This edition of the monthly newsletter will cover some basic tips and hints associated with your woodturning and the tools you would normally use in your shop. I thought this would be a good forum to discuss some of the common wives tales spreading around the shops. I’ll take it easy on these, put the response in simple terms, and save you some time and money.

Tool Handles

I get a lot of calls on handles for turning tools. I think new turners look in the catalogs and magazines and see turners creating art with handles unlike the normal design and shape of tool handles. Everything from three sided to double stepped handles are being shown and touted all over the internet and video world. I really wonder who came up with these designs and what they expected to achieve with the changes. I remember a time in the 60’s when steering wheels grew or shrunk by about 3” in either direction. It didn’t help you steer the car, but it looked really cool in the car, and that’s what it was all about, looks. I believe tool handles should be of good wood, with a great finish. Offsets, bumps, second ridges for handles, etc are just not necessary. I use the simple design method of “if it works for my other tools, it will work here”. I turn most of my handles from 1.5” material since by hands are fairly large and I like the feel of a tool in my hands. I start by picking a tool that will run like the new one, get the sizes and start a blank. I want to drill the hole in the handle while it is being held in the lathe. I squeeze the blank in the chuck and drill through the tailstock to establish the center and about a 3 inch depth of drill. Getting this bit to run to the center and be straight is the hardest thing most woodturners will encounter in making a handle. You are going to ask about the size of the hole, if it is a square shanked tool, just enough of a hole to get it started in and keep it round. Then before you set the tool, put some epoxy in the bottom of the hole to grab the bottom of the bar when you set it. The bottom is much more important than the neck of the tool because chatter happens when the tool is allowed to move or vibrate in the holder. Of course, you will have to use a piece of 3/4” copper, either a 3/4” long scrap or one-half of a slip sleeve as a ferrel at the end of the tool. Now that you have set the length and drilled the hole it is time to put the shape on the handle. While holding it in the chuck, put the rotating center in the hole and shape up the neck, make it so the ferrel sits on it nice and tight. I guess by now you noticed that the hole is nicely centered in the handle, nice how that works out.
I like to put a little step at the end of the handle, but nothing to lock my hand onto when turning, I want the ease of movement to be of my own making and not locked into what somebody else chose for me. I shape the entire handle, neck it down for parting and apply a few coats of O.B. Shine Juice as a sealer. This is a tool handle, avoid exotic finishes or finishes that will damage easily or flake off.

I always put a coat of stick wax on the handle before I part it off and get it ready for the tool. Making a good tool handle is as simple, or as complex, as you want it to be. Just keep in mind that it is your tool handle, your work of shop art and it really should look good.

Get a handle done and send me a photograph for the newsletter.

“Management”

A couple of years ago I started sharing the responsibilities of our family business of providing cutters, bars and other components required by woodturners. You began dealing with my lovely wife, Cindy, in her role of sorting, filling, packing and shipping your orders. She also handles all financial transactions of Big Guy Productions, which I had to transfer to her during my extended stay in the hospital. I guess the bottom line would come down to one statement, “If Cindy doesn’t do it, it will not get done”.

Big Guy Productions is a true home business, with real home business situations. We have to maintain an inventory of items which woodturners are searching for, at a really good price. And we have to keep tuned into the wants and needs of the woodturner who supports us. We have added several shapes of cutters in the past two years, all exact copies of the cutters being sold by some of our competition. If you find a cutter that you need, and want, drop us a photo, scan, copy, or an actual cutter for us to work with. We can get right to work on it and have an inventory prepared for sale.

“Management” is still working on finding vendors for items dropped off our schedule during my 5 month nap in the rehab units. We have found several vendors to perform the work, I think I will be returning to the shop in September to create the Blackhawk sharpening system. I hope to get all the inventory available for purchase by November, and that should make your Christmas shopping a little easier.

To keep up on what is available, check our website, [WWW.eddiecastelin.com](http://WWW.eddiecastelin.com)
Members Gallery

I have a piece that I’d love to show this month. It is made of Maple, which I turned as two bowls, then glued them together and shaped the outside. To be sure I got the walls the same thickness all around, I put a small hole in the center of each larger circle and I used a special made thickness tool (bent piece of hard wire) to check as I was hollowing. It is unbelievably thick and very consistent. I did the decorating with an air powered carving tool.

I received this from Jerry McGill. He just finished making a complete set of carbide tools with parts he bought from Cap’n Eddie Castelin. They look great, but do they cut? They are carbide tipped and sharp as ever. Nice job on making tools.

This is a piece from (unknown) since I had a lightning strike erase a lot of e-mails I accessed through the shop computer. I managed to move the photos, but the e-mail went with the other stuff the mighty ruler of lightning decided to erase.
I got this from **Jim Elkins**. Don’t know what he was turning, but he was sure having a good time. Fresh shavings all over a clean lathe. You gotta love it.

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**Freedom Pens, for Our Troops**

I was just told that this project is closing in on 200,000 pens for our troops. It is time to get you started.

