















(Continued from page 7)

One way to achieve this is to quit at 200 or 320 grit then layer on coat after coat of varnish to fill in the microscopic, voids, scratches and swirl marks left by your abrasives, at the risk of making a piece that looks like plastic or worse, gloppy. This is a very time and varnish consuming process and the more you fuss, often the worse it gets, kinda like “Brer Rabbit and the Tarbaby” (Uncle Remus Tales) [http://www.longlongtimeago.com/llta\\_fables\\_brer\\_rabbit\\_tarbaby.html](http://www.longlongtimeago.com/llta_fables_brer_rabbit_tarbaby.html) .

The other way that produces a better result in my opinion, is to gently and smoothly sand the surface of the piece through finer grits then seal the piece with two, but no more than three conservative coats of varnish, hand sanded lightly with 1000 grit abrasive between coats, then finally buff the piece with a micro abrasive pad, with or without a tiny bit of wax.

Sheen is up to you. If you use a “gloss” variety of finish you’ll get the best clarity to show off your piece’s grain and figure best. If you like gloss you’ll surely have it if you sand to finer grits. If you want to soften the look or make the piece look more natural, cut the finished surface back using a “grey” microfiber pad or “oil-free” “0000” steel wool, both available from Lee Valley (tool catalogue page 220) and other quality woodworking supply retailers.

Alternately, sand to even higher grits, 2000 and beyond and apply only oil, wax or no finish at all, letting the woods natural colours and iridescence radiate unhindered by chemical coatings. The amazing work of the late Gordon Dunphy will show you what I mean <http://www.ingridmuellerartandconcepts.com/dunphy.html> .

In future installments I’ll discuss:

- abrasives I use, how I use them and what to avoid based on my experiences
- what kind of finish to apply to complete your piece
- oils versus varnishes
- preparing a final surface, shellac and varnish finish

## Rudy Saffron Honours Louise Bonneycastle

At the January meeting Louise Bonneycastle was presented with a large wooden bowl. Rudy Saffron had made the bowl for her to honour her efforts for the benefit of the club over the years. She has frequently provided the eats and treats for various meetings and the members have been very grateful for her efforts. After Rudy made the presentation, Louise responded by saying that she always felt like the shoemakers child who never had any shoes and therefore she was doubly grateful. All the members join with Rudy in saying Thanks Louise!!!



## Turning Alabaster Jack Wallace



**Warning alabaster creates much dust when turned! Be sure to have a good vacuum to clear the dust and have a breathing mask under your Facemask**

Preparation of the stone is the first step. From a larger block of alabaster select a section without any obvious cracks. Using a diamond saw cut a suitable piece of stock. Be generous in the sizing of this stock.

Soak the stock in a 50/50 solution of white glue and water for a week. Remove the stock from the solution and allow it to set up for another week. This allows the glue to permeate the miniature crevasses in the rock and helps to prevent it from breaking as you turn it.

Now using a sanding disk cut a flat on the face of the alabaster that is to hook to the lathe Headstock. If this is to be a large piece you may wish to cut a parallel flat at the tailstock end of the rock.

Take two pieces of scrap  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wood and bore a two and a quarter inch mortise in the wood that gets attached to the head stock. This permits mounting to the head stock with a set of #2 jaws of a talon chuck. Alternatively mount the piece on a faceplate. Now, using Weldwood glue, affix these pieces of wood to the flat ends of the alabaster.

Using Weldwood glue, affix these pieces of wood on the ends of the rock. This is one of the best glues to use for this as it has some flexibility. Allow to set up for a week. The rock can now be mounted onto the lathe.

Before I go further, a word about tools. Any tool you use for wood will cut alabaster for about 10 seconds before you need to re-sharpen. You need to use a carbide tip tool. I purchase mine, a bit for metal turning, from Busy Bee Tools. Here is the link to the aforementioned bit- <http://busybeetools.ca/cgi-bin/picture10?NTITEM=B083>



To sharpen this type of bit you can use a "green" wheel designed to sharpen Carbaloy drills. This works fairly well, but really never gets the bit to a sharp edge like a knife. I purchased a 5" diameter diamond wheel which I can mount on a slow lathe to run at about 300 rpm. Below the wheel I have a small magnetic parts dish, sitting on the ways of the lathe, into which I place a sponge or paper towel that is wet and rubs on the edge of the wheel to keep it moist and lubricated. This arrangement will now sharpen the tool bit to a razor edge quickly and accurately.

