

Can a fading chapter revitalize itself?

By Ken Emerson

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American Association of Woodturners

Northern Rockies Woodworkers Guild (NRWG) was founded in the mid 1980s by a group of woodworkers in Montana's Gallatin Valley. Although the guild billed itself as a general woodworking group, turners were a majority of members. We met regularly for several years, and in the early 90s we brought in some nationally known woodturning demonstrators.

Guild fades away

Like many organizations, the organization's life was closely tied to a handful of dedicated volunteers. After a 1994 demonstration by Richard Raffan, the well-known Australian turner, several members who had worked hard to make a success of these events said "never again!" At the same time, a couple of active members had serious health problems. In a short time, our group was so reduced in size that we simply faded away. No officers, no meetings, no programs.

But we did have money. Despite the member problems, the NRWG was blessed with a treasury of more than \$2,000. Dave Dickey, the treasurer at the time of the chapter's withering, continued to keep tabs on the guild's bank account. However,



Clay Foster's four days of workshops and demonstrations were the impetus for the revitalization of the Northern Rockies Woodworkers Guild. See page 44 for some of Clay's recent work.

when his own health began to fail in 2000, Dave pushed and cajoled some turners into recharging their batteries.

The old constitution was long gone, so we drafted a new one, elected officers, and set up a meeting schedule. Again, most of us were turners, so this time we conformed our constitution to the

AAW guidelines and became an affiliate chapter. There were about 10 of us who were retreats from the earlier group, and we spread the word about the revived group—mostly by word of mouth. Soon we brought in about another 10 new people, doubling our membership. (We had never been much bigger than that anyway, so we were pleased to reach that size.) We reintroduced monthly meetings from September to June, moving between members' shops and made a demonstration a key part of every meeting.

Because so many of us realized the value of workshops—especially to beginning turners—we wanted to bring in outside demonstrators. And we had this \$2,000 treasury....

We knew our \$2,000 treasury wouldn't by itself pay all the workshop expenses, but we believed we could put our grubstake together with other sources and make it work.

With the right people, you bet!

Chapter grows after Clay Foster demos

Tom Robinson, one of our new members, knew Clay Foster while living several years in Texas. Tom suggested that Clay would be a good candidate for our first try with an outside demonstrator. After Clay agreed to demonstrate in May, we applied for and received an Education Opportunity Grant to support our effort.

About 25 turners enrolled for Clay's two-day demonstration. Another eight members enrolled in an additional two-day hands-on workshop. Our events drew turners from as far away as Billings—about 150 miles away. And the big news for our small chapter: We signed up six or eight new members during Clay's visit. Our chapter grew by one-third!

The participant fees paid for just about half of the workshop costs; the EOG funds and our treasury paid the balance. All of those who gave us feedback on the workshop were pleased with what they had learned. Many of us recognize that our turning has noticeably improved. The officers are pleased to be growing again and we're already planning to hold another event in 2004.

Stay tuned: We're back as an active chapter.

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The Quizzical Woodturner

By Ernie Newman

Think you know something about woodturning? Test your woodturning IQ, then check answers below.

- 1 Match the wood types with the areas where they are found growing naturally:

Ebony	Australia
Eucalyptus	South East Asia
Balsa	Tropical America

- 2 What is the optimum thickness for a $3/4$ " wide skew chisel:
A= $1/8$ " B= $3/16$ " C= $1/4$ "

- 3 When is the roughing gouge used in faceplate work (grain at 90 degrees to lathe bed)?

- 4 An auger or drill may be mounted in the tailstock and used to bore a hole in wood chucked on the lathe. What is the consequence if the auger or drill wobbles or bounces as it enters the wood?

- 5 Have lathes ever been successfully powered by water?

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ANSWERS:

There is more than one way to turn and there isn't just one right answer to the questions in this quiz. Your comments and corrections are welcome.

- 1 Eucalyptus (gums) are native to Australia, Balsa is native to tropical America, and ebony is native to South East Asia and to Africa.

- 2 Some turners won't touch a skew chisel of any type, but those who do will find that skew chisels less than $1/4$ "-thick tend to chatter due to lack of strength and rigidity. A $1/4$ "-thick chisel will rarely chatter except on jobs such as porch posts where the tool overhang is excessive. In these cases a thicker tool is preferable.

- 3 The wide, shallow-fluted roughing gouge is so user-friendly on between-center work that it is tempting to try it on pieces where the grain runs at 90 degrees to the lathe bed. However, in this context the wide shaving that it takes is very difficult to control and likely to cause a monster dig-in, which could easily split the wood into two very dangerous pieces.

- 4 If the auger or drill wobbles when presented to the wood, then it will run off line. It is ideal to turn out a conical lead-in to center the drill or auger. If it still wobbles, the lead-in should be turned again for another try.

- 5 Water mills were first used to power lathes in the 16th century in Nuremberg, Germany. In the early 19th century, George Walker pioneered tidal power in New Hampshire. Walker set up his woodturning workshop over a tidal inlet. He used the tidal flow to power his lathe and, as his water wheel was reversible, he could turn whichever way the water was flowing.