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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*Art Liestman*

It seems like our last meeting was just a couple of days ago. Well, due to our annual early December meeting, that's true. So, there's not a lot to report.

The November meeting was action-packed – a 4-ring circus with Steve Hansen, John Bese, Rich Schmid, and Marco Berera (all award-winning turners, by the way) keeping us amused at the centers of the rings. Thanks to all of them!

During the meeting, we also circulated some sheets for members to indicate interest in possible classes with Stuart Batty and Christian Burchard to be held early in the new year. I was pleased with the overwhelming response. The classes and demos are being scheduled. Watch the next newsletter for details. We are also negotiating with several other world renowned demonstrators to visit during the next year or two. It's going to be exciting!

I'd like to offer a welcome to our numerous new members. We are an organization of volunteers, so please don't be too shy to participate. I'd like to encourage you to bring some of your work to the instant gallery. Try some of the President's Challenges.

Get to know the other members. If you have any particular interests or ideas on how we could do a better job, please let us know. Our success depends on active members.

Since the meeting in December is a field trip – see the notice to the left for details, our next President's challenge – the dreaded paperweight – isn't due until the January meeting. Let's see how creative you can be!

**NEXT MEETING  
 ON SATURDAY,  
 DECEMBER 15, 2001  
 at Brian Delora's Studio  
 446 Union Street, Vancouver**

Brian Delora will present the art of Gilding or placing gold leaf foil on wood. His studio is just three blocks east of Main Street on Union Street. You can't make a left hand turn off Main if you're heading south. Make sure you come either north on Main or if you're heading west on Prior turn right before you cross the Georgia Viaduct. Go down the lane (south of Union Street) and look for a green garage with 446 on it.



## THE PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

Thom Chadwick

There were two brave souls that took on the President's Challenge for the month of November. Merv Graham made a set of Salad Spoons using branches from his wood pile. He turned them by mounting them off center on his lathe. First he turned one (he liked it) then he tried to match it (he succeeded).



*Merv Graham's salad bowls and spoons made from branches.*

I unfortunately I didn't get the name of the turner of the pieces below but as they say, "A picture is worth a thousand words".



*Salad fork, spoon and container (Turner unknown).*

## NOVEMBER'S INSTANT GALLERY

Thom Chadwick

As typical, our November's Instant Gallery contained a fine example of talented workmanship. Ross Pilgrim showed a chestnut fruit bowl finished with Barley's gel varnish and a cherry segmented bowl that was finished with walnut oil.



*Ross's chestnut fruit bowl.*



*Ross's cherry segmented bowl.*

Marco Berera displayed an extremely small walnut Nativity piece that was so small it came with a magnifying glass. Unfortunately, I was unable to have a picture of it in the newsletter because it would have printed as a teeny tiny dot. He also had a natural edged decoration made of alder and brass which he showed us how to

make at the November meeting and another "all season decoration" made of walnut and chestnut.



*Marco's alder and brass decoration*

Two goblets made of Yew were displayed by Fred Baldwin.



*Fred's yew goblets*

John Bese brought in four pieces: an oil lamp and two flower frogs made of London plane and a wine stopper made of cocobolo.



*John's oil lamp and flower frog.*

Colin Delory showed us a mahogany platter that was inspired from Keith Greffe's presentation at the October Meeting. It had a finish of paste varnish.



*Colin's mahogany platter.*

Bill Kennedy made a couple of candlestick holders and a picture frame made of jack pine and maple.



*Bill's candlesticks*

Don Bishop had a nice bird house made of cherry and Ted Fromson, a cane made of a variety of rosewood with maple ends.



*Bill's frame.*

Doug Schop told us how he made this fine candlestick using birch and laburnum, finished in tung oil with bits of copper plumbing.



*Doug's birch, laburnum and copper candlestick.*

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I found the Instant Gallery to be one of the highlights of the meeting. Having so many creative people in one place telling us how they create their pieces is truly inspirational. I'm just hoping that the new members will bring in their pieces and experiences and spread their knowledge in the future.