Mount this bit into a standard tool handle and proceed to turn in the conventional way using the tip to cut straight into the rock. I find the best angle is with the bit and handle horizontal. If the bit is dull the cutting action works when the bit is pointed down in more of a scraping action. A sharp bit cuts well horizontally.

The alabaster is turned between centers until the material is round or approaching the desired shape. At this time I normally use a standard parting tool to separate the wood block at the tailstock end. To start cutting on the end of the piece you may need (or wish) to secure the piece in the lathe using a spindle steady. It is now possible to hollow out a vessel in the usual fashion. I normally begin with a carbide drill bit in the tailstock to cut a core out of the stock. Once this is out, the carbide tool can be put back into action to hollow to the desired amount making a bowl or hollow vessel as desired.

The basic shape has now been developed and finishing can begin. I start with a 100 grit sandpaper to fine tune the design and then work through the grits to 600. With the 600 grit use waterproof paper and keep the rock moist. This will give a nice mirror surface. At this point, the exterior and interior surface is defined and is fairly polished. Finish the polish with buffs of Tripoli, diamond and carnauba wax.

Now to remove the piece from the lathe, use a cone support, or the like, at the tailstock end to help prevent accidental dropping of the alabaster. I then use a parting tool to separate the wood at the headstock from the rock. Cut it down to a small diameter and then you can bust the piece off the lathe. You will still have a thin layer of wood on the base that one can remove with a disk sander. Again work through the grits and polish the base to its finish. You may alternatively wish to reverse chuck the part for this step.

Manual carving and decoration can be done easily with small diamond bits and you can also carve the surface with small chisels.

One does not need to work solely with large pieces of alabaster. Below is an example how a small piece can be prepared for turning and carving.



Here are two examples of what can be done with smaller pieces of alabaster.



**References:** At the demo for alabaster I was asked for the details on the diamond wheels that I use. This was purchased from KBC TOOLS in Mississauga. Their website is <http://www.kbctools.com/can/main.cfm> then select page 543 in the catalog. I am using the Economy Diamond part no 1-640-276 . Price about \$150. Note that with this you will need some sort of shaft adaptor to mount it on your lathe.

The bits are from BusyBee tools Part No B081 at <http://busybeetools.ca/cgi-bin/product10?&NMCLASS=00164&NSBCLASS=00271&NETID=1027370115102881706>. This will require a handle to hold it. Just note the shaft is .5" dia. I use a Oneway or a Kelton.

Woodchuckers has the Oneway type

Kelton is available at Leevalley <http://www.leevalley.com/wood/page.aspx?c=1&p=49136&cat=1,330,49236> Part No 53B01.03

Alabaster Blocks are available from <http://www.sculpturesupply.com/> A typical block is 10x10x10" and costs about \$50 To cut the stone you can use a Sawsall with a carbide bit available at Home Depot or if you have a large concrete saw with a diamond blade that works well too.

## WOODTURNING VIDEO REVIEW

### Richard Pikul



I have watched many turning videos. Many are informative, some are useful, a few are terrific and some, unfortunately should be deleted. Check out this video:

<http://www.finewoodworking.com/ProjectsAndDesign/ProjectsAndDesignarticle.aspx?id=33226>

The video demonstrates turning a shaker table leg. Mark Salusbury sent me the link, and It turned into an exchange of messages about how the video (and/or the table leg) could be improved. The exchange ended when Mark came up with the most appropriate summary of our discussion:

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## MAKING COPIES OF YOUR WORK

Richard Pikul



This article is for turners who wish to make copies of their work but are not sure of how to get started.

The following steps will be discussed:

- Planning ahead.
- Make suitable drawings.
- Minimizing the planning process for just a few copies.
- Hints for making accurate copies.
- Designing and making templates, story sticks and other aids.
- Hints for large numbers of copies.

A significant part of my work depends on accurate reproduction, and I have, over the years, developed my own methods to simplify the process of making exact copies in a practical, straight forward manner. My methods are not the only way, but I think they are a useful starting point.

