



CHATTERMARKS



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The eNewsletter for Woodturners of Western Puget Sound.

AIR

Brush

So scan the Show and Tell table, and when you come to one of Jay Shepard's pieces, the 'W' words begin to form—like "Whoa!" and "Wow!". Outstanding does not begin to describe some of Jay's work. For those of us who aspire to artistic heights, it brings on shortness of breath and a rapid pulse. If only..... we think.

Well do we have a treat for you! Jay will be here on Wednesday the 27th to show us some of the magic he creates with water-based finishes and an air brush technique he has perfected. A glance at the photo insert will show that the word 'perfected' is not an exaggeration.

Jay is not a late bloomer artist as some of our wood turners are. He has two college degrees in art, from Central Washington State and Arizona State, and a long history of working with wood. Initially, he used his

talents on hand crafting furniture and eventually evolved into using wood to create individual art pieces. Today, he almost exclusively works with his wood turnings.

In the beginning of his career, the term 'starving artist' did not appeal to Jay. So after graduating, he did what he needed to for his family and got a 'real' job. Working for the Department of Ecology of Washington, he helped develop award winning programs of waste reduction and recycling that are used all over the state.



Recycling is more than just a plaque on the wall for Jay. He takes recycling into all aspects of his art. Using locally available wood and calling it 'urban salvage', Jay likes to recycle scrap

or rejected wood with occasional accents of imported or exotic woods. We all can identify with taking a gnarly, ugly piece of wood and transforming it into something more attractive than someone would have ever thought possible.

Next meeting

May 27, 2015

Social time-
6:00 PM
Meeting -
6:30 PM

Kitsap
Adventist
School
5880 NW
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Bremerton,
WA

Special Speaker
and
demonstration

Jay Shepard

Pre-demonstration
activities -

Show and Tell,
Wood Auction,
Sand paper &
Glue sales.

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OPCAAW.COM



The Mystery and Magic of Madrone

By Russell Neyman.

You will see quite a few extraordinarily beautiful pieces on the Show & Tell table in the coming months. There will be large bowls with rich pink with creamy birdseye, hollow forms with dramatic reddish-brown flames, and lidded boxes with remarkable figured patterns. I know that because dozens of our club members turned out at a madrone burl sale at Dave Schweitzer's shop in Shelton two months ago and went home with wondrous chunks wood.

Dave is a fellow member of the Olympic Peninsula Woodturners and owner of D-Way Tools. Each year, he coaxes his friend, Jay Paremeter, to bring a huge flatbed trailer of the wood for us to buy and turn. This year Jay trucked in some figured maple, too. The ideal time to harvest any tree is at the end of winter when the sap is stable.

I arrived at the "advertised" start time of nine o'clock but was surprised to see several dozen veterans already there, grabbing their favorite pieces.

No matter, because there is always plenty for everyone. Visitors poke and prod the freshly-cut specimens like cowboys at a horse auction. Jay's wood is expensive -- \$1.25 a pound -- but worth every penny.

I LOVE THIS stuff! It's our home tree and we are lucky to have plenty of it around us.

Worked green, it turns like butter and it's easy to send yellow and pink ribbons of wood shooting across the shop. Typically, I make a hollow form or deep popcorn bowl, turning it to a perfect shape but knowing full well that, in a day or two, it will be highly textured and probably distorted to high heck.

If I leave it unfinished for a period of time the surface will turn a reddish brown, and if I apply a finish immediately after taking it off the lathe, it will generally keep its cream-and-pink tones.

Occasionally, a photo of one of these pieces will end up on a wood turner's forum page, and the wood draws a great deal of attention from artisans from other parts of the country. It's not considered an "exotic," like the pricy blanks imported from the rain forests of Central America or Africa,

but it is highly desired among wood turners.

The guys from Illinois, Pennsylvania and Texas marvel that we Pacific North-westerners can take a chainsaw into our backyards and cut down a tree that is this beautiful and dynamic. They ask, "Where the heck did you find that stuff?"

