

Turning in the Age of Corona, Episode 18

Santa Cruz Woodturners

November 20, 2020

Lubricants, Illumination, and Juniper

Daylight is fading fast in late November, the shop is getting chilly, and there's a dearth of mirth on the Earth. So first, let's turn on the lights.

At SCW's chain saw demonstration in September, John Wells brought for the "thin wall" President's Challenge a lamp with a translucent tan oak shade that deserves greater attention than we were able to give it with all the COVID precautions.



John created three separate components on the lathe, each with remarkably different approaches. The thin wall shade was made by hollowing the endgrain of a full log of tan oak. To solve the problem of deformation while shaving fractions of a millimeter to create a uniform thickness thin enough to transmit light, John left bulk at the base and worked progressively on small segments, not attempting to do the whole thing waffling in the wind. The thinness allowed it to shrink without splitting, and the symmetry of the blank allowed it to stay nearly circular...with some character.

The fluted riser is redwood burl, with the upper flare corresponding to the periphery of the tree, including the color transition from heartwood burl to sapwood. How did he make those flutes, you might ask?

John started with a standard radial, smooth spindle with the gentle flare. He then wrapped blue painter tape in spirals from bottom to top, leaving a thin line of wood visible between the tape. He marked those exposed lines with a pencil, took off the tape, and used carving tools (Dremel and hand tools) cut the flutes, then sanded them to satiny perfection. A closer look:



The hole for the wiring through the riser was cut with a lamp auger through the headstock of his Oneway lathe before the fluting was carved. The light socket and hoop to hold the shade were pretty simple after all that!

Now the base. Starting with a block of cherry, John carved ripples inspired by the appearance of water flowing over a rock in a mountain stream with filtered light. Each of the ripples was then sanded, and the wood ebonized. Fastening the riser to the base was simple by comparison



As we've been privileged to observe, John is blending turning, carving, and sculpture with ever more intriguing results. While this one could be considered "functional" because it will shed light on a dark day in the aftermath of fires and pandemics and poisonous politics...it's really a sculpture that captures the magic of our forests.

If you have a lamp you would like to show and tell "virtually," send me some photos and a description. Not too long ago, in an early episode of Turning in the Age of Corona, Maarten showed us a rocket ship lamp with an LED exhaust. This is a good season for illumination.

Now from the sublime to the mundane: **Lubrication! ...or...Ways to be Slicked**



Thanks to our turners who responded to the survey regarding “How To” maintain and lubricate the ways of their lathes for a smooth sliding banjo and tailstock. We all have struggled at times with this, and there is some common ground.

Just about every respondent emphasized shielding the ways from finishes—whether with wet sanding, spraying, or friction polish. Some have made lightweight plywood protective boxes to quickly slide on or off.

Needless to say, after roughing out wet wood, chasing after every last trace of wet shavings saves a lot of work later in dealing with rust.

Steel wool seems like the most popular abrasive to remove rust, although John prefers Scotch Brite, and Roy likes Sand Flex blocks.

We all use something slippery after cleaning the steel, but in this regard, our preferences diverged.

WD40 and Boeshield each had two advocates. Three used wax of different brands. Dennis uses wax paper on both the lathe and steel tables for saws. Roy uses a proprietary product called Glide Coat, and Tom Eovaldi loves CRC 3-36.

Dan uses silicone spray, as I did until recently. Before the silicon dries, if it gets on untreated wood, it can interfere with finish adhesion. That’s avoidable with caution and patience, as different brands dry at variable rates. CRC, Liquid Wrench, and other brand names of silicon spray are available in most hardware stores.

Nobody claimed to use a petroleum based oil, which doesn’t dry, attracts dust, and can interfere with finishes.

Larry, who started this conversation by showing off his dancing banjo, will periodically remove the banjo and the tailstock, then get into the nooks and crannies of the cam

locks for deep cleaning with acetone, WD40, and steel wool, then lubricate the moving parts with Minwax from the can.

Club members like Jim Beckett and Bill Arnold live within walking distance of the ocean, and they may have special strategies...*to be continued!* The Boeshield product (from Boeing, naturally) claims to dry with a protective coating for rust. Morgan, who lives by a stream, and I who live under redwood trees in winter, have been convinced.

Share your ideas about friction—such as what to do when your knock-out bar won't dislodge your #2 Morse taper spur center...or how you manage a threaded fixture on your headstock when it just doesn't want to let go.

Choose your Rattles Wisely

Tim Johnson, SCW's rising master of delicate spindles, has a friend about to enter maternity leave. It's nice to have a lathe to make a personal gift for these wonderful times of family life. This walnut rattle, instead of the classical 17 BB's, has a 2020 penny for the noisemaker.



This one



Not this one

Out of State Juniper

Inspired by John's sculptural vision but lacking the carving skill, I decided to use Nature's sculpture to create an unusual natural edge bowl from a tight juniper knuckle rescued from a friend's firewood pile in Southern Utah.



You need a magnifying glass to see the growth rings, and it feels silky inside.

Please share photos of your work, and we'll keep the inspirations coming.

Wells Shoemaker

President, SCW...in the process of a smooth transition....