Most turners do not make identical (or 'very similar') copies of their work. If you are a bowl maker or turn artwork pieces, the tendency is to use each piece of wood to it's maximum potential. This results in work that is very individual and unique, but what happens when you need to make a pair, a set, or a large number of pieces that are to be 'identical'?

There are many reasons to make identical pieces, of almost any kind of turning. The most obvious are table and chair legs, spindles for banisters and railings, architectural accents, a matching set of plates or bowls, pepper mills, candlesticks, utensils, tools and tool handles. Projects such as spinning wheels also use many identical pieces which are first turned, then assembled into the final product. There is also an occasional need to make copies for items that display better as a pair or set, or to provide the same item to multiple 'customers'.

When the first real need to make identical pieces comes up, most turners will shy away from the task. This is understandable as any unfamiliar project will tend to appear more complex than it really is, and can seem quite overwhelming when initially taken on.

### PLANNING AHEAD

How does one make something daunting, easier to deal with? Start by breaking the project up into more manageable pieces. Even if you only wish to make just a few copies, take the time to work out the steps you will need to complete your project.

The following is my planning list for a new project

- Make initial drawing(s).
- Check to see if I have all the tools required – a trip to the toy store may be required.
- If many copies are required I will make a prototype out of wood that can be discarded if it doesn't work out.
- I often make a second or third prototype, sometimes more, continuing until I'm satisfied with the design.
- Revise drawings to include changes made.
- Make templates – easier if you have full size drawings.
- Make any tooling, special tools, gauges, jigs and fixtures that the project requires.
- Get the wood for the entire project. I often include extra wood to account for mistakes or unusable blanks.
- Make the blanks for the entire project. If the blanks are all the same, it's a lot easier to be consistent when turning.
- If the project requires any intermediate steps (e.g. initial turning is between centres, final turning held in a chuck or faceplate, off lathe hole drilling or shaping etc), then perform each step in order on all blanks. Again, this will help to minimize errors and keep your work more accurate.
- Start turning. I will start slowly on the initial piece(s), keeping track of what is happening (yes, I make notes!). This is very important if the project is for many pieces. Making notes as you turn the initial piece(s) reduces the chance of making the same mistake twice, saves time in the long run and can also reduce waste. I make my notes on a copy of the drawing – keeps everything in one place, easy to see and I don't have to remember where I put the notes. . .

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- If I must use a new tool, or one that has been collecting dust for a while, I will take the time to practise on scrap wood. I think this step is very important. It is unfortunate that this is a step that most turners do not even consider doing. Not taking the time to practise can result in discarding costly wood when the rusty hands don't perform as they should. A musician friend of mine practises four hours for every hour that he performs. Think of how good your pieces would turn out if you followed this regimen? Practise with purpose? Make give away items.

### MAKE SUITABLE DRAWINGS

This can be a difficult step for those who have no draughting experience. In any case, do take the time to make drawings as this reduces errors and aids in refining a design. Start off with a pencil and paper to get the general outline of your project. Whether you use CAD software or wish to make all of your drawings by hand, make full sized drawings. Full sized drawings will simplify making templates and jigs.

Do you want to know more about how to make 'proper' drawings? Check out this web site ([http://drawsketch.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&zTi=1&sdn=drawsketch&cdn=hobbies&tm=9&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http://www.ider.herts.ac.uk/school/courseware/graphics/engineering\\_drawing/](http://drawsketch.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&zTi=1&sdn=drawsketch&cdn=hobbies&tm=9&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http://www.ider.herts.ac.uk/school/courseware/graphics/engineering_drawing/)). This site provides the basic information of how to make drawings and how they should look. Lots of good information for those who use computer software drawing programs but never received any formal draughting training.

A list of software for woodturning. (I have listed only those for which I have positive feedback):

Woodturner Pro is well known in North America, designed specifically for woodturners. It is not difficult to learn. The full suite version will cover virtually all of your turning requirements. Web site at: <http://www.woodturnerpro.com/> A 30 day trial version is available as a free download – they will allow you to use it free for a month to determine if it will fill your needs. The full software suite is under \$US100.00

Creative Woodturner software is available as a download for US\$80.00 from: <http://www.creative-woodturner.co.uk/index.php> This software is popular in Europe and other parts of the world.

