The Journal of the Nova Woodturners' Guild

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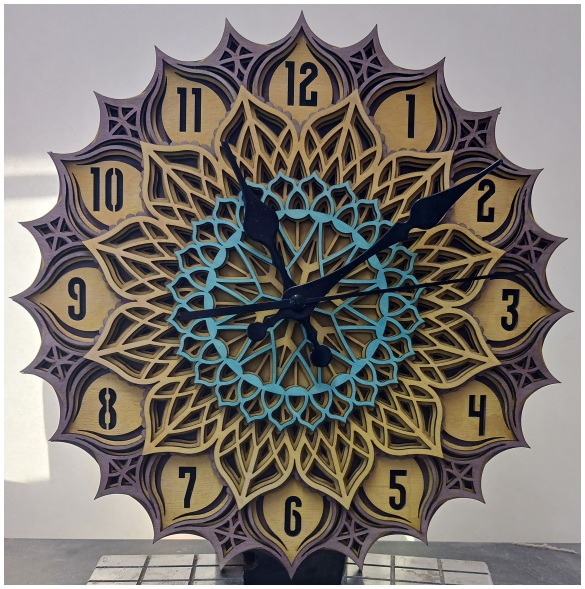
Second Edition

The Turning Point

In this issue:



The next meeting of the Nova Woodturners' Guild
will be held at Lee Valley Tools, 150 Susie Lake Crescent, Halifax
Sunday, October 19, 2025 at 2:00 PM

At the October meeting:
Bob makes a cell phone speaker
Show and Tell
Membership sign-up and renewal for those who have not already done so

The President's Report

Once again fall has arrived with thoughts of what to turn for the holiday season. When you stop to think about it the busy season will be here before you know it. If you're like me, I'm anxious to put the information Steve Zwerling gave us about skews to see how well I listened.

Getting back to the approaching holidays and gift ideas, this month's demo might be something you would want to turn. I will be showing how I turn a cell phone speaker; it's a hollow form with a slot cut into the rear of the piece to allow the cell phone speaker to be placed inside the unit. The nice thing about this project is you can easily modify to your personal preferences.

See you on Sunday and happy turning.

Yours truly,

Bob Earle — President

Notes from the September Meeting

The meeting called to order by President **Bob Earle** at 2:03 PM with 12 members present and 3 members online.

Announcements:

- The annual dues are now due. If any of your personal information has changed, please complete a new membership form. A new feature this year is that dues ($40.00) can be paid by e-Transfer to treasurer@novawoodturnersguild.com. So, dues can now be paid by cash, cheque, credit and debit card or e-Transfer.
- Going forward we will be holding our meetings in a hybrid format (both in-person and online) for anyone who can't make the meeting in person. There were some issues with this in the past but most problems seem to be worked out now. As always, we are looking for feedback on your experiences with these hybrid meetings.
- Life member Stephen Zwerling has sold his house and will be moving. He will be downsizing and selling off a lot of his gear and supplies. Watch the Guild emails for more information.

Main Presentation:

The main presentation was a demonstration by Life Member, **Stephen Zwerling**, on *Taming the Skewz*. Stephen started turning in 1980 on a General 160 lathe. He started doing demonstrations at woodworking and woodturning clubs and would often get asked about tools. You can turn with just about any tool and to demonstrate this he showed how to turn cylinders, coves and beads using only the crescent wrench that came with the lathe. *Editor's note: sadly, we have no photographic record of this part of his talk.*

To turn well and easily, there are a number of key points that you must understand.