And there are reasons that cured bowl blanks aren't available in other parts of the country.



The Pacific Madrone was "discovered" by a scientist aboard Capt. George Vancouver's expedition to the Pacific Northwest in 1792. It grows exclusively in N CA, OR, WA, and B.C.

PACIFIC MADRONE

is a species of wood like no other and is unique to the Pacific Northwest. It only grows along the coastlines of Northern California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Its botanical species name -- *Arbutus Menziesii* -- honors Scottish

botanist Archibald Menzies, who "discovered" the tree during the 1792 expedition to the Pacific Northwest under the command of British explorer, Capt. George Vancouver.

It's a messy tree. It has reddish bark that peels away and elliptical, nondescript leaves that always seem to be dirty. The leaves grow in arrays of five to seven, and fall off in the cold season, leaving dark splotches on the roofs of light-colored cars. The outer skin tends to have warty knots and branches that suddenly change direction, as though the tree couldn't make up its mind when deciding which way it wanted to grow.

Burls usually grow near the root ball and branches higher up the tree tend to be yellower. Bark inclusions vary from deep red to black, and there does not seem to be a rhyme or reason for the coloring. I've found blue veins running the entire length of a trunk, bright red tones, and voids where you can't imagine they'd be. When it comes to color, madrone is fairly unpredictable.

One of the reasons madrone (which can be pronounced either "ma-DRONE" or See **Madrone** on page 3 -

The outer skin tends to have warty knots and branches that suddenly change direction, as though the tree couldn't make up its mind when deciding which way it wanted to grow.

Madrone—continued from page 2

“ma-drone-AH”) can be challenging to use for furniture projects in that it almost always grows with a lean. It’s rare to see one thicker than three feet in diameter and it often grows along a shoreline, reaching out over the water or out from under some evergreen. That lean means that part of the trunk is growing under stresses of compression. Those packed-together series of tree rings tend to release themselves as the tree dries. That translates into a giant crack all the way to the center.

I’m not positive, but it seems to me that madrone is much, much wetter than most species. This may affect the way it behaves when it dries.

Beyond the primary trunk not much grows straight, so its primary use within the woodworking community is limited. It’s often shaved into veneer and commands a high price, especially if there’s a figured wood involved.

It’s beautiful, sure, but it’s a major challenge to take a freshly fallen tree and turn it into a bowl.

MAKE NO MISTAKE about it: if you decide to harvest a madrone, you have work ahead and you’d better not dilly-dally. Left to its own devices, it will crack and split, and it will self-destruct in a blink of an eye. No, you can’t take an extra day to work the wood. It requires immediate attention.

Dave Schweitzer, Norm Hix and other veteran woodturners suggest boiling the wood to change the physical characteristics of the wood and slow down the drying process. The preferred method is to rough-turn the bowl leaving the walls quite thick (the rule of thumb is 10 percent of the overall diameter of the bowl; e.g., a 10-inch blank would have walls one inch thick) then boiling it in plain water for several hours. You still need to seal the end grain and set it aside to dry for weeks or months, but at least the chances of a serious split are reduced.

One complaint I hear about the boiling process is that it removes a great deal of the red hue from the wood. That’s a valid point, but you can cook down the red liquid that is left in the pot until it becomes a syrup and re-apply it to the shaped and sanded piece. You really aren’t applying a stain to the bowl; this step is merely re-installing a color that was temporarily removed.

Another technique is to place the wood in a large pail of denatured alcohol and let it soak for several days. I’m told that the alcohol and water exchange places, effectively replacing the water with a substance that will evaporate quickly.

Steve Bartocci, the chemist-turned-wood-dealer from Kirkland, tells me that preparing and selling madrone blanks is a risky business. Even after boiling his blanks, he loses a third of his stock to catastrophic cracks. Burl, because of its twisted grain, is less likely to split in half, but he still keeps a watchful eye on those, dabbing any checks with CA glue as necessary.