Google SketchUp is available as a free download from: <http://sketchup.google.com/download/index2.html> A pdf instruction book on how to use SketchUp for woodturning is available for US\$11.00 from: <http://www.turnedoutright.com/woodturning-products/modelling-woodturning/> I have no detailed information about this instruction book, but the table of contents indicates that the cost of the on line book is reasonable. If you are not familiar with CAD programs, you may need to find someone to teach you how to use SketchUp – or be willing to spend quite some time on your own to understand how to work with it.

### MINIMIZING THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR JUST A FEW COPIES

**Make a drawing!!!** Even if you want to make only one copy, this is an essential step – it's the only way you will be able to minimize mistakes. If at all possible, make an actual size drawing – this will allow you to later make templates and story sticks easily.

There are three approaches to make the drawing:

**One;** you are copying something that already has been made. This is common for repair work on furniture and architectural turnings. In this case, take dimensions directly from the original for your drawing. Sometimes the 'original' is in poor shape, or covered in many layers of paint. This can lead to problems as some dimensions may need to be estimated, or paint layers, may need to be included to allow replacements to match the appearance of existing pieces.

**Two;** If you are copying a bowl, hollowform or box that you previously made (and are happy with), take accurate dimensions from your existing piece and make a drawing you can use as a reference while you turn. If you wish to make only one copy, you could use the existing piece as your "drawing" and take dimensions from it while you work. A tip; use sticky notes or pieces of tape to write down the dimensions and stick them to the sample piece. This way you need to take measurements only once.

**Three;** design your work on paper, then make a sample to confirm design dimensions are error free and practical. I suggest that you use a blank that you can discard in case the design needs more work. When the initial piece is a 'pass', you can use it as your sample for comparisons.

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size copy of the drawing glued to one side, then spray painted with Krylon clear coat. The right hand edge is bent at 90 degrees so that it 'hooks' on to a finished end of the blank, accurately locating the template. Note the pencil guide notches on the edge. These are shaped and sized for a 0.5mm pencil, allowing me to make accurate, fine lines quickly. I have used this template to make more than 5,000 pieces so far and it shows very little signs of wear.

Making just a couple of copies, and don't intend to make more in the future? In this case, a template can be made easily from paperboard (like cereal boxes) or from a thin piece of wood or plywood. A story stick can be made from wood, plastic or metal. If the design may change, make a temporary template/story stick before investing time in permanent fixtures.

If you are making a copy or a drawing from an existing piece, you could use a profile gauge (see Fig. 5) to capture the shape and transfer it to your work. If you use this method, regularly check that the gauge has not been disturbed by testing it against the original.



Figure 5

The profile gauge shown is an 18cm (7inch) long gauge from Lee Valley (<http://www.leevalley.com/home.aspx>), stock # 44K14.02. They also have a 25cm (10inch) plastic version (03N01.01). The plastic profile gauge is made of thicker sections so is not as precise.

I found a 30cm (12inch) metal gauge on line from Germany at: <http://www.fine-tools.com/kontur.htm#ziel306930>

Garrett Wade has 30cm (12inch) 20K30.02 and 45cm (18inch) 20K30.03 plastic gauges, available on line from the USA at: <http://www.garrettwade.com/product.asp?pn=10K20.01&bhcd2=1262740672>

If your work piece is longer than the profile gauge, simply use the gauge section by section. For spindle work try to work from the tailstock end, toward the headstock.

## PREPARING BLANKS

To make turning easier, make all of your blanks identical. This will both speed turning and help to prevent errors.

If you are making bowls, hollow forms or platters and the initial step is to turn between centres to develop the initial shape and / or to turn tenons for chucking later – do this step for all pieces first. Again, this helps in making the pieces more consistent and minimizes errors.

Making lidded vessels or boxes, where the lid is part of the same piece of wood? Turn round between centres, adding any necessary tenons and make the parting cut, but not all the way through. This will help to keep the boxes and lids together. It's easy to perform the last cut with a saw when you begin to turn each individual piece.

If your work is all spindle turning, cut all blanks to the same length and square dimension before starting. This will minimize changes to your lathe set up as you work.

## APPLYING FINISH

Unless you are applying finish on the lathe, wait until all of your pieces are completed. This will not only save time, it will be easier to apply the finish consistently over a number of pieces.