Key Points:

- All of the cutting happens at the exact point where the metal of the tool meets the wood. To get a good cut, you must learn to master the angle and direction that the wood and edge of the tool are meeting.
- Cutting Theory Goals:
  - You aim for a high quality of surface without imperfections
  - Need control of the cutting process to achieve your planned design
  - Need to use safe and efficient working methods by default

Basics of Cutting Theory:

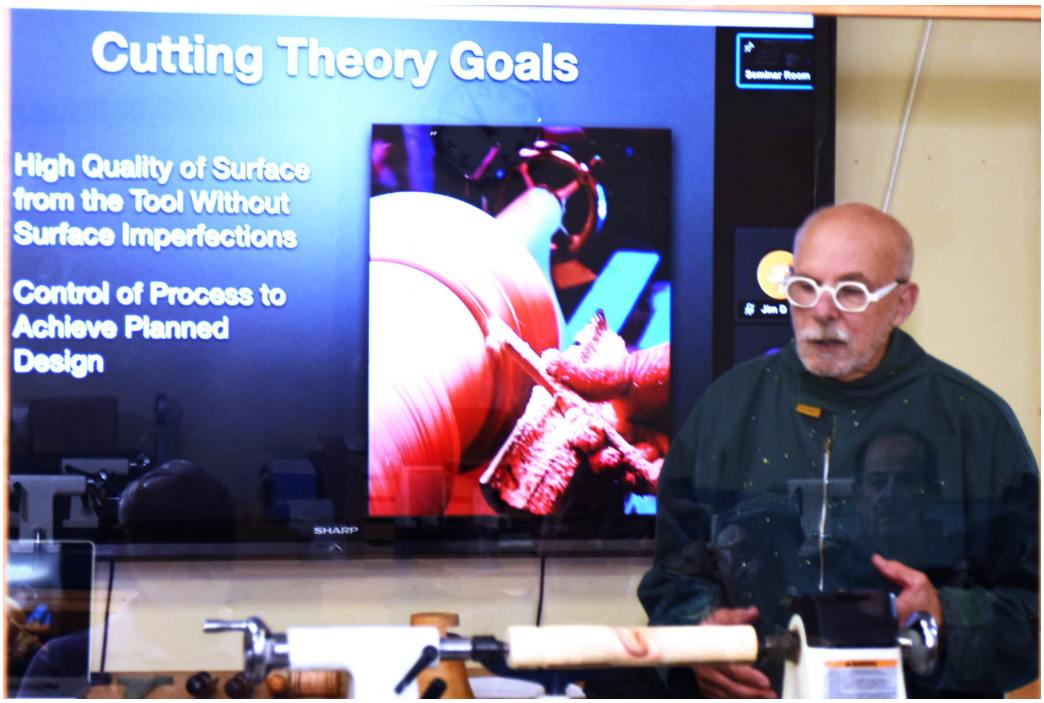
Our main focus is on the angle between the surface of the wood and the surface of the tool edge. The **Reference Bevel** is the beveled face of the tool in contact with the wood. The best cuts are achieved when the angle between the wood and the reference bevel, the **Clearance Angle**, is very close to zero degrees.

The **Tool Angle** is the angle between the reference bevel and the top of the tool.

The **Rake Angle** is the angle between the top surface of the tool and 90° to the surface of the wood at the cutting point.

You get good shearing cuts when the **clearance angle** is close to zero degrees. As the **rake angle** gets close to zero, you are scraping. In between those two point points you are neither shearing (cutting) nor scraping, and have high chances of tool chatter, dig-ins and catches causing significant surface damage and safety issues.

The angle between the cutting edge of the tool and the axis of turning (parallel to the lathe bed) is the **Side Rake Angle**. Controlling the **side rake angle** will mean the difference between fine shavings (good surface) and small chips (poor surface).



All of these concepts were demonstrated using a roughing gouge. The cutting process consists of 4 steps:

1. Place the tool on the wood with the bevel in contact — no cutting is happening at this point (the clearance angle is below zero degrees).
2. Raise the handle of the tool until the clearance angle comes to zero degrees. Cutting will start at this point making very fine shavings.
3. Move the tool along the piece — cutting the shape desired.
4. Move the tool back from the wood — the cut ends.

