

**JANUARY 2017 DEMONSTRATION
BOWL TURNING WITH CHARLIE LAPREASE
WITH HELP FROM MARK ANASTAS**

On Tuesday evening, January 10th, about 35 members of the Central New York Woodturners braved some winter weather conditions to attend the monthly meeting. The featured demonstration was **Charlie LaPrease** discussing how to turn a bowl. Charlie was assisted by his mentee, **Mark Anastas** before returning to college.

Charlie began by asking attendees what they would like to learn in the session. Several ideas were put forth, all of which Charlie handled during the demo.

Mounting a blank can be done in one of several different ways.

Deciding which way you use depends on your tools and your intent. Lathes generally arrive with a four point drive center.

But you can also use a two point, or various sizes of steb centers. With each of these methods, you can change the angle of the wood before turning which allows you to enhance your bowl.

Two other ways to mount the blank don't give you the same option but certainly are excellent methods to use. You can use a face plate mounted with screws—use sheet metal screws NOT sheet rock screws!- or you can use a screw chuck with a worm drive.



So how do you get a blank from a piece of wood. Charlie showed how a blank is cut using a sample he created. He then explained how the blank could be used to create a bowl. A blank can be oriented in two ways—with flat side up or with it down, so the pith



facing up or down. If the pith faces up then the rim of the bowl will be along the flat face and you will produce a larger bowl. With the pith (flat face) facing down, your bottom is in the flat face and the bowl will be smaller. You make a decision based on your intended result.

Also, when first cutting your blank from a log, you can change the appearance of your final bowl. A few years ago, we ran a multi-month feature about this. We are republishing this feature starting this month. See page 18 for its start.

Charlie took a blank to the lathe. As he mounted it, he noted a variety of safety issues for everyone. First, always turn the speed down on your lathe after shutting it off or before starting it. Second, make sure that head stock turns freely. Third, do not lock the spindle lock on the tailstock, but of course lock the tailstock into place. And fourth, never move the banjo & tool rest if the lathe is turned on.

Why not lock the spindle lock? When you are turning, over time, the connection between the tailstock and the wood will loosen—it's inevitable, especially with wet wood but also with dry. You'll want to regularly tighten that connection and having the spindle lock locked will limit the ease in which you can resolve the issue. Also, when tightening your tailstock, start with the handle at 12:00, then give it a clockwise turn to tighten it. Why? The weight of the handle will naturally drop as you turn, and with it on the 1:00 side, it will tighten naturally rather than loosen.

Once the blank was mounted and adjusted to get it as in balance as possible, Charlie turned the lathe over to Mark to turn the bottom and eventually add a tenon to it for holding in a chuck. Mark started the lathe, let it come up to a comfortable speed for starting out. He addressed the blank with a bowl gouge to start, making sure that he had three points of contact with the tool—up against the body, his right hand on the handle, and his left hand holding the tool on the tool rest.

With reference to holding a bowl in a chuck, there are two ways—you can squeeze or expand. Charlie likes to squeeze a tenon rather than expand but sometimes the wood determines which way you will go. The tenon size should match you jaws with them just a little bit open. Also, your tenon must conform to the shape of your chuck—if your chuck's jaws require a dovetail, you need to make the tenon with a dovetail. If your jaws are square, make the tenon square.

While turning the bottom, Charlie talked about cutting uphill—against the grain—versus downhill—with the grain and the result of each style of turning. As is common with most turning demonstrations,



Use Calipers to Measure Your Chuck's Jaw Size so You Can Create a Tenon that Fits



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attendees asked a variety of questions which Charlie handled well, often with jokes. The speed at which the lathe was operating was naturally one question. Another was the angle of the tool. Charlie noted that the angle of the tool is based on the grind as well as the height of the lathe, your height, the tool rest height, what is comfortable, how you are standing, and the way you are holding the tool.

Charlie reminded everyone that the angle of the tool is the direction that the tool points is the way it will cut. When asked how often the tools should be sharpened, a discussion of tool steel occurred. Charlie noted that on the better tools, the inside of flutes are polished. If you have lesser quality tools, polish the inside of the flute. When pressed to not be a politician and bypass the question, Charlie talked more about sharpening as your tool feels dull and even using a diamond honing card in between sharpenings on the grinder. Mark noted that even the species of wood will determine how often you sharpen.



Charlie likes to add a *feature* along the top or rim of the bowl. Doing so adds interest to the bowl. He's experimented with a variety and urges everyone to try something. Yes, you could use special texturing tools but use your tools to design an edge. For the bowl he was turning, he created a rib design. He also creates an angle on the top that creates a more pleasing edge.



After completing the outside, normally Charlie would perform any sanding needed and then put on a finish. For the meeting, no sanding or finish. Instead, Charlie removed the bowl, replaced the drive center with a chuck. One attendee expressed concern that the nipple on the bottom needed to be removed first. Charlie noted that the nipple allows you to reference the center so leave it on for now. Make sure that it is not too fat; length does not matter as it will go through the chuck.

Charlie mounted the bowl in the chuck, using the center created by the steb center to help center and balance the bowl in the chuck. He tighten the chuck around the tenon, making sure to hit each hole once plus one. At a low speed, he tested that the bowl was secure and evaluated whether it was off.

He then removed the tailstock and Mark stepped up to

cleanup the edge. Mark then proceeded to start cutting the inside.

As he moved along, Charlie discussed how some people (including some professionals on the "circuit") will use a forstner bit to drill out a large amount of the center of the bowl to reduce the amount of cutting needed. He noted that doing so could weaken the structure of the bowl and cause it to collapse, especially if you don't have the edge complete..

Of course, if you have a coring system, you could core out the center and reduce your time creating the bowl.



When removing the inside, work in levels, completing each section as you go. If you have an issue and need to return to the top (like Charlie did), you will encounter chatter and vibration.

While Mark was clearing out the bowl, Charlie took time to talk about tools, the development of tools over time and reminded folks that tang-based tools should never be used when turning a bowl. Charlie then took over and continued to remove the inside from the bowl.



In the interest of time, Charlie did not finish . However, he showed folks how to complete the bottom of a bowl using another piece. He would normally finish shaping, sand as needed, and then apply a finish.

To take care of the bottom, Charlie inserted a worm



drive into the chuck and attached a small jig to the drive. Then, he place the non-rubber side of a mouse pad against the jig, placed the bowl over the mouse pad and jig, and then brought the

tailstock center to the center of the bowl bottom. The center was easy to find because the nub was left on! At that point, he finished the bottom, creating a slightly concave to the bottom and decorated as needed. The final nub is knocked off with a hand chisel and mallet, the spot is sanded, and the bottom finish is applied..

Finishes

Preserve is a great finish—available from Klingspor online

Odie's Oil is also good

Make Your Own—Use beeswax, mineral oil, etc.