## HINTS FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF COPIES

First, make enough pieces so that you are comfortable with the project. I have two magic numbers; 12 and 100. After making 12 pieces, I am confident of the design and turning techniques. After making 100 pieces, I have enough experience with the project to start including time saving techniques, make any special tools, improve jigs etc.

As you work, make changes to your templates / story sticks which will aid your work. Making templates out of metal will extend the life of these aids.

Does your work require the addition of holes or cutouts? See if it's possible to include these while you still have a work-piece with square corners – a lot easier to hold for drilling or routing.

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For some projects, it may help to break down the work into stages when turning. If this can be done, you can save lathe set up time by splitting up the work and completing each stage, in turn, for all pieces.

When suitable, invest in items such as special tool rests, live or drive centres or tools which will save time, materials or frustration. Do a cost analysis first – don't buy an expensive tool or accessory for a 'one job' requirement.

Continually improve your jigs and fixtures to speed your work, make the pieces more accurate or improve the quality.

If you begin to make production runs of many new designs, look into Computer drafting programs. Learn how to use the software, it can take the drudgery out of making drawings, especially those which are adaptations of existing designs.

Yes, there is a stage past this as well – high volume production. I have not reached this stage, but do know that to get involved one must start spending money in the five to seven digit range for equipment. I would love to talk to someone who does use CNC machinery to turn their whatsits.

If you have any comments, suggestions or a CNC lathe owner, contact me: Richard Pikul [rpikul@sympatico.ca](mailto:rpikul@sympatico.ca)

## Set Aside Fear Of Making Mistakes: commentary by Mark Salusbury



Mark Salusbury submitted a link, to a Youtube video of Sir Ken Robinson giving a speech on creativity. Your editor replied to Mark that the video did not have much to do with woodturning, but if he would make a case for its inclusion, it would be so included. Mark's case is given below, ending with the link to Sir Ken's video.

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Sir Ken Robinson states a strong case legitimizing creative expression which I think many woodturners may find a refreshing confirmation.

He, importantly, recommends setting aside fears of making mistakes so that we may explore and learn about the process and about ourselves. The fear of making mistakes, an unnatural fear, that has been introduced to us and nurtured since birth, is what separates many aspiring minds from achieving originality and success. Thankfully, that fear only kicked in after our first year, otherwise many of us might still not walk.

Without the freedom to let ourselves be creative, permitting ourselves to explore new ideas despite the probability of things not working out exactly as planned, we run the risk of cheating ourselves from achieving our potential.

Introducing the link to the members allows, them to decide, for themselves, whether it's a subject set they'd care to explore.

Click on this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY&NR=1>

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### **American Association of Woodturners Annual Symposium**

The 24th AAW Annual Symposium: June 18-20, 2010. Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford, Connecticut.

Help us celebrate AAW's upcoming 25th anniversary. To mark this important milestone, a special 25th Anniversary logo will be created. A member-wide contest is being held for design submissions. The most appealing, appropriate, and eye catching design will be selected by a special committee. All AAW members are welcome to submit their idea(s) for the 25th anniversary logo. Anything from a sketch to a well-crafted design will be considered. Please submit your image as a JPG. AAW reserves the right to modify any submitted design and will prepare the final artwork. The deadline to submit your logo ideas is February 28, 2010. All entries are to be submitted to the AAW office, either by letter or email, by that date. Please include your name, mailing address, email address and membership number. Mail submissions to: American Association of Woodturners 75 5th St W, 222 Landmark Center, St. Paul, MN 55102-7704 Email: [inquiries@woodturner.org](mailto:inquiries@woodturner.org)

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Question: How many woodturners does it take to turn a spindle?

Answer: Several...one to do the turning and the rest to say "I could have done it better".

Have a look at the video. View it a second time and be critical about the tools and techniques used by the turner. View the video again. If you still feel that the turner is making mistakes or should be using different tools - view the video again. Repeat until you finally realize that the turner in the video made a nice looking table leg in an efficient manner.....

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**How does one measure the hardness of wood?**

Mark Salusbury thought the WGO members might be interested in the following link. It describes the Janka method of measuring the hardness of wood. <http://www.sizes.com/units/janka.htm>

## The People Who Make The WGO A Success

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