



Alabama Woodturners Association



AWA Newsletter

A member of the American Association of Woodturners
Location-Homewood Senior Center; 816 Oak Grove Road; Homewood, Alabama 35209
www.alabamawoodturners.com

October 2016

Coming Events

- October 8-Dean Black~'Turning Large'
- November 12-Round Robin
- December 10-Christmas Luncheon
- January 14-TBD

2016 Officers of AWA

- President-John Sowell
- Vice President-Carl Cummins
- Treasurer-Jennifer Smith
- Secretary-Amy Benefield/Jean Cline
- Directors-Maurice Clabaugh, Bruce Gibson, Dwight Hostetter, Michael Malinconico, Richard Serviss, Staten Tate, Gary Hales
- Webmaster-Carl Cummins
- Newsletter Editors-Jean Cline, Amy Benefield

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Christmas Is Coming!

How many ornaments have you made and turned in?

October~Dean Black 'Turning Large'

Note that the October meeting will NOT be held at the Senior Center in Homewood. It will be at Dean Black's shop in Springville. Please see page 6 for directions and pages 7 and 8 for more information.



September Demonstrator-Jim Sebastian



September Turn and Tell



Jerry Hanchey~Red Oak Vessel; Poplar and ? (Airbrushed and Lacquer) Christmas Ornament

John Jackman~Sweet Gum and Magnolia Bowls

Sandy Bishop~Hickory Branch Bowl

Howard King~White Oak/Birseye Maple Vase; Mesquite/Walnut Vase; Mesquite Vase; Hickory Bowl; Walnut and Maple Bowl

Maurice Clabaugh~Norfolk Island Pine Thin (3/32") Bowl

Myra Harper~Cherry Vessel; Walnut Bowl; Red Oak Bowl

Phil Duffy~Natural Edge Elm Burl Vessel

Royal Ritchey~Cherry Vessel

Jack Capps~Red Bud Vessel

Jack Tyler~Cherry Vessel

Bill Hubbard~Redwood and Cherry Vessels

Carl Cummins~Dogwood, Cherry, Maple, Hickory Thin Bowls

Justin Miller~Maple, Holly, Sycamore, Diamond Wood Christmas Tree Topper

Pete Marken~Ambrosia Maple Vessel; Spalted Tamarind/Katalox Vessel; Ambrosia Maple, Katalox Vessel; Tamarind Vessel

Gary Hales~Apple Bowl

Dwight Hostetter~Osage Orange Shoe Horn

Ronny Perkins~Acrylic Stamp Pen



How'd They Do That?



Saturday Afternoon Mentoring (Starts about 1 hour after the morning session ends or about 1:00)

AWA owns lathes, chucks and tools necessary to use in classes but you may also bring your own tools. Training is held in the Craft Room at the Homewood Senior Center.

If you are interested in participating either as a student or a mentor, Phil would love to talk to you and sign you up! Phil Fortmeyer-(205) 612-7496.

James Files designed and turned the September piece for the Karl Harper Perpetual Challenge. Jack Capps' name was drawn as the recipient of Mr. Files' piece and will design and turn the next piece.



Johnny Adams, whose birthday was September 2, won the birthday prize.

Who will take home the October birthday prize of a piece of Red Mallee?

Check out the list of contenders below.

AWA October Birthdays

Marty Cogan - 10/6
Nick Menzies - 10/10
Ron Griffin - 10/12
Martin Howell - 10/18
Michelle Marken - 10/20
Janet McDonald - 10/23
Howard King - 10/26
Sandra McMillan - 10/31
Tommy Poe - 10/31

October Born

Clairvoyant. Nature Lover. You are a born leader. People look up to you. Amiable. Honest. More emotional than practical. Rebellious, at times. Totally independent. Good looker. Clever. Faithful towards family, friends and your love. You give importance where due. Dedicated and hard working.

Raffle Prize News

We're changing the raffle once again!

Bring an item to donate and buy raffle tickets. We'll raffle the items donated and all of the tickets will go into the pot for a new lathe!

So-o-o-o, what do you donate? How about a tool, jig, turned item, wood blank etc. If you've been to any of the meetings since November, you probably saw some of the items that were donated for the AAW Symposium ticket raffle. That should give you a pretty good idea. Use your imagination ... within reason, of course! As a bonus, if you bring donations, you'll get an additional raffle ticket!

\$1 each ~~~~~ \$5 for 6 tickets ~~~~~ \$10 for 13 tickets.
Ask Amy for ticket numbers for higher dollar amounts!

The success of this raffle and when the drawing takes place will depend on your willingness to donate nice items and also to buy raffle tickets.