## THE WEST COAST WOODTURNERS COMPETITION

*Stan Clarke*

The West Coast Woodturners Competition presented by the GVWG at the Cloverdale Woodshow this year was an outstanding success. The entries were surprisingly exciting, creative and very well turned. The displays were excellent, very nicely laid out, with great signage and the attendants (ushers?) did a fine job. Judging from the comments of the general public, the show was "a smash" (that's show biz talk).

My first thought on seeing the show was "Boy! I'm sure glad I didn't have to jury THIS show." There were so many excellent pieces (I am running out of superlatives here) that it must have been difficult to choose. I wondered if the big cash prizes were an incentive or are we just getting a lot better? In the previous newsletter there were photos of the winners (on the internet they were in full colour but in the printed copies they were black and white) that showed clearly the quality of the work .

There were 75 entries: High school, 1; Novice, 15; Intermediate, 25 and Open, 34 and over a hundred pieces. It was a little disappointing that there was only one "high school" entry but this was the first year for this category.

During my "shift", the comments from the public ranged from positive through enthusiastic to "Wow! What beautiful work". I answered many "How did they do that?" questions, but the one I liked best was about Art Liestman's jigsaw piece, "Was it all in pieces and had to be assembled or what?" I was tempted to say yes but explained that it was all one piece with little bits cut out of it – Art's strange sense of design.

A few years ago the "Biggie" from Australia, Mike Darlow told the members of our club that we were nothing but 'a bunch of salad bowl turners'. (He was never invited back). I wish he could have seen THIS show. There was one salad bowl and it was a beauty (not that there is anything wrong with salad bowls) and the huge bowl by John Bese was a work of art. It was inspiring, I think, for club members to see the work of Jason Marlow, Steven Kennard, Don Derry, Herman Van Debrock, etc. We do not see them at our "show and tell".

The club owes a big vote of thanks to Bruce Campbell and his group, (unfortunately I don't

have their names), for producing this show. They worked damned hard raising money for prizes (\$4000.00), scrounging stuff for the raffle, and setting up and managing the show. Our thanks to the energy of raffle ticket sellers both before and during the event. The show came in under budget so did not have to be subsidized by the club. Bruce and his associates deserve “a bottle of the best” and a “well done chaps”.

## CIRCLE CRAFT'S CHRISTMAS MARKET

*Bob James*

In October I was approached by Art to organize a booth for this year's Circle Craft Show. Of course I was hesitant, because my organizational skills have never been my strong point, but as usual I jumped in without checking how deep the water was. The event was from November 6th to 11th at the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Center, under the sails.

I picked up the lathe and loaded everything in my trailer and headed down to absolute bedlam: There were trucks and trailers driving right in the building setting up booths and displays. It was all quite intimidating but I soon met the boss, Paul Yard, and he set me up in a area with a booth, power for the lights and the lathe.

I would like to thank the people who helped me make it a success: Stan Clarke for advice and Art Liestman for Guidance, my employee Sean Karreman for fast loading and unloading, Neno Catania for spending a good part of his week with me – he was a great help. Thanks to Andrew Forrest, Ted Fromson, Marco and Myrna Berera, Steve Hansen, Mike (Ace) Dawson, and Fred Baldwin who had too much fun anyway. The response and interest was quite phenomenal. The booth was busy at all times with people asking questions and watching the demos, I almost didn't have enough time to concentrate on what I was doing.

Even my son Bryce had a go at demonstrating. A lot of the women showed a huge interest in the woodturning. I thought it was because of the quality of men, but I flatter ourselves. They might have found us cute in a primitive way. All in all it went very well and next year we'll be more prepared and maybe more people will get in on it. See you next year.

## THE WEST COAST WOODTURNERS COMPETITION ERRATA

Last month's newsletter contained an error on the People's Choice Award. The correct winners are shown below.



**1ST PLACE PEOPLE'S CHOICE**  
*Marco Berera - Saturn Revolution #2*



**2ND PLACE PEOPLE'S CHOICE**  
*Gary Kelly - Forestry Phonograph*



**3RD PLACE PEOPLE'S CHOICE**  
*Hermann Van Debrock - Floor Lamp*

# FIRE SAFETY IN THE SHOP OR...

## Smokey the Bear meets Red Green

Ed Pretty

The other day, a friend and I were discussing all kinds of issues associated with shops in general: machine placement, floor area needed for this or that machine and so on. The conversation eventually led to shop safety and ultimately to various fire hazards that can be present in a home shop. After discussing a few things that were old hat to me but had never occurred to him, my friend suggested that I write an article on fire safety. My first thought was “Why bother writing about something that is just common sense?”, but then if some of this stuff is news to him then it may be to others. With that I decided to write this piece in the hope that even the smallest bit of information might save someone’s shop (and themselves) from disaster.

