



# Northwest Corner Woodworkers Association

8

May, 2002

## Next Meeting: Mike Hess' Shop 1185 Roy Rd. Bellingham 360-650-1070 May 7, 2002 7:00pm

### Bowling on the Green

The demo was about to start. We all had heard descriptions before of Vernon Leibrant's turning prowess with big bowls and had just finished viewing examples of his big wheels of fortune that lined two walls of display room and shop in Everson, WA. We were now ready for this noted Washington woodturner to show us the way.

When I got my first lathe, a mini, two Christmases ago, I hied down to PSWC for basic training. After a couple sessions, my first bowl, a shallow, oval, 2x3-inch cavity in maple, was finished and presented to my wife who asked, suspiciously, "This is a bowl?"

Vern has turned big and bigger bowls for 30 of his 50 woodturning years. In less than an hour he worked a huge chunk of local, green butternut into a basin of beauty you could wash a cougar in.

Vern is a quiet, unassuming, good-natured guy with a friendly grin and a desire to help other turners. Tonight he was Atlas, probing along the axis of a spinning timber, finding enough leverage in his long-handled lances to change this mass of fiber into a work of beauty. The special turning tools are as long as Vern is tall, and the slabs of wet potato-peels they made arched out at the crowd, causing front-row visitors to scatter. It was quite a spectacle.

### **For the record**

Vern's average production is 300 bowls a year. He has produced 70 since 9-II.

Almost a hundred large bowls are exhibited at his studio/shop, some reaching 4 feet in diameter. He sells from his studio and ships others to galleries in New York and California where they find ready markets here and abroad. Each bowl is distinctive and as varied as nature provides.

Vern gives the wood its shape, symmetry, and surface while his wet turning technique almost always ensures that the green-turned wood will not later bow out of shape or crack. He has lost very few bowls by this process. Vern's bowls average a half-inch to an inch in thickness at the rim to maintain structural integrity. In the turned bowl world there are small museum quality bowls with sides so thin they are almost transparent. These you don't touch. Vern's products are the 18-wheelers of bowl-dom and often may be put to practical use.

We watched him turn a bowl about 24 inches in diameter and some 10 inches deep. It was craftsmanship of the highest order. He reads the wood as he works, looking for balance and color, and will change the working center in mid-stride if he desires. The butternut revealed an enchanting, highly contrasting light and dark brown pattern.

Finally, Vern declared it was time for sanding. He donned his rainmaker outfit, pulled out a shower curtain to protect the few souls still seated nearby, turned on the overhead waterworks, and proceeded to wet sand both bowl surfaces with a power sander. (He covers the cooling vents on his electrical power sanders with tape for the short period of sanding.) Now it was drying time. The demonstration was over. The bowl would be air-dried for three weeks before finishing and polishing would begin.

### **Turning gears**

Vern's lathe and other turning gear are technically very interesting. The 2-hp motor and turning spindle are heavy duty (the base is 18 cu ft of reinforced concrete) and the tool rest is a gargantuan structure that can be placed anywhere, if you've got the strength. He re-

cently turned some big diameter, eight-foot long posts for a local customer using a tail stock that is also a heavy-duty, concrete affair. For spindle turning, it's completely adjustable; the shop floor becomes the lathe bed.

Vern teaches, speaks, and gives demonstrations all over the local area and Canada. He's got everything rigged so that he can load and unload his big lathe into the truck himself. Every year his studio is a featured stop on the Whatcom County Artist Tour. He shows no signs of slowing down.

No one can say how many bowls he has turned over the past 50 years. Thousands, of course. With a market always clamoring for more, Vern Leibrant has become a BIG name in the big bowl business. From now on he's my choice for the Super Bowl.

Jay Geisel

#### **Notes from the Prez :**

Going to Vernon's shop was a real treat for me. I missed a couple of opportunities in the past. So for me this was special. There again the talent and diverse knowledge that is in our club is awesome. I feel if I wanted to turn a bowl I could get started with what I learned at Vern's shop.

Congratulations to Larry and bill on the club roster it looks really nice and full of great info. I look forward to using it. Everyone is doing a great job at participation when needed. It seems like we are all having fun and learning a lot. The spirit of our club is alive and well.

**"I say if we want to, we can, or if we could, we wood!"**

Gary

#### **A tip from Vern:**

After the meeting several of us were looking at the sanding station Vern uses for finishing his bowls. He had several random orbit sanders that are used for finishing. A discussion followed about which one is best. Vern said they are all good, but he made an improvement to them. He removed a rubber O-ring located beneath the sanding disc. This prevented the sanders from leaving swirl marks on the finished surface. The rubber O-ring is evidently some sort of a snubber that is not needed.

Minutes of NCWA Meeting - April 2, 2002

Early arrival at Vernon Leibrant's shop in Everson, Washington, gave you some enjoyable moments to examine an extensive body of artistic bowls that highlight Vern's long turning career. Dozens and dozens of beauties in all sizes and design lined two walls of his studio/shop and foretold of exciting

demonstration ahead.. President Gary Holloman brought everyone back to reality at 7:20 p.m., and it was business again.

