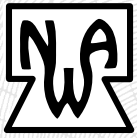


WOODWORKERS NEWS



Northeastern
Woodworkers
Association

June 2025, Vol. 34, Number 6

A Message from the NWA President

Folks,

The rains have blessed us this year. Pools are full, lawns are lush, I gave away bushels of asparagus. Even with all of nature's joy, it has been a bittersweet month. We gained some new members and lost a beloved member. The passing of Steve Vanderzee has left a hole in our hearts that will not soon be filled.

Elections have passed, and as I'm sure you've realized, I'm still here chatting away. However there are some new faces. We welcome Roy Richardson as VP, and Diane Balch and Jordan Mapes as members-at-large. Everyone else on the board stays the same, though not necessarily in the same role. We will be looking for a new treasurer over the upcoming months. Alan Hayes will be leaving the role by the end of our fiscal year.

Although it's fun to revel in our shiny new board members, I also think we should take a moment to thank our outgoing folks, Lee Hilt, Wally Cook, and Dale Lombardo for their contributions to the board over the past years.

The potluck in memory of Steve Vanderzee was a success, if you can assign success or failure to that kind of event. If you were unable to attend, I'm led to believe that there will be photos and commentary below.

In friendship and sawdust,
Kay

Don Orr's Eulogy to Steve VanderZee Spoken at the Celebration of Steve's Life

I miss Steve. He was a good man. A truly good person. He made me want to be and do better just because he was. I came in last Monday kind of distracted and figured I'd hear his voice or laugh and was sad when I realized he wasn't here. He was ALWAYS here. Helping, teaching, laughing, telling stories. I'll miss his stories. Stories of how his family name came to be. Stories of working with his dad as a kid doing electrical work. Doing it right, long before electrical codes. Stories of some of the crazy things from his job.

Always helping. He helped me many times. He has helped many new turners get started and make progress. He helped with shop cleanouts with his truck. He helped with sawmilling with his



truck because he had a truck, and he liked to help. He helped with Showcase including prep, load up, load in and load out. He helped run the Pen Booth and scroll saw area. He loaded up machines and materials for the County Fairs, often by himself, transported them to the Fair and brought them all back and returned them to its place. He was so much fun at the Fairs. He loved talking to all the people who would come by. He was the best salesman/promoter for this group. He spent a lot of time here at the Shop. Often first one in and last one out. He was instrumental in getting this shop up and running at the beginning. There's a saying, by whom I can't remember, that goes something like, "In times of need look for the helpers" That was Steve.

When the Scrollers needed a leader, it was Steve who stepped up to help bring it back. When the Adirondack Woodturners needed a new leader, it was Steve who stepped up and didn't say no when asked.

We can all honor him by stepping up and giving of our time and talents for this wonderful organization as he did so much. There's a lot he did that won't get done if we don't do it.

And on top of all that, he was one heck of a good woodturner, scroller and woodworker.

We miss you. Rest in Peace Steve-you have earned it.



Don Orr

NWA Members Held a Potluck to Celebrate Steve VanderZee

By Susan McDermott; Photos by Juliana Shei and Stan Blanchard

On Monday, May 12 about 80 to 100 NWA members assembled in the 97 Railroad Ave. shop to honor a recently deceased well known and loved member, turner and scroller, Steve VanderZee. Steve died suddenly on Easter. NWA President, Kay McCampbell, informed the entire NWA membership (about five hundred). Immediately, Steve's closest shop members, organized by Pam Bucci, planned a potluck and program. Unflappable Pam coordinated entrée, salads, desserts, and drinks made by members. She made thirteen quarts of chili while John Ryan and Jim LeFebvre brought meats and set up a carving table with about thirty pounds of smoked turkey and pulled pork.

The long table in the Conference room was filled with desserts brought by sweet-tooth members. The photos with this article will give readers an idea of the many main dishes and sides offered. Steve would have loved it!

The newsletter reached out to members who knew Steve well for stories or memories to contribute to this article. The response confirmed Steve's generous, selfless, capable qualities as a wood worker, a teacher, and a Showcase team member.

Wayne Distin: "Steve and I worked together to keep the shop running. Any electrical work needed, Steve would step in to fix lighting fixtures and help me



Shop memories of Steve



Potluck turnout

repair power tools. Steve was always willing to help. I learned a great deal from him, and he will be greatly missed."

Dave Mobley: "My last memory of Steve was at our recent Showcase, and it is typical of him. A visitor to the Membership booth had a question about turning, and I took him over to see Steve. Even though Steve was busy, he was welcoming as usual, addressing the question, and inviting the person to come to our shop. I will miss him a lot."

Jim LeFebvre: Jim recalled a segmented turning class he and Steve took under Ray Puffer's instruction. After Steve finished his bowl, he moved around looking to help others. Once Steve took a guitar building class taught by Bill Sterling. He finished his guitar but knew nothing about playing it. He told Jim he would give it to his sister Kady for Christmas. He knew she would cry, and she did!