So far, in over 30 years as a professional firefighter, I have had lots of opportunity to see good old Mr. Murphy at work. Trust me, if you can imagine it, it has happened. Over the years, I have attended fires in both commercial and home shops. Sometimes accidents happen and sometimes people are just plain stupid. In all cases, the loss to the owner, whether great or small in someone else’s eyes is devastating.

I could keep this article short and sweet by stating the obvious, advising everyone to put up “No Smoking” signs and advising everyone to get an extinguisher and calling it quits, but I think the majority of you have figured that one out. The not-so-obvious is usually what trips someone up in these enlightened times and that is what I will discuss here.

### “SOURCES OF IGNITION”

In the fire biz, we talk about “sources of ignition”. Sometimes they are obvious to the eye, yet invisible to the mind – like pilot lights. Sometimes they are insidiously subtle – like static arc. We all like to sharpen our tools with grinders that make a shower of sparks. Some of us have cutting and welding equipment in the same area (uh, just ignore the first 10 feet of my shop as you walk in, OK). At one time or another most of us have used Watco Oil or some similar product (Similar? How?): this is the famous “oily rag” situation explained. I’ll discuss them all.

Sparks from grinding and welding are visually pretty obvious, but consider how close your grinder set-up is to the lathe or other producers of large amounts of bone dry, finely divided, highly flammable, organic (stuff that burns) material. Those little buggers tend to go a lot further than you may think. If you don’t believe me, grind a tool in the dark and watch the shower. If distance is a problem, try a deflector (a.k.a. piece of plywood) or turn the grinder toward the wall. The real solution is to keep the shavings cleaned up (ya, right). Common sense says to sweep up and dispose of suspect shavings outside before leaving the shop.

There are sparks and then there are sparks: static discharge can produce some dandies. Many of us have vacuum systems to assist us in the “cleanliness-next-to-Godliness” thing. To be installed properly, such a system must have metal ducting that is both bonded and grounded, but for ease of installation (not necessarily cheaper) we often use PVC pipe. All that air rushing by tends to create an electrical charge on those things that it passes over – or through. Metal conducts electricity nicely and therefore tends to shuck off any electrons that happen along right away. If the system is grounded they find their way harmlessly to terra firma. Plastic, on the other hand doesn’t conduct well at all, so those same electrons tend to build up until there is bunch of them. They still want to get to terra firma but with no easy path, they finally take the big leap all together (strength in numbers). This can result in a pretty spectacular arc and, voila!, one of these pesky ignition sources is born.

There is one thing to keep in mind when sparks are involved. At work we maintain a “fire watch” for 2 hours after a fire is deemed to be completely extinguished: as professionals, “rekindle” is not in our language. That time period was chosen because it usually takes about that long for a small ignition source to progress to a noticeable fire. Thanks to welders in sawmills, we usually get to go play about two hours after they have done their thing if they have not done their spark chasing after wrap up. So if you are doing “hot work” where sparks are being produced, maybe consider taking another peek before turning in for the night.

### DUST EXPLOSIONS

While in the general area of shop cleanliness, let’s talk about dust (we’re talking sanding dust here). This stuff is even more finely divided, bone dry, highly flammable, organic (stuff that burns) material. When suspended in air, this stuff starts to act more like a flammable gas than a flammable solid. Explode? You bet – and if it doesn’t explode it can burn real fast over a large area. Picture the concrete grain elevators that live along the shoreline in North Vancouver. In the early 70’s a series of dust explosions resulted in a final blast that took the tops off of four that stood side by side. That’s a little larger scale than most of our shops, but the same principle applies. It is common to have a smaller initial explosion – kind of a “whoof” – that stirs up the dust laying everywhere, creating a perfect atmosphere for the big bang. Boom... then Ka-boom. If there is a correct dust/oxygen ratio floating around in the shop, it might as well be natural gas. A pile of dust on the floor is way too rich, a haze from a few minutes of sanding is probably too lean. A continuous operation that produces fine dust or sweeping up the shop on Sunday can get the mixture “juust right”, and one of those not-so-obvious ignition sources does the trick (vacuum system perhaps?). There’s a plug for dust control if I ever saw it.

