



Chips & Chatter

Newsletter for the Silicon Valley Woodturners

May 2025

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President's Turn

Spring has fully arrived, and with it, a new burst of energy in the shop—longer days, warmer weather, and a bit more daylight to enjoy making shavings. I hope each of you has found some time to get on the lathe this past month, whether to finish a project, experiment with a new tool, or just let the wood take you somewhere unexpected.

My personal 'spring cleaning' crusade has been to reduce the amount of wood laying around my shop and yard. (Dave's not the only one who needs a wood diet.) Some of the wood has a sentimental nature (I knew that tree), some of it has promises attached (I told the neighbor I'd make them a...), but a lot of it was just opportunistically collected at the time. Now without any specific project in mind I've been cutting these cracked, often spalted logs and putting pieces on the lathe just to see what comes out. Sometimes inspiration strikes, sometimes I end up with just a pile of shavings.

As I've been doing this, I've been thinking a lot about the tool presentation demo Brian Havens gave us this month. By remembering to consider grain orientation, and where my fulcrum is, I've been able to mostly avoid nasty catches with some rather uniquely angled (and mounted) blanks. It has also helped me stay focused as much on technique as on the final form I'm looking for. Thanks again Brian for a great demo. Several people have told me how much they enjoyed it and how much they learned.

And thanks again to this quarter's 'Chipping In' award recipient: Mark Koenig. Mark's continual work with setting up, running, and putting away our AV system, as well as his video editing, occasional demos, and ever-present club mentoring has helped make this club what it is.

And speaking of club demos, several people have asked for a demo on making lidded boxes. Don Bonnett has graciously agreed to show us how for next month's presentation. I'm looking forward to it! I'm also looking forward to seeing your smooth creativity in the 'no sandpaper' president's challenge next month.

Keep on turning,
Kevin

Announcements

A memorial for Jim Gott is scheduled for June 21 from noon to 4pm in Cameron Park (approximately 30 min past Sacramento on Highway 50). To RSVP please contact Kevin Lee.

Reminder: Silicon Valley Woodturners club files can be found on groups.io, which is the system that sends out our emails to club members. It also allows us to store files that only club members can access. One of the files is a [document with links](#) to the hidden video recordings of the professional guest demonstrations. (The actual videos are on Youtube and are not restricted - they are hidden. So please don't share the links to non-club members)

To get access on Slack for the West Bay Woodturners group or for the Maker Nexus group, contact Kevin.

And remember - when replying to a post, please reply in the comment thread. It helps to keep discussions more organized.

Events Recap

For May, we had two presentations. At the general meeting, Brian demonstrated tool presentation. For the Sawdust Session, Dennis demonstrated finishing with polyurethane.

Meeting Demo – Tool Presentation

Presented by Brian Havens



In this demo, Brian demonstrated different ways that tools (gouges and skewers) interface with wood.



Using a straw model, Brian illustrated the challenge of cutting across end grain. The solution, he explained, was to approach end grain with a narrow cutting angle.



Wide cutting angle - creates larger shavings. It may be more efficient for wood removal, but has more risk of tear-outs.



Narrow cutting angle - has more cutting edge on a smaller surface resulting in lower resistance. Wood removal is slower but this results in a smoother finish.

Cutting Edge: Use an appropriate cutting angle for the grain orientation. A wide cutting angle is fine for most wood. But for difficult grain (knots, brittle or figured wood), a narrow cutting angle will help.

A medium cutting angle is often a good compromise.

For spindle work, gouges can catch on endgrain. To avoid catches, keep the gouge angle between 0 to 45 degrees.



Fulcrum

Be cognizant of the fulcrum, which is the point where the tool makes contact with the tool rest. The principle is "be cognizant of" as opposed to "always cut on" because, although engaging the part of the cutting edge that is aligned with the fulcrum results in a stable cut, it is OK to cut away from the fulcrum with certain caveats.

- Cutting slightly off of the fulcrum does not create enough force to cause a catch.
- Cutting away from the fulcrum while applying counterforce is OK for rough cuts.
- Consider what happens if the cutting edge succumbs. Does the cutting edge dig

If you feel grabbiness or catches, re-evaluate your tool position with respect to the fulcrum.

Skew

When the skew is laid flat - or flush with the tool rest - the "fulcrum" is no longer relevant. This makes the skew stable and less prone to catches.

This is useful for making quick tenons, or even making subtle coves and beads.



Bowl Gouge

Can also do a plane cut with a bowl gouge by using the wing of the gouge at a 45 degree angle. The handle of the gouge is held low, so that the wood is riding on the top of the wing-side bevel.