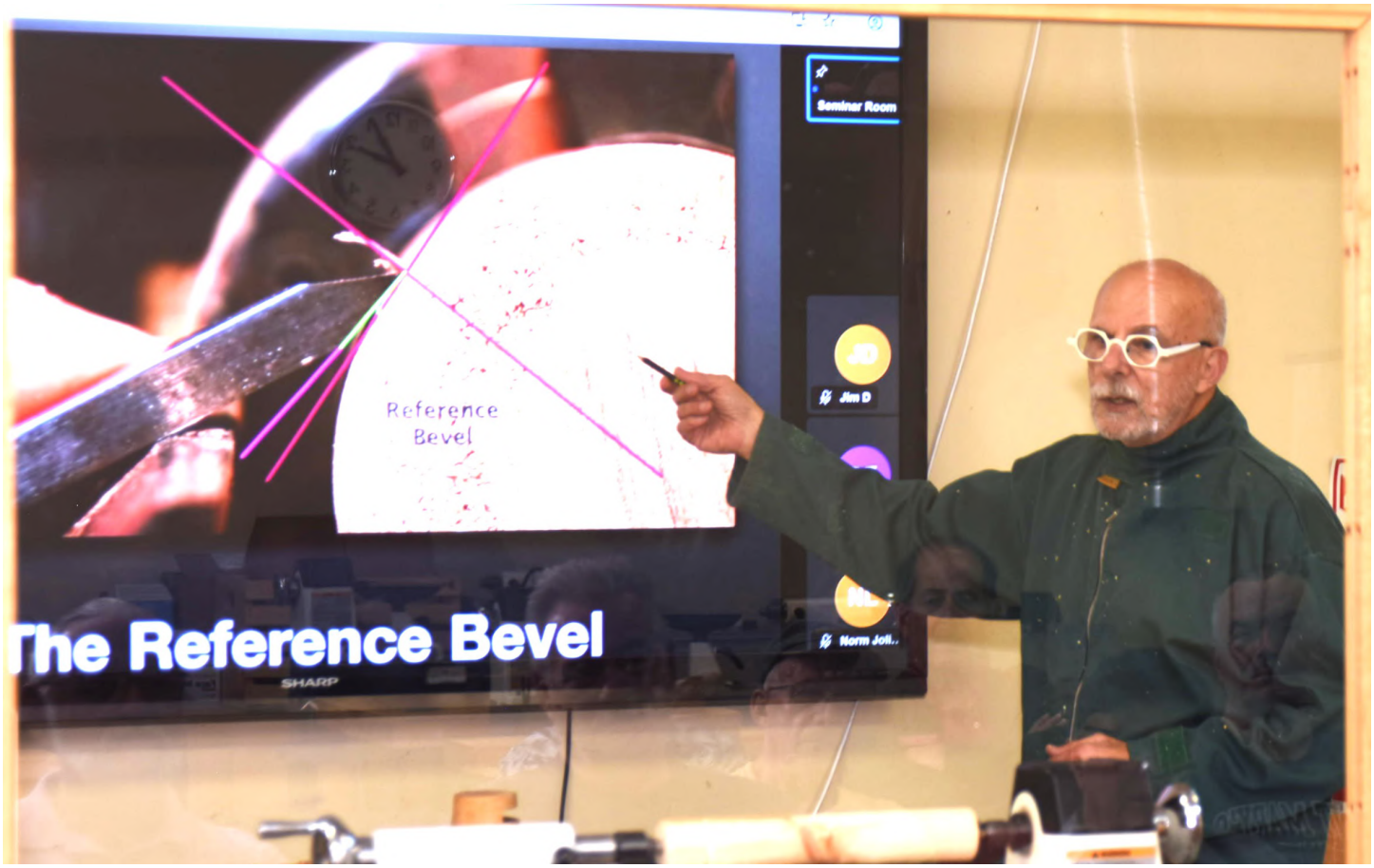
With practice, this 1-2-3-4 process repeats without needing to consciously think about it.