Bartocci is another advocate of the boiling method. He keeps two eight-inch blanks – one boiled, one not -- near his band saw to demon-

strate the dramatic results. One is quite workable; the other is so filled with cracks that it might not yield a single pen blank.

Of course, the splits and checks are to be avoided at all costs, but there are those of us who find textured and slightly bent



Madrone burl tends to be located around the tree's root ball, with lighter woods higher up.

bowls appealing. I call those “warpies” and they are among the most popular of the items I sell.

My preferred method for dealing with madrone’s idiosyncrasies is to attempt to control *some* of the warping – but not all -- usually with a combination of boiling and microwaving. I turn, boil, microwave, and then re-turn, watching for changes along the way. If

cracks develop I fill them immediately, either with glue or clay. The microwave step involves zapping the rough-turned object for just a minute or



Madrone is sliced for veneers as dimensional lumber is impractical.

two or three, depending on its mass, then letting it return to room temperature before giving it another jolt. You need to be careful not to overdo this. After microwaving, the piece should be warm but not hot to the touch. Be sure to weigh the piece so you know when you have reached a point of stabilized dryness.

See **Madrone** on page 4 -



Rolling Thunder

Washington, D.C.
on Memorial Day.

Those packed-together series of tree rings tend to release themselves as the tree dries. That translates into a giant crack all the way to the center.

Be sure to sign in at the meeting pay your dues. That money is used to bring in our great presenters and their valuable information.

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Madrone—continued from page 3

Another technique I find worthwhile is to turn a very green piece paper-thin, using a backlight shining through the wood as a guide for consistent thickness. I'll turn it as quickly as possible, then leave it spinning in the lathe for an hour or so, allowing it to air dry. Bowls and platters like these really can't be sanded – they're just too wet – but they can be polished. Typically, I'll toss it in the microwave after polishing. Later, after the wood is completely dry, I'll re-polish it.

The results are pretty dramatic and, often, extraordinary. Both partially dried and thin/green turned processes produce a textured surface, varying from a striped "corduroy" effect to a swirling "quilted" quality. Some crinkle up like an old potato.

If it's what I consider a show piece, I'll go the extra mile, taking months to complete the project as I wait for the moisture to stabilize. I often air-brush the features to replace some of the color lost during boiling. I have turned, perhaps, a hundred or more madrone pieces and almost always a surprise awaits me when the process is complete.

IN A WORD, madrone is a fascinating, beautiful wood that offers plenty of adventure. Working with Madrone is like going on a blind date—it's risky, exciting; and you can expect lots of surprises. Will the wood be stable? Will it simply self-destruct? Is the figure attractive? What color will this particular tree be? Yes, it is a great deal of work, but look at the wonderful results! **-RN**

Richard Raffan

Saturday July 25, 2015

A huge name in the world of woodturners, **Richard Raffan**

is soon to fade from the headlines of the craft's news as he nears retirement. The Woodturners of Olympia will present "A Day with Richard Raffan" in July with accompanying workshops from July 26th to August 2, 2015.

Sign up now to attend this symposium with Richard before he returns to his Australian home. Go to the web site—

<http://www.woodturnersofolympia.org> for more information and registration materials



DUST COLLECTOR RAFFLE

Don't forget, tickets are currently available for our raffle, which is a Delta Air Filtration system donated by Norm Hix. The system, although 10 years old, is in good condition.

It has a 1-1/2 hp motor that is currently set for 240v but easily convertible to 120v. Last year the top bag was replaced with a pleated filter by Wynn Environmental. The filter alone was over \$200. Also included are an assortment of gates, connectors, hoses, clamps and PVC fittings.

All in all, Norm estimates the value of the system at \$300 to \$400. A new 1-1/2 hp Delta or Jet air filter will start at over



Raffle #2—Delta Air Filtration system + parts and fittings

\$500. This complete system could be YOURS for a mere \$5.00 ticket! (see photo)

If you don't already have a dust collection system, YOU NEED ONE! Protect yourself. Keep your air clean. Keep yourself healthy.

