latex paint as these all work to control the outgassing of water from the wood. Coating the end grain is especially important for hollow form bowls, otherwise they may be impossible to remount and turn to the final shape if highly distorted.



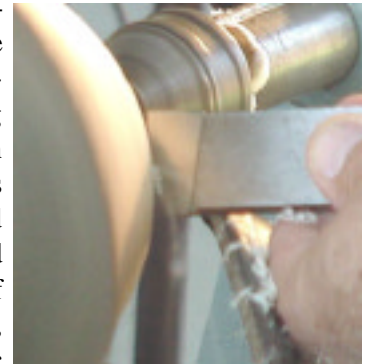
As the tool edges got worn with turning, Bill went next to his method of sharpening. He uses a 'slow' bench grinder (1,750 r.p.m.) with the white grinding wheels. Before sharpening, he'll clean and true the

wheel. Delta and other manufacturers make specialized grinding systems that provide a uniform and consistent sharpening result. However, with some practice and a little in the way of a tool rest, a bench grinder works well and is 2/3^{rds} less expensive than a dedicated sharpening system.

Bill started with a domestic pecan blank he had generally shaped using a band saw. His goal was to turn a natural edged bowl from this blank. He first mounted the blank between centers and started by shaping a foot which he would later use to remount the billet with a chuck. Using a 3/8" bowl gouge to hog off the bottom and sides of the blank, he went to a wide parting tool to refine the outside shape. When asked why he cut a tenon rather than

a rebate for the chuck, Bill noted that his experience was that a rebate works best with dry wood whereas a tenon works better with wet. As he continued to refine the shape, Bill noted that the cutting edge of the tool should be just above the center line of the work regardless of the position of the tool rest.

He finished the outside of the bowl with a shear scraper using very light pressure and a slow speed to remove turning marks and reducing the need to sand. During the turning, Bill said that it is important to complete the turning of a natural edge wet bowl in one session because the stress relieved by cutting the wood will quickly cause distortion and be difficult to remount later. If you have to leave it over night, tightly wrap the work in plastic to retain as much moisture as possible as this may reduce much of the distortion. He then removed the work and mounted the foot in a chuck.



Starting at the outside edge and moving in toward the center of the bowl is the best technique for natural edged work. The idea is to establish the wall thickness and get this area as smooth as possible as you can't easily come back to it later. Bill then worked down into the bottom of the bowl, changing to a curved shearing scraper to round out the bottom and remove turning marks.

Bill next reversed the work using a Jacobs chuck holding a small sanding disk in the headstock and a 60° cup supporting the bottom. This allowed him to part off the tenon foot and make a slight cavity in the base. You want the bowl's base slightly concave so that the bowl is supported by a rim. After removing the work, he used a small chisel to part off the wood tip he couldn't remove while the piece was mounted.

Bill prefers a combination of a MinWax Natural oil coat, letting this dry overnight and final finishing with a wipe-on gloss polyurethane in several coats. He does all his finishing on the lathe. If you want a softer finish, he suggests using the gloss with a final 0000 non-steel wool and a good paste wax. Using the gloss poly gives the work a harder and longer lasting finish. In effect, he is using the wipe-on ploy as you would a high friction finish. The result appear to be the same at a lower cost.

How do you price a bowl? Bill says what ever the market will bear, keeping in mind that galleries generally charge 40-50% commission. You can see more of his work at www.gulfcoastwoodturners.org and photos of the demonstration and all of the new Show and Tell items at www.lcwoodworkers.com.

VENEER CUTS

Working with veneer can be a fun challenge and there are some very sound reasons for adding this skill to your woodworking repertoire. Chief among them is the aesthetic one: you can create large objects with unbroken grain patterns (such as doors or table tops). Such grand expanses, if comprised entirely of boards that were edge-glued together, would at best be unpredictable. This is due to their ever-changing dimensions as they expand and contract in unison with changes in temperature and humidity levels. These fluctuations would eventually cause warping, splitting and other types of disintegration. By applying a veneer to a stable substrate such as plywood or fiberboard, this nightmare can be avoided. Veneering also can save you money. A panel created by applying a fancy cut of hardwood veneer to MDF (medium density fiberboard) will usually cost quite a bit less than an equivalently-sized panel in solid quartersawn stock.

There are several ways in which mills cut veneers, and each of them delivers a very distinct grain pattern.



The least expensive and least treasured is a rotary cut. The log is simply rotated into a knife and the result is a wide sheet of veneer with a broad, unimpressive pattern. It's primary use is as a balance sheet - it is applied to the back of a substrate which carries a finer grade of veneer on the front face. Rotary

cuts also can be found in some inexpensive, mass produced interior closet and passage doors. Some rotary cut applications are designed to be painted.

The favorite cut of America's greatest woodworker, quartersawn solids and quartersliced veneers

were found everywhere in the Mission furniture of Arts & Crafts guru Gustav Stickley. The cut delivers a close, tight and very straight grain, which in some species—especially oak—features a flake or ribbon pattern. This is the result of slicing through medullary rays.

Cut at somewhere between 15

and 30 degrees to the radial, the rift cut eliminates most of the medullary rays found in quartersawn veneer while still delivering a straight, tight grain pattern. This is one of the more expensive cuts due to a large amount of waste and the fact that it calls for a lot of setup and milling time.

The most common cut in millwork grades, this method of slicing the stock straight across the log produces that familiar cathedral grain pattern. It shows up most frequently on hollow core doors and kitchen cabinets. The log is ripped down the middle before slicing.



Plain Sliced. There are some variations on these four cuts, such as a lengthwise cut along the log, or small quarters (where the center of the log has rotted). But almost every piece of veneer you'll see falls into one of these categories. The obvious exceptions are fancy cuts, which include veneers cut from a crotch (where two large limbs grow together), or a burl (a diseased growth which can deliver astoundingly beautiful figure).

From www.woodezine.com. Thanks to *John English* and sign up for his great online Newsletter on turning and carving.



HELP OUT LEE FRAZIER

Recall that Friday, June 11 is the fundraiser for Lee Frazier, 5:00 p.m. at the Habibi Temple. 2928 Pack Rd., Lake Charles.

Your minimum donation of \$7.50 will include a fine meal and drink, 3 live bands, a voice impressionist, silent and live auctions plus a cash bar. You can also donate a bit of your work for one or both of the auctions.

While tickets will be available at the door, it's best to get them early. Just contact Lee (436-8520) or Lola (494-5505), Tom Spindler (475-8038 work, 478-8301 home), or Loretta Boutte (478-6825).

Donations can be brought to any of these folks or to the event. Checks should be made payable to "Lee Frazier Transplant Fund" and brought to any Jeff Davis Bank location.