To get the best cuts (fine shavings) an extra step is included:
2b. Move the handle to the side to create some side rake angle and proceed with the cut.

Using the Skew Chisel:

Key Points

- Use the 1-2-3-4 process as above, but make very small adjustments.
- Ensure the reference bevel stays firmly in contact with the woodturning.
- The depth of cut is controlled by where the reference bevel is pointing — "where the bevel goes, the cut goes".
- To increase the depth or amount of the cut, point the bevel more downwards, toward the floor. This increases the clearance angle and makes a more aggressive cut.
- Take thin, light cuts to get to the desired shape — just a millimeter or so at a time. More aggressive cuts are hard work and result in a lot of torn out wood.
- Shift your weight from one foot to the other as you move along the cut to ensure straight cuts. If you swivel at the hips, you will get a curved, uneven cut.



Shew chisels can be made from flat bar stock or oval stock. With flat stock, it is good to ensure that the bottom edge of the stock is rounded over on a belt sander. This helps with control and prevents the

skew digging into the tool rest causing damage to the tool rest. Nicks and dings in the tool rest will cause the tool to catch and not move smoothly across the rest as you are cutting.

Cutting coves is usually done with a spindle gouge as a skew will often be too wide to give a good curve in the bottom of the cove, unless it is a very large cove. To cut coves with fillets, cut the cove with a spindle gouge, then use a skew chisel to cut the fillet at the desired location.

Cutting beads requires learning to move the skew in several different motions simultaneously and smoothly. These are:

- moving from side to side to progress the cut;
- moving the handle of the tool to the side to shape the curve of the bead;
- twisting the skew along its axis to keep the clearance angle just above zero degrees to keep the edge cutting;
- raising the end of the handle to allow the tool to cut smaller diameters in the bead — getting up and over the tool rest; and
- it is important to make sure you are standing where your cut will end, not with your body centred on the cut. This allows you to flow through the cut without your body getting in the way of the handle as you sweep through the cut of the bead.

Any questions?

Guild Business

Camera

The guild was given an older video camera that was used for meetings for several years and is no longer needed.

Motion: The donated camera be declared surplus and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
Approved

IRD

Motion: The Guild expend funds as needed to secure an Internet Remote Demo (IRD) in the 2025-26 year, such funds not to exceed $500 Cdn.
Approved

Show & Tell:

Mark Hazen showed a small bowl (not shown) turned from a Walnut blank won in the raffle and a second bowl turned in Butternut crotch, also won in the raffle.

Leo Westhaver showed off a shallow live edge bowl in Poplar, finished with Tried and True, with the foot carved into separate feet. Careful observers will note a pyrography crow on one side and some trees on the other.

Bob Earle presented a bowl and plate from some oak he was given, turned while green. He finished it with sanding sealer, beeswax and then buffed it. He also showed off a prototype of a cell phone speaker (which he will be talking about at the next meeting). It was made from a Norway maple he cut down, finished with linseed oil.

Raffle Results:

Charles Nieforth	took home a turning book.
Leo Westhaver	took away a selection of magazines.
Greg McMullen	also added some magazines to his collection.
Bob Earle	took away two small blanks for future projects.