See Larry Matkins at the rear of the meetings to purchase your raffle ticket for this dust collection system. It's a great in-



Veteran woodturners suggest boiling the wood to change its physical characteristics and slow down the drying process.

Do a favor to the Club and a friend – print this newsletter and pass it on.—Ed.



"Working with
madrone is like
going on a blind date;
it's risky, exciting,
and you can
expect surprises."



A Gallery of Member's Work: Many of these beautiful pieces are made from Madrone. Clockwise, from the upper left are pieces by Dave Schweitzer, Dan Ackerman, Scott Overby, and Ralph Lindberg. Photos by Dan Marler from our website.

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Page 5

Help Wanted: Auctioneer

The club needs someone with a unique set of skills to help us with the monthly wood auction. George Kromka, who has handled the job for several years, is tackling a new assignment for the club and will no longer be available, so we need an individual who has a fair knowledge of wood and has a sense of "negotiation" to help us out. Contact Russell Neyman at PRESIDENT@OPCAAW.com

We can't stress how important this position is to the success of our monthly event. Effectively, the money produced by the wood auction is a major source of funds for the club, so if you have the skills, please drop a note. Your responsibility would be for just the 20 minutes or so during the wood auction.

14-42 Lathe Auction

A member of the club donated a Jet 14-42 lathe. Repairs have been done to the lathe and it is in great running condition.

The club will auction off the lathe at the next general meeting on May 27, 2015. Proceeds from the auction go towards the video upgrade fund.

The auction will be held in the front parking lot after Show and Tell. All those interested please gather at Russ's pickup where the lathe will be displayed.

Changes to the Bylaws Are Under Consideration.

Later this year the Olympic Peninsula Woodturners Board of Directors is likely to propose some modifications to our club bylaws. The changes under consideration are fairly minor but this requires a vote of the general membership.

The primary change being discussed will be the addition of webmaster to the Board of Directors. The role of Vice President of Public Relations has grown to the point that one person cannot handle both the newsletter and the website, so two roles have been created. There is also some confusion about how and when our elections take place, and there may also be a modification to that section of the bylaws.

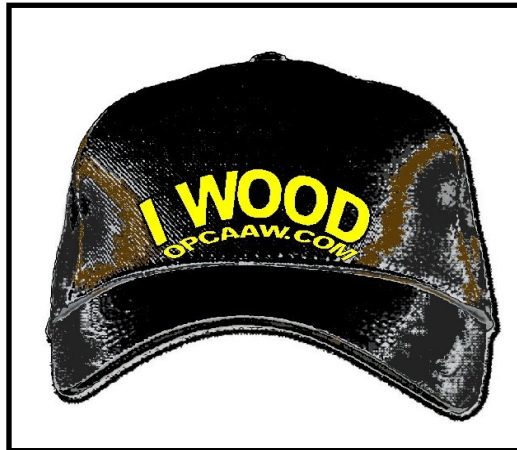
Club member Terry Jackson, who is experienced in these sorts of things, has been reviewing the current document and has made suggestions, but everyone's opinion is welcome. A copy of the current Bylaws can be found on our website at www.OPCAAW.com.



"I WOOD" Hats

Baseball caps displaying bold "I Wood" lettering produced by member Bonnie Douglass should be available for purchase at the May meeting for \$20 apiece. We did take special orders for custom colors last month, but the "regular inventory" will be a single color scheme (probably black with yellow lettering).

The hats will be located adjacent to the Glue & Sandpaper display.



In the area

Cedar Root Folk School is offering a platter carving class—June 20-21, 2015 on Maristone Island, near Port Townsend, WA.

The course description states: *Use traditional tools to carve a serving platter or*



trencher from cedar or red alder wood with Heidi Bohan, author of People of Cascadia. After carving the platter you can ornament the platter with carving details and decorative elements such as shell and metal.

These functional platters can be used for serving food or as regular dinnerware. Each platter is custom designed based on personal taste and skill set.

Heidi Bohan is an educator and author specializing in ethnobotany, native plants and their traditional uses.