\$1 each ~~~~~ \$5 for 6 tickets ~~~~~ \$10 for 13 tickets

If you don't think you are an expert turner, look at any of the newsletters from other clubs. You will see that your turnings are equal to anything out there. Your turned items probably *ARE* 'good enough'.

AWA gives a birthday gift door prize to a turner who has a birthday during the month of that meeting.

Here are the 'rules' for 2016 as they stand now:

- 1) This is a door prize so, yes, you need to be at the meeting and stay for the drawing to win.
- 2) You need to make sure Jean and/or Amy have your correct birthdate. No fair changing your birthdate in the middle of the year! You're stuck with the one they originally gave you!

President's Challenge-September 2016

Thin-walled bowl-4" or more in diameter by 1/8" or less thick



President's Challenges For 2016

February-Done!

Tops

March-Done!

Jigs, Tools and Contraptions you have made

April-Done!

Square Bowl-7" x 7" x 2" or larger

May-Done!

A natural edge piece incorporating a major flaw in the wood

June

No Challenge due to the AAW Symposium

July-Done!

Matched or complimentary pair of candle sticks, one at least 6" high

August

Pepper mill in memory of Karl's Harper's birthday

September

Thin-walled bowl-4" or more in diameter by 1/8" or less thick

October

Christmas Ornaments

November

Lidded box with 'pop' top-1" or more in diameter

Location: Blackwood Gallery & Studio, Springville Al.

Driving directions: I-59 N to Hwy. 174 (exit 154). Go left to 4-way stop and then left on Hwy. 11. Gallery and shop is 1/2 mile on right. Phone: 205.467.7197

Dean's work is all throughout the B'ham Botanical Gardens.

Dean Black has done extensive turning and casework for the Birmingham Museum of Art and is one of the most highly regarded woodworkers in the Birmingham area. He will demonstrate both faceplate and spindle turning using a variety of lathes in his fabulous shop!



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WORKING WITH WOOD

'Good ol' boy in debutante market' welcomes art seekers to his shop

By Nancy Raabe
News staff writer

He went to school to become a veterinarian but now makes his living as a master woodworker.

He's fished huge blocks of Spanish cedar out of the Caribbean, and turned what others considered useless driftwood into elegant, hand-crafted bowls of tremendous value.

He's been known to banker after magnificent old oak trees for years running, hoping against hope for some catastrophe that might put the wood into his skilled hands — and has been rewarded by lightning strikes that ended up doing just that.

He crafted all of the exquisite woodwork for the Birmingham Museum of Art's Asian collection, including the majestic walnut colonnade, capitol and



NEWS STAFF PHOTOS/CHARLES NESBITT

Dean and Sharon Black pose next to Bob Taylor's copper "Frawg" in their gallery, which opens on the back into a woodworking shop. Dean Black built both the tool and the post lathe that he uses above to turn a large piece of Spanish cedar from the Caribbean Sea into a decorative bowl.

wood beams that frame the big mural in the Chinese gallery.

But he also specializes in gunsmithing. He has built a full-sized working cannon out of wood that has been coveted by rock legend Neil Young and country star Kenny Rogers. And more than just about anything, he enjoys riding to work on his

Arabian filly, Nifa, or tooling through downtown Springville on his John Deere.

There are other seeming contradictions that make Springville's Dean Black one of the more interesting people you're likely to meet. But when it comes down to his craft, nothing needs elucidation: All who know him agree

he's one of the finest woodworkers around. In addition to his work at the BMA, other public credits include the Japanese teahouse gates at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 30 columns over the stage inside Samford University's Harrison Theatre, the cross at All Saints' Episcopal Church, 22 columns for the Montgomery Cancer Center and, with Conroy Parker, the University of Alabama at Birmingham's graduation scepter.

"Dean is very, very gifted, and we're lucky to have him here," said Don Wood, curator of the Birmingham Museum of Art's Asian collection. "He's known all over the region. He's so versatile, from the guns he custom-builds to the work he's done here at the museum to work he does for private individuals. He has a real understanding of wood, which is unusual. He really understands the trees, what will work and what won't. That comes only from a real love of what you're doing."

Thanks to Blackwood, the gallery and shop that Black operates on the main drag in Springville with his wife, Sharon, an artist and fourth-grade teacher at Chalkville Elementary School, visitors can see Black in action just about anytime. The Blacks keep regular hours but advise those coming from a distance to call first at 1-205-467-7197 to make sure they'll be there. Located at 5715 U.S. 11, the shop will be closed through next Sunday in preparation for an upcoming exhibit of Russian glass.

