



Ticking the boxes for a fulfilling retirement

Dale Guilford talks to Mark Baker about what drives his creativity

My woodturning journey has been driven by an interest in wood, tools, techniques and community. Throughout my childhood I was always around wood and tools in my father's shop. Seventh-grade shop class is where I created my first turning, which was a lamp turned from a bowling pin blank. I am always surprised to learn how many woodturners had a similar beginning.

Later, when I started my own family, having a workshop was always a priority. Woodturning was never the primary activity for me, it was only to support my furniture-making with spindles for tables and chairs. It wasn't until years later, when I was nearing retirement, that woodturning became a primary focus. Woodturning now satisfies many of my needs for a comfortable retirement, including keeping busy, being creative, working with wood, shopping for tools, making things for family and friends, and researching methods and techniques.

AFTER RETIREMENT

During my first year of retirement I began to turn on a regular basis and then I took a detour. I started a small online business, AzCarbide, providing a selection of carbide inserts to woodturners. This detour satisfied more of my needs – connecting with woodturners, creating new products, selling online, and making money. It was like I came out of retirement. Or, as they say, I found a way to monetise my hobby. However, as the business activity increased, I had less time for woodturning, which is my real passion. So, after six years I decided to sell my business to a fellow woodturner in Michigan, Ron Campbell. I was pleased my business was going to someone who would grow it, and who is a leader in the woodturning community.

I do miss the daily discussions with woodturners, learning about their

latest projects and sharing with them my experiences and ideas.

After turning many bowls it was time to find new challenges by learning different techniques to improve my skills. Over the past few years I have tried turning many objects, including pepper mills, kaleidoscopes, boxes, platters, basket weave illusions, bottle stoppers, and segmented bowls. I am always searching for new things to make.

Currently I am perfecting my 'pottery illusion' technique after viewing Native American pottery and baskets at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ, US. Other ideas come from the turnings that fellow club members bring to the club meetings. Viewing these gives me ideas for my next project and the required techniques I need to learn.

I am fortunate to live in an area with three active AAW chapters and many excellent woodturners, all willing to share their knowledge and expertise.



ABOVE LEFT: A selection of miniature hollow forms with southwest style designs ABOVE: At home in my 3.68 x 4.27m woodturning shop in Gilbert, AZ US



Pottery Illusion collection turned from various timbers, adding paint, texturing and other features

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DALE GUILFORD

Recent challenge

I started adding piercing and carving to some of my work. Certainly bringing out the natural colour, figure, and shape is always my goal for all my turnings. However, now I find adding piercing or carvings can provide an interesting aspect. So far these techniques have been the most challenging steps I have taken in woodturning, but I am enjoying the results and working with new tools.

Gifting my turnings gives me the greatest pleasure, somewhat of a way to leave my mark. I also frequently reach out to neighbours with a gift of a small bowl, box or pepper mill, sometimes made from their own tree. Needless to say, my neighbourhood boundaries continue to expand. I have sold very few items as commission work does not excite me. The environment of no commitments and schedules is ideal for my work style.

Of all the parts of wood turning, community is the most important to me. The best thing I ever did to expand my awareness and advance my skills as a woodturner was to join a woodturning club. The second best thing was volunteering to participate in demos at local expos. Not only does it promote woodturning and club membership, but also I am able to strengthen and create new relationships working beside fellow club members. I have found that the opportunities to volunteer and support a club and promote woodturning are limitless.

Always searching

Another part of woodturning that adds enjoyment is having an abundant supply of turning blanks. There's something about the hunt and discovery of usually free wood. I like to try different species for their unique characteristics of colour, density and figure. Living in the desert south west many think we have a limited supply of wood. Quite the contrary – we actually have more than 20 species available, many that have been imported for landscaping.

On every vacation trip to parts of the US I am always looking for turning blanks to add to my inventory. Each piece I turn has a story about the wood and how I acquired it. Some of my previous customers and I started a wood exchange, trading turning blanks from the states of Iowa, Minnesota, California, Washington and Victoria, Canada.



Pierced Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) hollow form following the natural grain pattern

As I demo at our local county and state expos, I experience the interest in woodturning first hand. I am always intrigued by the attention paid to it and the curiosity, especially from the younger generation.

Unfortunately, many schools have

discontinued their hands-on industrial arts programmes and this puts more responsibility on turning clubs and organisations, as well as the opportunity to fill this void by promoting woodturning. I feel so fortunate to have found woodturning as my passion for it continues to grow.