References

Presentation used during the demo: <https://svw.groups.io/g/svw/files/ToolPresentation.pdf>

Brian's Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@BHavensWoodworker>

Sawdust Session – Polyurethane

Presented by Dennis Lillis on May 10, 2025

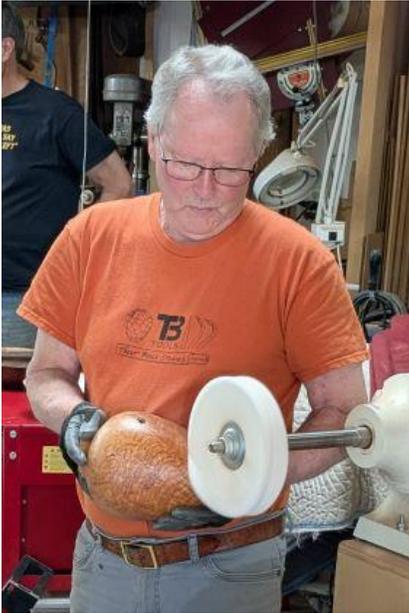


The May Sawdust Session covered polyurethane, and was a follow up to the previous session on sanding. It is important to achieve a smooth sanded surface on your piece since finishes will not typically cover over blemishes. On the contrary, finishes may even highlight blemishes in your piece - as you may see when viewing your piece in direct sunlight!

The main focus of the session was a comparison of two types of wipe on polyurethanes: General Finish and Minwax. The chemical difference is that General Finish offers an aliphatic polyurethane, which is considered less toxic and more food safe. Minwax and many other vendors offer aromatic polyurethanes, which are less expensive. The downside of aliphatic polyurethane is that it is more reactive. When storing it is recommended to reduce air exposure when containers are opened, and to store containers in refrigerators (separate from foods). Dennis used a small sample cup to work with



For the demonstrations, Dennis used bowls turned the night before. He remounted them on the lathe and used a low speed to apply the polyurethane using small cotton patches (2in x 2in) cut from t-shirts.



For the first layer, it is important to get enough penetration into the wood to start filling up the wood pores. Thirsty wood may require thinner and more polyurethane to get sufficient penetration. Water based finishes may be thinned with water, but oil based polyurethanes should be thinned with paint thinner. Use only a small amount to thin.

Note: image is Dennis buffing an old hollow vase

The keys to applying polyurethane are:

- First remove all dust and clean the area where you're applying the finish. Apply with a lint free cotton cloth like an old tee shirt. 3x3" is a good size that can be folded over to form a 1x1 1/2" pad. Dip the pad into the finish and apply to the rotating bowl moving at a pace that wets the wood consistently from beginning to the end of the area. Make at least two or three passes to assure evenness of the coat and eliminate any excess. If the finish starts to get grabby you may want to add a small amount of thinner so you can achieve the wet and even coat with the 3 passes. There should be no drips or sags. The goal is multiple thin even coats which will dry pretty quickly usually in 15 minutes or so at 70-75 degrees. Six to ten coats in this manner will seal most woods very adequately without making it look like it is encapsulated in plastic.
- Apply even coats while on the lathe. Then quickly use a dry cotton patch to remove excess material. Stop before the coat starts to set. Otherwise the hardening polyurethane will start coming off in chunks.
- Drying time between layers depends on weather and environment

- Applying many layers will smooth out unevenness in the applications due to changes in the grain. Apply as many layers as you can. Rule of thumb is to stop when you get tired of the process.

Additional Perspective on Sawdust Session

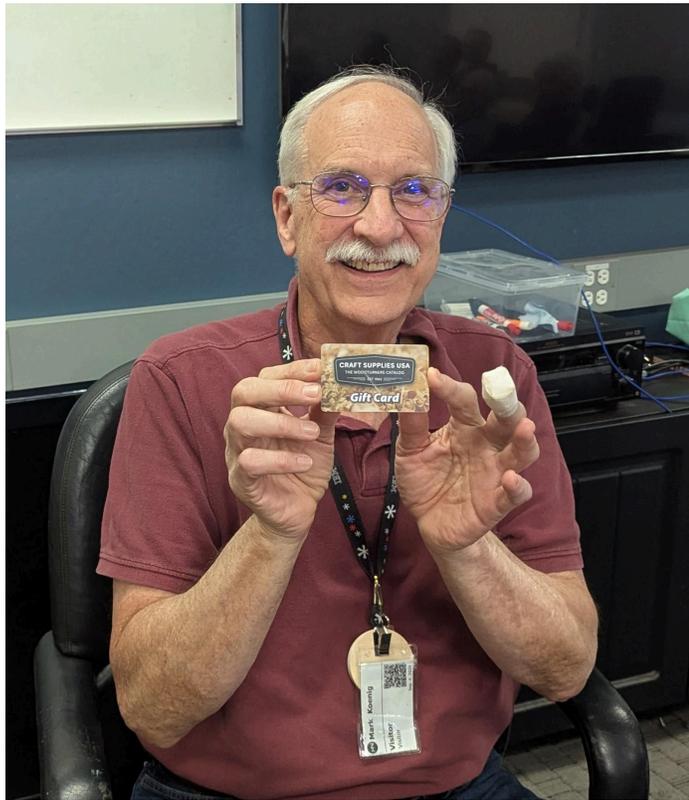
By David Vannier

Dennis Lillis has been generous enough to host a quarterly training session on a Saturday. The first session was on sanding, and the second on finishing with Poly. We spent a few hours discussing the finish process, with both some very educational explanations on the chemicals involved and a demonstration of the application. Just in case club members don't know, Dennis has an in depth knowledge, school and professional work, in chemistry. His finishes are excellent, but then you already know that. Following our education session was lunch, and time for us to share questions about other topics. Yes, time to share our favorite passion and continue sharing experiences and knowledge.