### AH, CHEMISTRY

Hopefully the next section will not be too painful because it’s important. My intention is to explain why things burn so that you can decide what to do or not do as the case may be. Please excuse the elementary approach, but Bill Nye finds it more effective as do I. When something burns, whether solid, liquid or gas, it is the gaseous form of the product that burns – even wood. Flammable liquids burn when they give off *vapour*. Some flammable liquids (like gasoline at about minus 46°F.) give off *vapour* that burns at normal ambient temperatures. Others don’t give off vapours until much higher temperatures (like diesel at about 104°F.). This is called the “flash point” if you are looking up information on the product. Flammable *gases* exist as a *gas* naturally so are ready to go pretty much all of the time. Solids, of course, require a whole whack of heat to give off *vapours* so are significantly safer. Hopefully by now you have noticed that I have emphasized the difference between a *vapour* and a *gas*. Don’t forget to keep *flammable gases* and *vapours from flammable liquids* separate in your mind.

Probably the most prevalent of the villains in our world are the vapours from flammable liquids. Flammable liquids cause us much grief because, unusual in the chemical arena, they abide by a rule. The vapours that evolve from the liquid are always heavier than air. The thing that causes such a problem is that the vapours tend to stratify in low areas rather than dissipating, thus allowing enough stuff to build up to light up. (By the way, the “heavier-than-air-rule” doesn’t always apply to flammable gases: having fun yet?). Anyway, the same rule that causes the problem also allows us to avoid catastrophe. Because we know that they will likely be hanging around the floor, we know that we should extinguish pilot lights in the area and eliminate all those other pesky ignition sources, like grinding, as well. If you have a wood stove in the shop – think a bit about how long it takes for that thing to really go out. Best of all – get rid of the flammable liquid if possible.

Where is this significant? First of all, store the gas for the mower and the BBQ propane (it's a flammable liquid – trust me) where there are no ignition sources – especially at floor level. Next, if you have a furnace or water heater in your shop area, avoid using any solvents with flash points lower than room temperature (that info is available in a Material Safety Data Sheet – MSDS for short). Keep this in mind when using finishes (especially lacquers) or adhesives that have “driers”. The real sneaky one is contact cement. For you French Polishers, watch out for methanol (methyl hydrate) because it follows the heavier-than-air rule and you can't see the flame: pretty cool stuff. I reduced one problem in my shop by installing an overhead furnace when I built it so that the pilot light is up high. Of course heavier-than-air vapours can be stirred up by movement (Aarrggghh!!! Make it stop!), so the best thing to do is what the manufacturer says: eliminate all ignition sources and provide good ventilation. I could emphasize all this with both humorous and tragic war stories but these are best served with beer(s) and a couple of other firefighters.

By the way, MSDS's are available from whoever sells the product.

## OH NO! MORE CHEMISTRY

Sorry to stay in the chemistry end of things but there is another relatively minor area of concern as far as home shop owners that still should be discussed. We tend to use various chemicals in our lives and some of them don't like each other (or, really like each other, as the case may be). The possibilities are endless – as I have found over the years – but a common possibility in our shops could be oxidizers. These can be in the form of acidic corrosives (battery acid is a good one – lots of “O's” in H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>), any fertilizer with “nitrate” in the name or any strong bleaching agent (Javex doesn't count). Watch out for things with “-ite” and especially “-ate” at the end. If these things come in contact with bone dry, finely divided, highly flammable, organic (stuff that burns) material, they tend to cause a reaction that generates enough heat to start a fire. Not common but it happens, so keep the chems in their (proper) containers and on the shelf.