See Blackwood, Page 2F

From Page 1P

Shop in back

Out in front, Sharon operates the gallery, which specializes in the work of Alabama artists such as Cam Langley, Sarah McCleskey, Frank Fleming, Ethel Owen and Michael Wootton.

In back, Dean's woodworking shop houses more than 100 varieties of wood, including exotic types such as pink ivory (so rare that Black carefully saves the sawdust from the palm-sized heart pendants he makes for future use), Brazilian rosewood, African bloodwood, ebony and purple heart — along with a wide array of tools, lathes and saws, many of which Black designed and built himself.

Oh, yes, and talk about doing it yourself: Black and a few others constructed the entire building from scratch — shop and gallery —

without any plans, working solely from a rough sketch on a single piece of paper. That way, they were able to incorporate a stall in the rear for Nifa that includes a Mr. Ed-like window through which the horse may comfortably watch her master at work.

Black and his wife also have another Arabian, Raffiq, and two black Labradors, Chewbacca and Achusta, along with innumerable "varmints" that occupy the couple's 133-acre farm around their log-cabin home a couple of miles away.

Black's feel for wood comes from an equally deep love for the outdoors, and the creatures of the earth, that he's had for as long as he can remember. His grandmother, Vira Black, ran Black's Bird Barn near Homewood Cemetery years ago. "She raised birds in her house," Black said. "She'd have 5,000 in there at a time. She raised them for everybody, including Sears and Roebuck's," back in the days when those littlelets sold small pets. And just where did all those birds stay? In one end of an old bus, of course, which his grandmother had cut off and attached to the house.

"She'd lug the birds around in her black '51 Plymouth," Black said, recalling harrowing rides transporting the birds here or there. "When she took off like a bat out of hell, you could hear those birds just banging on."

Vira Black also grew her own vegetables and saved scrupulously, even re-using old nails. So self-reliant was the family, Black said his father used to tell him, that they didn't even feel the Depression.

Dean grew up with wild animals

as pets. "Squirrels can be real friendly," he noted. "If you get them young enough, they'll play on your shoulders." He ended up taking three coveted pets — a boa constrictor, a rattlesnake and his horse — with him to school at Auburn University. "The boa would get out, but he was real friendly," Black explained, taken aback slightly by a visitor's surprise.

Almost a vet

While in school at Auburn, Black lived on the old 300-acre Whatley Plantation some 10 miles off campus. It was there that he got interested in gunsmithing by refinishing old guns and installing parts to earn spending money. Eventually Black opened up his own gunsmithing shop in the old White and Black Grocery Store on the plantation grounds. He'd been interested in guns for years,

Black said, "but I wasn't your typical kid. Being educated about guns early in life is very important."

On track at Auburn to become a veterinarian, Black was stopped short when he couldn't bring himself to put a dog to sleep. He'd been interested in wood since he was a youngster, when his father, Buddy, a salesman for the family-owned Southern Furniture and Rug Co., let him help restore furniture. Eventually that interest led him back to woodworking, and he and Sharon opened Blackwood in 1991.

The ingenuity that he's used to build whatever he needs comes from his father, Black said, who could do just about anything he set his mind to, including gourmet cooking and sewing.

Black insists he is not an artist, but a craftsman. "I can't even draw a straight line," he said. But for a novice, watching Black at work in the shop is to experience a rare combination of artistry and alchemy. His prized pink ivory hearts, crafted from small chunks of that precious wood, are honed to smooth perfection with loving care. Here at one end of the room, using special tools he's made himself, he can turn a simple round cylinder of wood into an finely tooled doorknob in the twinkling of an eye; there, at the other end, he passes the edge of a flat board through a machine that notches it perfectly, so that when it's glued to another similarly made piece the seam has no chance of breaking.

In the end, Black is entirely comfortable with his role as a "good ol' boy in a debutante market," as he puts it. He loves his old-fashioned tools, proudly shows off his lathe —

patented in 1860 — and freely admits that he is completely computer-illiterate.

"A mouse to me is some furry rodent," he said, shaking his head. "And I wouldn't play a four-year-old in Nintendo, because I'd get beat. People say I should get a computer, that I ought to come into the 20th century. I say, when a computer can sand a bowl or a board, let me have it. I like doing things the old-fashioned way. I hope my clientele does, too."

Part of the idea in having the gallery in front, Dean said, is to first draw people in the door with the artwork, and then hopefully have them continue back into the woodworking shop, where he clearly enjoys having visitors.

"If I could get paid for talking," Black said with a twinkle in his eye, "I'd be in good shape."