Wrapping things up with wood sharing. Dylan ran the chainsaw cutting wood to meet your needs. I have been on a wood diet for a few years. Unfortunately, like all diets, I cheat. I admit that when I see a piece of wood with some nice grain, I struggle to say no. At the end of the second event, I was feeling good. I had stuck to my diet, while helping others see opportunities, and keeping Dylan working hard. When it looked like we were all but done, I saw a walnut crotch that had been being used as a chair, including by me. One side looked totally useless with a branch pocket that was completely rotten. I rolled it over, full of bugs in the dirt, but after brushing the dirt off I didn't see any bugs. So, just because Dylan didn't look tired enough I loaded it up to be cut. Guess he was ready for a rest because he handed me the saw. Crotches are always the most work to cut, so I guess I deserved that. But when it was opened up the feather jumped out. So, diet, well, next time.

Thanks Dennis, Peg, and Dylan!

Chipping In Award



Kevin created the Chipping In Award to recognize individuals who have greatly contributed to the club. This quarter's award goes to **Mark Koenig!**

He is often seen during club meetings driving the AV system, which he architected. Mark also spearheaded the Beads of Courage program for the club. In addition, Mark has been a valuable contact for Maker Nexus where he helped train Kyle on tool sharpening and often helps to run the AV for Maker Nexus' quarterly meetings.

Congrats Mark!

President's Challenge

President's Challenge was to make twins from one a piece of wood



Felicia-Vases



James-Bishops



Dennis-Boxes



Scott-Boxes



Steve-Spindles



George-Maple Bowls



Angela-Cats



Vic-Vases



Sang-Box



Kat-Bowls

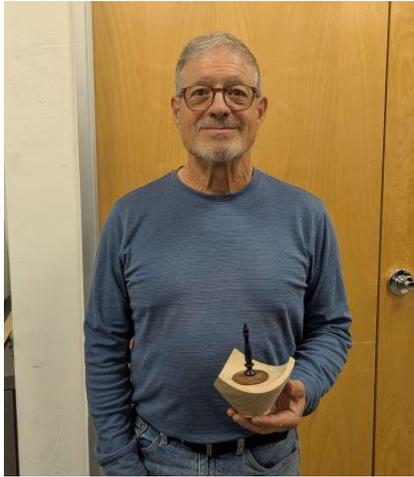


Jim-Bowls



Kevin-Triplets

Show and Tell



Jerry
3 Corner box (Sycamore,
Acacia)



Vic
Bowl (Black Acacia)



Sang
Painted bowl & Wigstand
(Poplar)



Kat
Platter



Kevin
Bowls (Juniper)

Not pictured: Felicia's Candleholder

Mark Your Calendar!

Date	Event
June 4	General Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demo: Lidded Box (Don Bonnett)- Pres Challenge: No Sandpaper
July 9	General Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demo: Inlay (Bob Bley)- Pres Challenge: Lidded Box
July 19	Sawdust Session: TBD
July 30	Board Meeting
Aug 20	Picnic <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Time: 5pm- Pres Challenge: Something for the kitchen

2025 Ironman Tracker

2025 Iron Man Status

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Joel Bauman	■											
Brad Bond			■									
Don Bonnett				■								
Edy Chung	■	■		■								
James Craig	■	■	■		■							
Steve Dahout	■	■	■	■	■							
Jerry Galli	■	■	■									
Angela Gunn		■	■	■	■							
Brian Havens	■	■	■									
Mark Koenig				■								
Jim Koren	■		■	■								
Kevin Lee	■	■	■	■	■							
Dennis Lillis	■	■	■	■	■							
Jim Loney	■											
Scott Lucas				■	■							
George Mathew	■	■	■	■	■							
Dylan McVoy		■										
Vic Mitnick	■	■	■	■	■							
Kat Napolitano		■	■	■	■							
Jim Ostrowski			■		■							
Sang Park	■	■	■	■	■							
Jessica Pineda	■											
Felicia Preston	■	■	■	■	■							
David Vannier			■	■								
Milton West					■							
John Whittier	■											
	Name Badge	Weed Pot	Offset Bowl	Wig Stand or BoC Box	Twins (identical or fraternal)							

About Us

Silicon Valley Woodturners Inc. is a non-profit [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) organization dedicated to education and having fun. Every position in the organization is held by volunteers. The dues we collect and the donations we get go towards teaching the members the art and craft of wood turning.

We are a local chapter (in the Bay Area of California) of the [American Association of Woodturners \(AAW\)](#).

President: Kevin Lee

Vice President/Program Dir/ Pens For The Troops Coordinator: Jerry Galli

Treasurer: Tom Stutz

Secretary: Felicia Preston

Member at Large: Dennis Lillis

Newsletter:

Photos provided by Angela Gunn.

To submit announcements or articles for an upcoming newsletter, please contact [Sang Park](#). Newsletters will typically be published 2 weeks after each general meeting.

www.svwoodturners.com

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