## AS PROMISED, “OILY RAGS” EXPLAINED

Ever since I can remember, I have been told that “oily rags” are a fire hazard and I think that's pretty standard. It would seem that we generally understand that there is a “spontaneous combustion” situation involved here. So, what is spontaneous combustion? Generally it's a situation where heat builds up very slowly (or sometimes astonishingly fast) from a chemical reaction creating enough heat to ignite the material in question. The chemical reaction that takes place is oxidation – just like the sulphuric acid on wood shavings. The difference is that it is usually biological in nature. Wet hay is a classic: the hay gets wet, starts to rot (oxidize), and the heat generated starts a self-accelerating cycle leading to ignition. The oil in “oily rags” is not petroleum based oil, but a vegetable oil such as linseed or tung or similar. In their raw state (arranged in such a way as to be easily heated – like on a crumpled rag) these contain bacteria that will work on the organics in the oil creating a slow oxidation process just like the hay. If the oil is boiled, the bacteria is killed and doesn't present near the problem, although not eliminating it all together. Watco is notorious for this problem because it contains a certain amount of raw linseed oil. Not to slag only Watco, there are lots of others out there with the same problem.

This is a curious problem around the shop. I have been to a fire in a cabinet shop on Sunday night that took all weekend for the rags in their van from the last job on Friday to take off. I have been to a house fire where the husband did his yearly “watco-ing” of the cedar paneling, dumped the rags out on the porch, cleaned up, grabbed a beer, sat down to watch the game and “whoosh” – roaring blaze on the porch. I have tried to produce a controlled fire in this way and have not been able to do it. There is obviously a very specific combination of ambient

heat, humidity and the way the combustibles are arranged that allows this to happen. While you are working with the stuff, don't place the rags on the bench all bunched up. Open them up and hang them on something so they can't heat up. That way, when the phone rings and you forget them, they don't get to do their thing. Once you are done, there is only one way to eliminate this problem when using an oil finish: dispose of the rags in a sealed metal container reserved for that waste only. Ideally, outside the shop is best. There are special containers made for just that purpose, but a paint can (with lid) works well, too. Putting them in a container filled with water works but that can be pretty messy. If you can burn them in the fireplace – great. If you have to put them in the garbage, wait until you put it at the curb before adding the rags.

## GETTING IT OUT ONCE IT'S STARTED

OK. Let's defy all logic and say that a fire gets going in the shop. My first advice is to alert everyone in the house/shop and then either call the fire department or get someone else to do it right away. Don't forget your address. Then go after it with an extinguisher and/or hose. I know you are going to think it's best to attack the fire right away, but if you try and fail, calling the fire department somehow gets forgotten: yes, it's happened. If things get out of hand, make sure you close the door as you bale out. If you think I'm full of it, pass on the phone call, attack the fire and win, call the fire department anyway. Fires tend to extend themselves unknowingly and, anyway, the insurance company likes to see a fire report.

Fires in wood, cloth etc. ( class A) can be put out with water or regular dry chemical. Flammable liquids (class B) require “dry chem” or CO<sub>2</sub>. Energized electrical (class C) required CO<sub>2</sub>. My recommendation is a minimum 5 lb. ABC type dry chem extinguisher. The ABC type of dry chem is the most effective of all; just turn any power off if electricity is involved at all (always do that anyway). I would not recommend CO<sub>2</sub> at all, even if you have one now. Expensive to buy and maintain and very ineffective. Have a water hose connected and within reach of the shop. If you have a pressurized water extinguisher, that's handy; just keep the pressure up. Definitely do not try to fight a flammable liquid fire with water as you will only spread the misery around.

Mount any extinguishers right by the door for easy access (and quick get away if things go south). Every year or so, take a rubber mallet, turn the extinguisher upside down and thump it until you can feel the dry chem “slosh” back and forth. If a dry chem is discharged even a little bit, it must be recharged as the powder screws up the seal and it will leak down.

If you buy a dry chem extinguisher, get one with a metal head: you can't refill the ones with a plastic head. And here's a good one – without anyone watching, read and understand the instructions before the fire.

Cheapest of all: get a 1 to 5 gal. pail or similar with a closing top that you can reach your hand into, go to Save-On and fill it with bulk baking soda. That's all regular dry chem is, and it works the same. Good plan for the kitchen but on a smaller scale – unless the cook is prone to burning dinner a lot. The stuff in the extinguishers is treated with silicone to flow nicely and not clump up. The ABC powder is different stuff completely and there is no cheap alternative.