Diane Balch: "Several times a month when Steve had a meeting at the shop, he would make it a point to come down to see what the Carvers were carving. He was helpful to me in using the scroll saw and supplying me with scroll saw blades. At Showcase, he loved when I supplied 'Pen Turning' and 'Scrollers' signs, as well as the four-foot caricature that allowed the minimal height requirement for turning pens. When it came time to set up the NWA booth at the Schaghticoke Fair, he asked a couple of Carvers to carve at the NWA booth."

And last but not least are words from Lee Hilt: "It'll be a very long time, if ever, before I no longer expect to see Steve's smiling face in the shop when I walk in. Steve was like one of the shop machines in that he was always there. I think he was sleeping there."

"Over the years, Steve has volunteered for many NWA events I've been involved with. At Showcase pack-up and move out from and back into the shop and barn, as well as the set-up and take down at the Saratoga City Center, Steve was often one of the last guys loading the final truck Sunday nights.

"Early on, Steve was involved with numerous shop cleanouts, working in the barn on lumber organizing, aiding us on sawmill days, as well as other club activities. We could always count on Steve to step up where volunteers were needed.

"My biggest concern without Steve now, is the RR Ave shop wiring. I was one of the grunts pulling wires when the shop was wired for our move in a few years back. The main panels in the shop are powered by 3-Phase. Most of



80 to 100 attendees



Three women who admired Steve: (l to r) Learay Silvia, Jan McEnery, Bev Reinhardt



Turner, John Kingsley



Three old timers who knew Steve well: (l to r) Bob Reinhardt, Wayne Distin, Don Cooke

OFFICERS

*Some recent position changes
are not yet reflected*

President - Kay McCampbell
nwa.president@woodworker.org

Vice President/Program Chair
Lee Hilt
lhagh@earthlink.net

Recording Secretary - Linda Reiss

Treasurer - Alan Hayes

Executive Secretary - Vacant



NWA BOARD MEMBERS

Pete Chast
Mid-Hudson Representative
Wally Cook
Board Member at Large
Dale Lombardo
Board Member at Large
Doug Wildes
Board Member at Large
Charlie Goddard
Board Member Emeritus



Mid-Hudson Chapter

Bill Sterling, President
Rich Cerruto, Vice President
Patsy Boisvert, Treasurer
Phil Dudek, Secretary



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Registrar - Frank Necaie
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Fiske Fund

Chair - James Lefebvre
Nick Piedmont
Karoline Sears
Steven Mapes
Robert Fleury
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Totally Turning Chair

Todd Gunter

us don't know anything about 3-Phase. Steve did. He was the guy who organized and directed the entire rewiring of the shop, including working in the main panels.

"As for the annual NWA auction, Steve had become auctioneer Bob William's right-hand man, with reading the lot item labels, helping spot bidders, as well as giving direction to Bob on where to go next. Each year, I called Bob for our auction, and he would remind me that he "ain't getting any younger" and that NWA should be looking for a replacement to answer the call. Last year, Bob told me that Steve is someone we should be looking for as his replacement. He said Steve has the organization and command voice to control an auction, and with a lesson or two on auctioneering lingo, Steve could be that guy.

I told Steve this a few times since our last auction. He smiled, of course. Steve was always smiling. I'm going to miss that smile. "



Six more turner fans of Steve



Organizer Pam Bucci gives her loving tribute to Steve



Lee Hilt (l) and Todd Gunter (r)



(l to r) Stan Blanchard, Kay McCampbell, Don Orr

WOODWORKERS NEWS

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Scott Oliver's Safe(r) Finishes

By Manav Malhotra

Woodworking is a hobby full of dangers: from the mechanical slicing and piercing of our flesh with sharpened steel to the slow chemical sabotage of our lungs and livers. We mostly learn to respect our chisels and table saws, but it's the invisible hazards - VOCs, solvents, and microplastics - that sneak up on us. As awareness grows around the long-term health effects of the chemicals we use to finish and treat our work, the search for safer alternatives becomes not just a matter of preference, but one of preservation. That was the undercurrent running through the full house gathered for Scott Oliver's discussion and demonstration on safe(r) wood finishes.

Scott, a woodworker with an MFA in metalwork, brings a unique perspective shaped by years of first hand exposure to harsh chemicals in his previous work. Rashes, reactions, and a creeping sense of unease eventually drove him to seek out finishes that wouldn't cost him his health. He credits Christopher Schwarz with the concept of "safe finishes," but he's taken the idea and run with it - armed with a pirate's attitude toward experimentation.

The heart of Scott's approach appears to lie in two principles: testing before trust, and simple is safer. He emphasized the importance of making finish samples - lots of them - to see how different finishes behave across shapes, corners, and grain directions. Label them, live with them, and learn. He brought many of his own to pass around - each one a mini case study in color, texture, and application method.

