

Buster Shaw

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My woodturning adventure started in 1989 when I purchased a Shopsmith MultiTool, wanting to make some turned legs for a table. Well, let me tell you what a disaster that was.

Not many books on woodturning were available at that time, so I became self taught! After a lot of cussing and sanding, the table still stands proudly in a daughter's home. But I was hooked!

Questions kept going through my head. What am I doing wrong? What the heck is rubbing the bevel? How do you sharpen these tools? And more.

My wife, Christa, finally got tired of hearing foul language coming from the shop and presented me with a gift certificate for a woodturning class at the Brookfield Craft Center in Brookfield CT. The instructor was Andy Barnum, and I owe him, big time! Calling himself a lathe guy, he is a professional woodturner and teaches turning at Purchase College of SUNY.

Andy started the Nutmeg Woodturners in 1989, meeting at the Brookfield Craft Center, one of the oldest clubs in the AAW. I joined Nutmeg right away, and at present I am the president ... and also a member of Central Connecticut Woodturners.

Well a few years went by,



and I was asked to do a demo at a club meeting. I was scared to death, so I practiced at home for weeks. The demo must have gone over well because Andy asked, "Have you ever considered teaching?" Well, I started out easy, teaching pens at the Woodworker Club in Norwalk CT. Soon I was asked to teach at the Brookfield Craft Center and for the past few years at Peters Valley Craft Center in New Jersey.

Teaching beginner and intermediate classes has given me a great deal of satisfaction, and I would rather teach a class than work in my own shop. Have you ever seen the smile on a kid's face the first time they turn a pen? How about starting someone on a cottage industry of making salt and pepper mills or seeing one of your students featured in the New York Times newspaper? How about an 80-year-old-plus with arthritis make a cracker platter with cutting board insert that was on their bucket list?

Christa is a noted Nantucket basket maker, and she keeps me very busy making molds, bases, and lids with finials for her baskets. Of course, she keeps all the money from the sales – need you ask?! Anyway making jigs for the lathe to produce these products has called upon my engineering background at times. It is



demanding work because she insists on exact duplication.

Doing demonstrations and teaching have a lot in common. The first thing you must think about is safety. With the horrible accidents that have happened over the past few years, safety must be our first priority!

Wear your face mask at all times. I know it gets in the way when talking, but people will think that, if you don't wear it, they don't have to, either. It's the monkey see, monkey do syndrome.

Teaching woodturning is similar to performing demonstrations ... being well prepared is essential! Download a great instructional guide, *Teaching Woodturning Basics*, from the member's area of the AAW website. If you follow its basic outline, your teaching experience will be a success.

- Have wood prepped
- Sharpen your tools at home
- Look professional
- Have handouts, if applicable



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