28cm diameter maple (*Acer spp.*) platter, using polar graph paper for design layout



Natural-edge honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) bowl

Accent piercing added to Indian rosewood hollow form



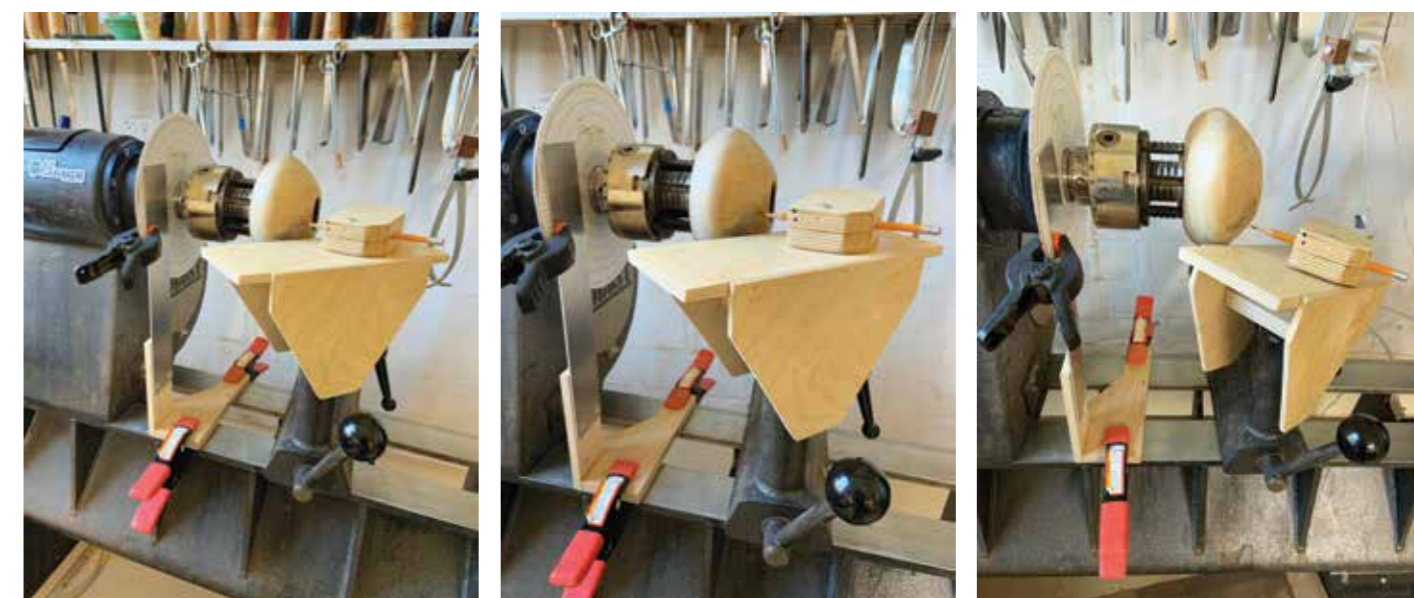
Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) hollow form with piercing

Added vine design with wood burning (pyrography) pen to a cotton wood vessel

DALE'S TOP TECHNIQUE: INDEX JIG



Homemade index wheel using polar graph paper and shop clamps



Simple to set up on any size of turning

Easy to follow any contour

Angle the platform for marking diagonals, creating unique designs

Many of my turning designs require indexing, sometimes over 100 segments. I decided to make my own index wheels using polar graph paper. This allows unlimited options with more details and control. I use a software programme from Blackcat Systems (www.blackcatsystems.com/software/graph_paper_maker.html) to produce a grid with the number of segments required. This programme allows the user to create custom graph paper with any number of segments needed. I print the graph paper and glue it to a 6mm-thick piece of hardboard and drill a hole to match my spindle. Next, I clamp a thin piece of aluminium to the lathe bed that allows the spindle to turn freely until clamped at the appropriate segment. As a guide for my

pencil block I mounted a piece of 18mm-thick plywood to the top of a tool post and over that added a plywood tiltable jig that can be moved to any desired angle ready for scribing. The block holding the pencil can be easily manoeuvred to scribe a line at any angle or contour you may have turned. The jig can be modified to your preference but the key component is the simple index wheel made from the printed polar graph paper and hardboard. There are a number of indexing tools available, but for total control I have found this indexing jig I use works the best for me. I have a number of wheels pre-made with different numbers of segments to help with the various designs I wish and like to make.