#### **Flag Boxes.**

Our Club participation in the national collaborative Flag Project is "well underway," he said. Three Saturdays of 6 to 8 hours of volunteer work have generated the 30 triangular boxes and completion of assembly has started. Two more Saturdays should do it, he estimated. (Note: At the fourth work session, April 7, Gary's crew had the Flag Boxes completely assembled, glass and corner splines installed, and the glass masked before spraying. The next, and final session, will concentrate on finishing and packaging.

#### **Club Recruiting Folders.**

Display racks, completed at the previous Saturday work session, were distributed to the member-hosts to deliver to the retail stores that graciously gave us part of their checkout counter space. A supply of the printed brochures was furnished by Bob Doop. I was unable to get all the racks distributed; not all the hosts were present, but most display racks should start to appear in the selected retail stores this month.

#### **Club Roster and Resources Directory.**

The new, looseleaf booklet that we have been waiting for arrived at the April meeting. It is a stunner. Vice President Larry Tomovick, aided by Bill Hakins and his wife, Judy, did an excellent job putting it together. Larry, as he distributed the books to each member present, called attention to the critical work performed by Judy Hakins did the entire composition work. A card expressing our appreciation was signed by all members.

#### **August Picnic.**

Chairman Lyle Hand explained the need for a valid attendance figure well ahead of the picnic. The Bellingham caterer will have this figure perhaps as early as June. Money will be collected up-front to assure the participation of those "intending" to picnic. A motion was carried to collect the picnic money at the June meeting.

#### **Treasurer's Report.**

C Laura Mathews warned that the Club's Treasury had been hit  
T rather hard this month and with expenses still being proc-  
a essed, a actual balance could not be reported. Printing costs,  
f Woodfest donation, and lesser charges will bring the new bal-  
o ance under \$1,300. She said.

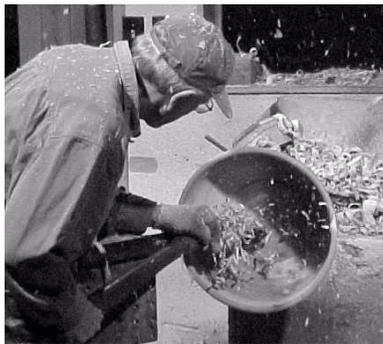
n  
p There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned. At  
8:20 p.m.

g

**Don't forget our "Bring and Brag". We all do something unique or have something that others would enjoy seeing.**



Vern Leibrant demonstrating bowl turning.



The finished product!



A photo of "The Tree project"

**The Flag Box Crew:**

Lyle Hand, Jay Geisel, Val Matthews, Gary Holloman, Owen Huffaker. 4/27/02, Holloman Design Shop.



**Directions to Mike's Shop**

From I-5 take the north Lake Samish exit. Turn left onto North Samish way, turn right at the lake, drive past the park and over the bridge, proceed straight at the fork in the road go uphill to Camp Lutherwood, turn left onto a gravel road, follow the cedar fence on the right to the end. Mike's shop is at the end of the fence. There is parking near the shop and down a gravel road about 100 feet from his shop. Mike suggests that you bring a flashlight because there is little light in this area.

**New Member!**

Gerry Rettig  
2622 Williams  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
(360)756-9638

Please add Gerry to your Club Roster!

**Jake Strauss**

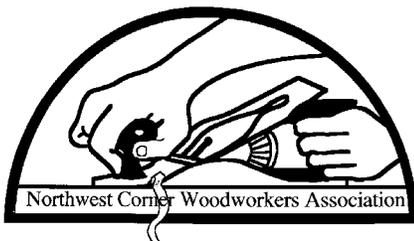
Kiln dried NW Washington hardwood lumber. (Sales by appointment only)  
6389 North Star Rd.  
Ferndale, WA 98248  
(360)384-3948

The NCWA was formed to promote high standards in woodworking, woodworking education, and showcasing local woodworking. The NCWA is open to all interested woodworkers.. Dues are \$24 per year, payable to NCWA, 7550 Ershig Rd. Bow, WA. 98232. Newsletter submissions are welcomed and are due by the 18th of the month to NCWA Newsletter, 925 South Hills Dr. Bellingham, WA., 98226. Or call (360) 734-9473. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. Location announced in the newsletter

**2000-20001 Officers:**

President	Gary Holloman	(360) 855-3376	
VP	Larry Tomovick	(360) 293-4580	
Sec.	Jay Geisel	(360) 466-3908	
Treas.	Laura Matthews	(360) 757-7730	
Library	Tom Chartier	(360) 734-9473	tc1376gp@aol.com
Programs	Larry Tomovick	(360) 293-4580	
Editor	Tom Chartier	(360) 734-9473	

**NCWA Newsletter**  
925 South Hills DR  
Bellingham WA. 98226.



**The Tree Project**

I visited Wes and Andrew's show at the Whatcom County Museum last Sunday. The show is really impressive! The main part of the room shows the tree and branches re-assembled. Surrounding the center are many projects made from the tree. The walls are covered with a history of the tree, old logging photos and photos of the tree being harvested, milled and being made into furniture.

**A comment from Jim Fox:** " Yes I was totally impressed with the extent and quality. Somebody, from the beginning, has done an outstanding job."

--jim