You may have seen or heard something from me about Freedom Pens in the work I produce. Freedom Pens is your chance to turn pens as a Thank You for our troops. It’s not a complex situation, in fact it is very simple.

1. Contact me and provide your name, address and **phone number** so we can reach you.

2. Talk with Joe Kelly when he calls you about being part of the program and arrange for you to get the kits necessary for the pens.

3. When you receive the kits, provide the blanks and get to turning Freedom Pens.

4. When you are complete with the pens, enclose a card to our troops in each package and wait for the responses. Joe will provide you with more information as you need it.

5. Ship your completed pens to Joe Kelly and he will be sure to get them to the people who will distribute them to our troops.

Then you are a part of the finest group of woodturners in the world and you have produced a fantastic thank you for our fighting men and women.

Again: Want it? Send the information to Capt. Eddie Castelin at capneddiecastelin@gmail.com or Joe Kelly at JHDK@cox.net
Just An Angle?
I get regular request for sharpening angles on turning tools. I’ve decided to address a few of the standards and why they are sort of “Set in Stone”. I’ll start with the Skew chisel and the angle that I have learned to sharpen it to.

The Skew is a very useful tool and can provide a glass smooth finish on most woods if used properly. Now you wonder, why did I start with the finish when I’m supposed to be discussing the sharpening of the skew. The blade that does all the cutting is what gives you that finish, that cut provides the perfect finish and allows you to control the cutting action of the skew. How you achieve that edge will make all the difference in the world to a beginning woodturner.

Let’s picture the skew edge, it is ground back to an angle of 25 degrees between the faces. Not 25 degrees off the vertical or horizontal, but 25 degrees from the opposite face. The reason is simple, you need to attack the wood just like a block plane would, small bites of a very sharp blade. I use a small protractor I get from Home Depot to determine that 25 degrees of cut. The first time I sharpened to this standard I thought it was too thin and would break off or chip when hit. But I took my time and got the basic shape without heating up the blade. Heating up the blade would definitely weaken the front edge and reduce the time between sharpening. But once you have it to shape, all you have to do is touch it up, no grinding, just sharpening. (This is a big difference in creating an edge.)

I use a 100+ grit wheel, on slow speed grinder, to put the edge in shape for sharpening and cutting. Once I get the blade shaped up, all I have to do is touch it up with a 320 grit diamond stone to get the very edge to the right shape and sharpness. (see the attached photo)

As you can see, the 25 degree angle is rather sharp, it needs to be sharp. A stubby bit will be too hard to control if you plan on doing slicing cuts with one of the most dreaded tools in your shop. Once you have it sharp across the cutting edge you need to practice on wood that you don’t want. That way, when you gouge it up, or ruin it, you can just drop it in the trash and not be bothered by it.

Let’s talk about the cut you will make, the slicing cut. If woodturners would stop listening to the guy in the woodcraft store, or reading the book published by the lathe manufacturer, we’d all be better off and make better art. Start with a piece of wood about 2” in thickness between centers. Put the lathe speed somewhere around 1000 RPM. Place the tool rest about 1/4” from the face of the piece and turn it on. Did I mention wearing the shield during this? Wear it.

Now I want you to get the blade high and mighty over the piece of wood, don’t cut, just rub for the beginning. This will give you an idea of where you want to be and cutting what you want. Then I would like you to twist the handle until the blade makes contact with the wood. You should turn it to be a slightly open cut on the piece. If you did it right, you made a cut, wrong and you jammed it in the lathe. Stop and start over again. After a few attempts, you should have some shavings coming out of the piece and start shaping it.

Keep practicing, it takes some time to develop the technique and produce some fine work.
Safety Shield
Many of you have heard me talk about safety visors and safety shields. I truly believe in them and use my almost often enough. I say almost because if I’m producing a video, the sound would be terrible with a shield on. With that being said, I have to start wearing mind more often than not because “management” is raising hell with me about shop safety. She feels that since I was toe-tagged twice in one year because of things we could not control, we can control being hit by flying wood and the shield would be the #1 way to start.

I was reminded of this by Ron R. of the Northeast territories with a short e-mail I received this weekend.
Ron reports, “I was just watching the first part of a two part video by Mike P. He’s turning a platter. He was wearing a ring all through the first part. Right at the end, he says : “Captain Eddie, I listened to you. I’ve taken my ring off”.
I feel good knowing that Mike decided that marriage bling isn’t more important than being safe in the shop. I understand management’s view on the matter, after all, it is a wedding thing, but that finger you could lose is a handicap thing, one does outweigh the other.
Dump the bling and get safe, it is the only way to go.

Want to be part of the Makin’ Shavin’s Group?
I’m always looking for input from the end user, your input is requested. Be it in print matter, worthy of the newsletter, photos of your work, photos of your tools, etc. (Especially the Etc.) If you have something you want covered, send me the information, request, photos, etc. and I will use them as I have room.
Send it to: capneddiecastelin@gmail.com