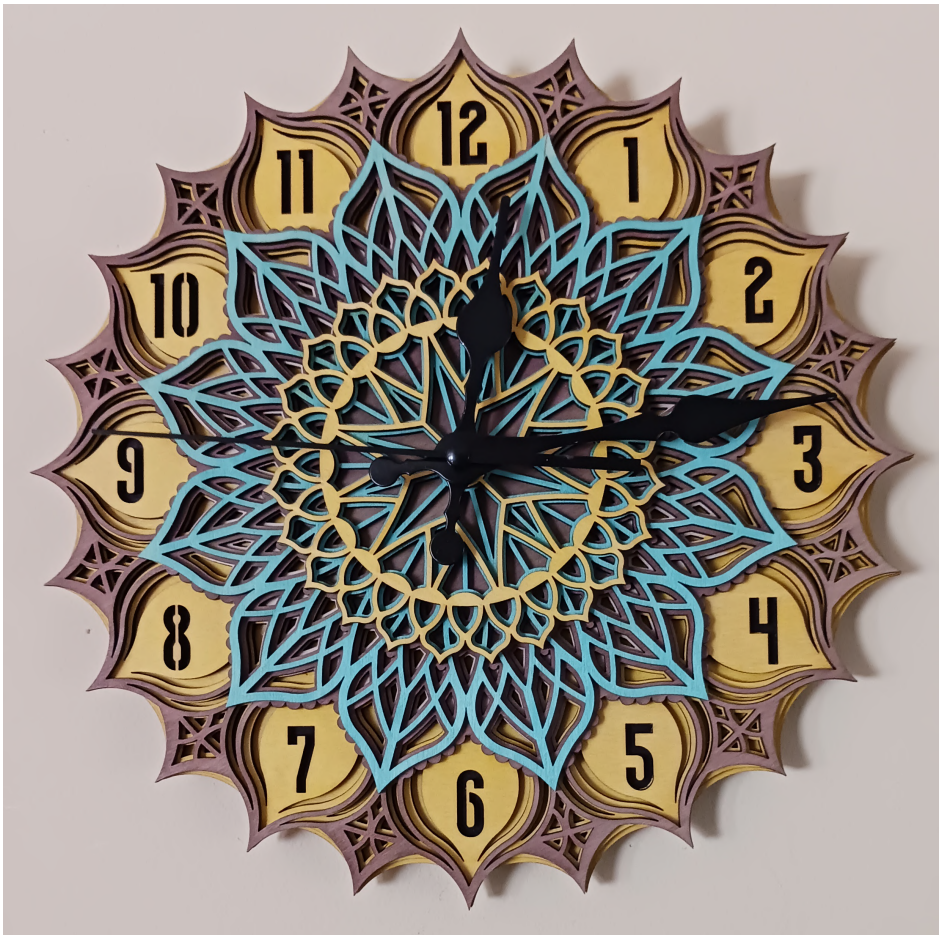
The meeting wrapped at 3:40 PM.

Calum Ewing — Secretary

A Clock with Wooden Gears

As many of you know, I have been puttering around in my shop combining woodturning and laser engraving. You have seen my flowers and lighthouses. This next project, a hanging wall clock with wooden gears was a bit more of a challenge. I bought the original design on ebay . . . it gave me somewhere to start. The original design wouldn't work for me, so I began modifying, refining and fixing the things that I thought would improve its chances of running. After several months of experimenting and learning about clocks I finally had a design that worked. It has been running for over a month now and keeps really good time. It has to be wound every day. At its current height it runs for about 26 hrs before the weight comes to rest on the floor. Although there is no traditional wood turning the gears all made of wood are turning. A video of it running can be found at **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhLUl7f9x18**.

I bought a few electric clock motors a year or so ago and lasered a couple of simple clock faces for workshop clocks. Now in my search around the internet I discovered some fancy multi-layered clock bodies that work with the clock motors I had left so I made a couple of these and they look great. Here is a photo of one of them.