See *In the Area* on page 7

May 2015

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Coming up -

Calendar of events, shows, classes and other things

2015

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| May 27—Monthly meeting | Jay Shepard | Air brush technique and water based finishes |
| June 24— Monthly meeting | Eric Loftstrom | Square bowls |
| July 29—Monthly meeting | Currently open, but we're talking with a great Canadian turner | |
| August 15 - Olalla Bluegrass Festival | One day booth with demonstrations and club information | |
| August 8 - Club Picnic | Otto Jarstaad Park, Gorst WA | |
| August 26-30 - Kitsap County Fair | Three day booth with show and tell and club info | |
| October 28— 25th anniversary celebration | with 94 y.o. guest speaker Wally Dickerman | |

Continued from In the Area on page 6 -

Cedar Root is a school dedicated to the preservation of lost crafts from bow and arrow making to tracking to plant medicines. See their web site at <http://cedarrootfolkschool.org/classes/>.

The Arbutus Folk School in Olympia, WA is offering a beginning wood turning class taught by Larry Miller at his shop. More information and registration can be found at their web site— <http://www.arbutusfolkschool.org/current-classes/>. Available classes are June 13, Sept 12, Oct 10, and Nov 7, 2015. They are one day classes with a minimum of 3 students and a maximum of 5.

This is a basic class covering lathe operation and safety, tool use, sharpening, turning techniques and finishing. No experience needed. No tools needed. Instructor will provide basic tools.

Make yours a ladder of success

Spring means maintenance, and maybe a need for a ladder. For each use one should consider the type, length, rating and material of the ladder to be used for the job at hand. In preparation to making a climb setting up your ladder is a major step.

1. Chose a safe location.
2. Prepare a level footing. Set the ladder at the correct angle (75 degrees). A too steep angle will endanger the climber to the ladder tipping over.
3. Ladder should extend @ least 3' above upper level (extension ladders).
4. Secure the bottom. Make sure both feet are in

contact with the ground.

5. Secure the top. No sliding around. Maintain the area clear of debris.

Do not:

1. use a step ladder in its closed position.
2. use it from the wrong side.
3. straddle it or sit on top.
4. walk it to move while you are on the ladder.

Climbing a ladder

1. Face the ladder going both up and down.
2. Keep your weight centered
3. Use 3 point contact – 2 feet and a hand; 2 hands and a foot
4. Carry no loads (only small tools on a belt)
5. Only one person on ladder at a time
6. Avoid exerting force while on ladder which could cause the ladder to shift.
7. Be very aware getting on and off, especially at the top.
8. Do not stand on top 3 rungs.

All above adapted from National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health - 2005.

I have been guilty of skipping steps five through eight of set up, step one of do not's and four and six of climbing. I hope you have a better record.—Vern

**Vern's
Safety
Corner**

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Remember to show your OP-CAAW membership name tag with a current year stamp showing you are a paid up member and get a discount with one of our sponsors

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Jim Conway,
Editor

The Mentoring Program

The OPCA AW Mentors are an select group of artisans and professionals who we have designated to promote, encourage, and guide novice and intermediate woodturners within our organization. Mentors provide counsel on subjects like shop setup, equipment purchase, safety, wood preparation and specialized skills. These are some friendly folks willing to give you a point in the right direction.

While not actually a formal training program, meetings with mentors often become just that. In some cases, advanced formal instruction is available for an hourly rate.

OPCA AW Mentoring is available only to members. Please bring your current badge with you to the first session

The current mentors are:

Dan Ackerman (Brinnon)	360-796-4155
Tones Briggs (Port Orchard)	360-271-6448
Bob Hickernell (Bremerton)	360-479-5501
George Kromka (Bremerton)	360-373-1028
Jim Leary (Kingston)	360-297-5872
Jim McFarland (Shelton)	903-352-9807
Brad Stave (Gig Harbor)	206-910-5459

bstave@comcast.net

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Most people have been brainwashed into believing that their job is to copy-edit the world, not to design it—Seth Gordin



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