## FINALLY – THE END

My objective is simply to give food for thought and perhaps some little known background. Most of the stuff here is all about common sense, available information, general shop cleanliness and some proactive thinking. I have no problem sharing this information as it does not jeopardize my job security one tiny bit. Over the years I have learned that I have a good job, in large part, because “some people just need lookin' after”. By definition, a woodturner doesn't fit into that category, so you should all be a little safer and my day job will still be there tomorrow.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Fred Baldwin – Education Co-ordinator*

DECEMBER 15, 2001 – For our December meeting we have asked Brian Delora to present Gilding techniques (placing gold leaf foil on wood) to all club members. This is a Saturday and we will meet at his studio at 446 Union Street with the presentation going from 9:30AM to 12:00 and 1:00 to 3:30PM.

JANUARY 23, 2002 – Art Liestman will demonstrate how he turns a vessel, then carves and dyes or colours the outsides of vessels.

FEBRUARY 27, 2002 – Ron Graham of the Mt. Vernon chapter will present how he does segmented and inlaid bowls.

### GVWG Officers, Appointees and Volunteers

**PRESIDENT:**

Art Liestman, 604-939-3843

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

John Bese, 604-581-8807

**SECRETARY:**

Dave Martin, 604-521-8327

**TREASURER:**

Don Hoskins, 604-939-6808

**MEMBERS AT LARGE:**

Ted Fromson, 604-876-0267

Andrew Forrest, 604-990-9667

Fred Baldwin, 604-224-5788

**FOF COORDINATOR:**

Bruce Campbell, 604-469-0221

**EDUCATION COORDINATOR:**

Fred Baldwin, 604-224-5788

**LIBRARIAN:**

Larry Stevenson, 604-438-3947

**WOOD EXCHANGER:**

Phil Laliberte, 604-936-2995

**FOOD CHIEF:**

Rich Schmid, 604-538-7012

**NEWSLETTER:**

Thom Chadwick, 604-879-1275

Steve Hansen, 604-585-0638

Dave Donnan, 604-939-3814

**DIGITAL PHOTO GUY:**

John Flanagan, 604-939-0942

**WEBMASTER:**

Mark Bese, markbese@home.com

MARCH 27, 2002 – Threaded boxes are the theme and Bruce Campbell will turn the lid and bottom of a box then show how he cuts the threads.

APRIL 24, 2002 – TBA

MAY 22, 2002 – Bowls can have handles – really – and John Bese will take on this challenge.

That's all so far. For future meetings if you have any suggestions please give me a call – 604-224-5780 or email me at fbaldwin@telus.net.

## CLASSIFIED

**FOR SALE** – Western maple, spalted and figured, from 2" – 6" thick and 9" thick turning blocks, also a few burls. Call Steve Likeness at 604-574-3927.

**FOR SALE** – 33" King wood lathe in excellent condition. Includes: Stand, face plate, live center, spur center, tool rest and tool rest extension. This lathe has a cast iron bed, spindle lock, swivel headstock, variable speed 600 RPM to 3000 RPM. Paid \$399 plus GST & PST. Asking \$299. Call Al at 604-273-6995.

**FOR SALE** – Rockwell Delta lathe and Marples set of eight tools. Hardly used. Call Don Hoskins at 604-939-6808 or email dhoskins@shaw.ca.

**FOR SALE** – Maple and sometimes other species for turning, block size and thickness vary. All spalted and/or figured. \$3.00-\$3.50/bft. Call Steve at 604-574-3927 or email steve.likness@gems2gov.bc

**FOR SALE** – Slabs and Burls in stock. Phone toll free 1-877-777-3292 or email Matte from Hatzic Lake area at tedtd@uniserve.com

## WEB SITES TO VISIT

I was asked last meeting to include our own web site.  
<http://www.gvwg.ca>

Check these out too.

<http://granuccis.com/>

<http://www.woodturningplus.com/>

<http://mgorrow.tripod.com/>

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please be sure to email me any articles you would like to see in the next newsletter by January 6th, 2002.

Send attachments as text only to

Thom\_Chadwick@telus.net