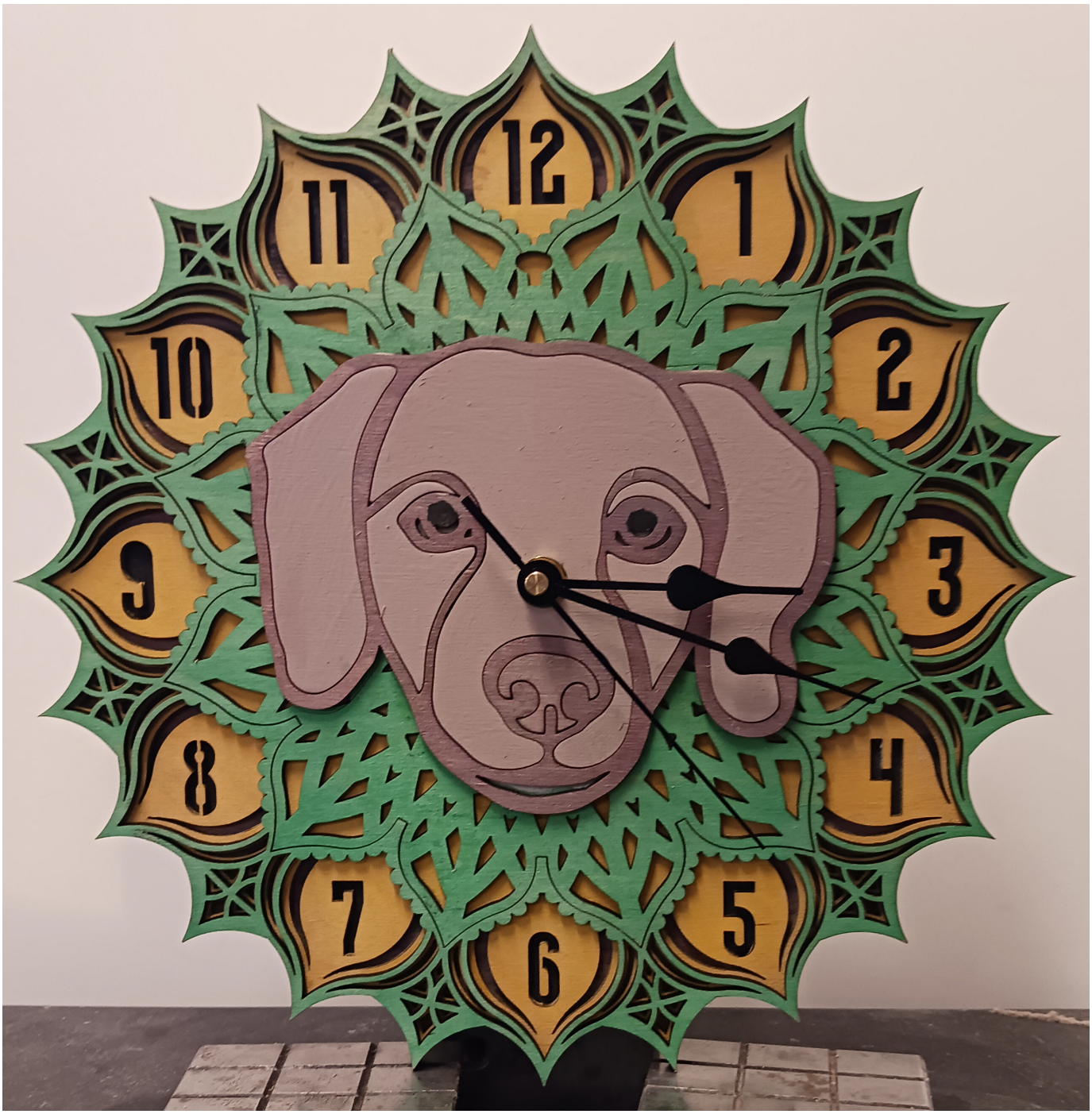


This is a the support frame, a clever design all held together with seven wedges.

Getting the right tooth design was a learning experience.

These gears didn't make the cut!

The final working model, running three months now, has no obvious signs of wear.



River Time: my daughter has a dog called River, so for Christmas...

Richard Ford

DaveM's Fireside Chat

Well, here we are in full blown fall colours and a crispness in the air... For those of us who make items for Christmas gifts this is the time we start to think about getting some of them done. To this end I have been researching the art and form of finials for my up coming Guild demo for the November meeting. I will be presenting a collection of photos of many finials to give us all some ideas to improve our own finials. As well I will be presenting some formulas for the design of pleasing finials which should also help us. I will discuss wood selection and various work-holding solutions for turning finials on the lathe. There will also be a turning demo for typical Christmas ornament finials and a discussion on tool selection, including some of my home-made tools designed for working on finials and other small projects. I am hopeful that you will find this demo enlightening whether you are a novice just starting your journey into finials or are a master of turning finials. I know that I have learned a lot in putting together this demo and I hope that it will improve my finial designs and execution.

On the technical side I wanted to talk a little bit about ebonization, in particular for finials. We have had some great examples of iron acetate ebonization by Bill Maes, where high tannin woods such as Red Oak, Walnut and Cherry will turn various degrees of black when treated with an iron acetate solution (fine steel wool dissolved in vinegar). This is fine when using these woods but there is less of an effect or none at all in other woods such as Maple, Beech, Poplar, Pine, etc. I know that Leo Westhaver has had a lot of success using leather dyes on his finials and we saw his use of these in his spiral finial demo a couple of years ago.

In my research on finials, I came across several videos on using India ink to ebonize not only finials but also bowls and other turned objects. The big advantage of India ink is that it is a jet black, indelible (not affected by water once dried), light-fast pigment, as well as smooth flowing. The recommended India ink is ***Speedball Super Black*** (3378). This ink is shellac based so it fills pores and is waterproof once dried. In my university days I got into the habit of using India ink for all of my field notes (using a fountain pen) and later used Rapidograph pens for all of my university writing (which was slower than using a ball point but at the time I wrote very small and the fine point Rapidograph pens gave my writing a neatness). So I just got my first 2 oz bottle of Super Black from Amazon a few days ago and haven't had a chance to try it out yet, but I plan to have a full evaluation of it for the demonstration next month. I would recommend you not buy it from Amazon, the 2 oz bottle was $20 and a 16 oz bottle was $67; after I had ordered it I checked at DeSerres Halifax (online) and the 16 oz bottle was $20 for the exact same product... Live and Learn! Anyway, once you have applied it and it is dry you can treat it with polyurethane, lacquer, shellac, Tried & True, or friction polishes like Mylands, in order to give you the sheen you are looking for. I hope to have examples of many of these finishes over Super Black at next month's demo.

Dave McLachlan

Letters to the Editor

After years of waiting, I finally have some submissions which I will call letters to the editor! — Editor

Just wanted to pass along my little discovery. When I use a diamond hone I always clean it after using with Windex window cleaner. I decided to try it as a honing liquid and find it works great! Plus you just have to wipe the diamond stone when finished. Cheaper than buying the honing liquid, and everyone has a bottle of Windex around the house!

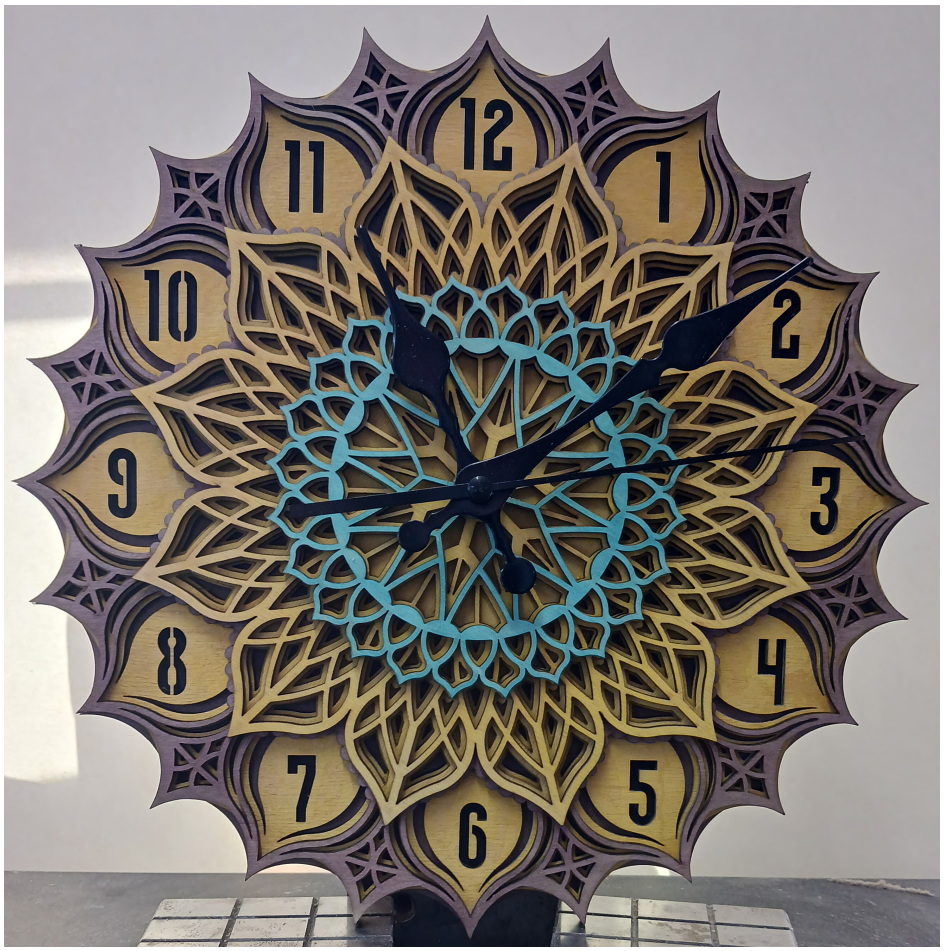
Leo Westhaver

Turned the bottom out of this bowl (spitoon ?) as I so often seem to do with cherry.

Turned another piece of cherry to fit into it. Now only need to turn the inside again and cut off the insert to make a new bottom. Sigh.

Bill Meas

Cover Photo



Another one of Guild brother Richard's laser carved clocks. Although there is some evidence of roundness, arguably this is only tenuously connected to woodturning. But, given his long-standing membership in the NWG and his many contributions to the Guild, no doubt we should cut him some slack.

Photo Credits

Thanks to Chris Palmer for photos from last month's meeting. The other photos were (as far as the editor knows!) all taken by the person who made the item in question and/or the person who wrote the article.

Nova Woodturners' Guild
2025/26 Executive

All members of the executive, as well as committee chairs, can be reached by using the email address associated with that position. That is, a note sent to (for example) the president will go to whomever is president at that time. The following `<address>`*es should be followed by* `@novawoodturnersguild.com` *to send mail to the person holding that position.*

A 'C' after a committee member's name indicates they are chair of that committee.

Position	<address>	Incumbent(s)	
Executive	`executive` (sends the message to all executive positions on the list)		
President	`president` (or) `pres`	Bob Earle	
Vice President	`vice-president` (or) `vp`	Bill Maes	
Secretary	`secretary`	Calum Ewing	
Treasurer	`treasurer`	Dave McLachlan	
Director at Large	`director1`	Mark Hazen	
Committees			
Library	`library`	Jim Diamond Brian Sharp	C
Web Site	`webmaster`	Richard Ford	C
Membership & Promotion	`membership`	vacant	
Newsletter	`newsletter` (or) `news`	Jim Diamond	C
Competition	`competition`	Bill Maes	C
Guild Photographer	`photographer` (or) `photos`	Chris Palmer	C
Fund Raising	`raffles`	vacant	C
Members Group	`members`	members	

The `members` address forwards the email to all members **who have signed up to be on the `members` list**. To add or remove yourself from the `members` list, email `webmaster@novawoodturnersguild.com`.

If you wish to send an email to **all** current members of the NWG, send your message to `secretary@novawoodturnersguild.com` with a request to forward your email to all members.