Scott began with milk paint - an ancient finish made from casein (milk protein) and lime. Safe enough to eat, and wildly versatile. He demonstrated his rapid-fire mixing technique using a power drill and whisk, turning dry powder into smooth paint in seconds. Varying the pigment-to-water ratio allowed him to demonstrate its full range, from translucent wash to opaque paint. Application techniques - foam brush, dry brush, layered coats - all played a role in dialing in a particular look.

Then came the dark arts: black India ink. Applied like a stain, it delivers a deep, waterproof finish that leaves the grain visible. He showed how to distress the surface using chainmail and pot scrubbers,



and how to pair ink with milk paint for an antique, timeworn aesthetic that felt both medieval and modern.

Perhaps the most useful example was linseed oil. Pressed from flaxseed, it's one of the oldest finishes known to humankind - natural, safe, and stubbornly slow to dry. Unmodified, it can take weeks to cure.

To get around that, Scott experimented with polymerization: thickening the oil to accelerate drying without resorting to the metal driers and petroleum solvents found in off-the-shelf "boiled" linseed oil (which, criminally, has never been boiled). That stuff contains cobalt-based dryers - definitely not food safe. Instead, based on an offhand comment in a book on finishes, Scott used an aquarium air pump to bubble oxygen through flaxseed oil for a month. This oxidized and thickened the oil, achieving true polymerization without fire hazards or heavy metals. The result was a beautifully translucent oil with quick drying time and zero toxicity.



Linseed oil alone isn't the most durable finish, so Scott shared a wax finish made from his blown linseed oil, beeswax, and limonene - a citrus-based solvent. These hard wax oils have surged in popularity in recent years, and for good reason - they're easy to apply, easy to repair, and give a soft, low-sheen finish that wears gracefully. He shared recipes, tips on tinting wax with vegetable pigments, and guidance on when to reach for tung oil instead - especially for outdoor or high-use projects.

Then, the curveball: soap. Popular in Scandinavia and increasingly admired for its clean look and easy maintenance, soap finishes are made by mixing soap flakes with hot water to form a paste. Scott described applying it to wood for a soft, matte finish that resists alcohol and feels silky to the touch. It's not invincible, but it's refreshable and easy to maintain. There were open questions about its slipperiness - maybe don't try it on your stair treads - but for furniture and paneling, it's a compelling, safe option.

Scott urged attendees to check ingredient lists, test their finishes, and not be afraid to mix and match - or make their own. There are plenty of reasons to explore what he calls safer finishes - not just because of what they *don't* contain, but because of what they *do*: reconnect us with tradition, invite creative tinkering, and let us breathe easier - literally and figuratively - every time we step into the shop.

Building a Live Edge Table

By Rich Cerruto

A live edge table is typically made of a single slab and retains a natural edge on one or more sides. The rustic look offers a timeless appeal that can add one-of-a-kind beauty to both formal and casual settings. While appreciating the look, I was intimidated by the design of legs and how to attach them to the slab. Then I came across a company called Bear Hollow Supply which offers a variety of domestically made cast iron legs. I was further encouraged by a never-ending supply of small mills offering slabs for sale on Facebook Marketplace.



Completed table with wax finish

When my wife asked for a craft table upon which to carve her comfort birds, I thought an “industrial look” with cast iron legs would work.

I found a mill just 20 minutes’ drive offering large walnut slabs. The slab needs to be dried. It also must be flattened to a uniform thickness which my mill offered as an optional service. Flattening is typically done with a router held at a constant height mounted on an X-Y table. Once one side is flattened, it can be run through a planer to achieve uniform thickness.

A slab will often have surface imperfections due to knots or rot. It may also be splitting at the ends, known as “checking”. In choosing the slab one should consider how to deal with surface imperfections and checking. My slab had minimal surface imperfections but was split on both edges. General purpose two-part epoxy can be used to fill in voids and butterfly joints can be used to prevent further splitting of cracks. I used a straightedge on a piece of ½” thick ash to draw a butterfly joint, choosing to make an asymmetrical shape which I cut out on the bandsaw. I then traced its shape directly onto the slab with a scribing knife and used a ¼” spiral upcut bit in a trim router to route the pattern. I did it in two steps: first at ¼” deep, then lowering the bit to ½”. Stay off the lines and then finish with a chisel. You should make the joint a little proud, then plane and sand it flush. Any gaps can be filled with white glue mixed with sanding dust.

A monolithic slab table can bow over time. To prevent this, metal “C” channels are attached to the bottom at a right angle to the grain. I used a router with a ¼” spiral upcut bit aided by a guide to cut two ¼” wide slots to receive the channels. The C channels (from Etsy) were attached by threaded inserts (¼”-20 wide x 25mm long from Amazon).

Since my table was 80” by 36” I opted for the optional stretcher rod that goes between the leg assemblies. Finally, since this was a craft table not susceptible to water, I opted for Bush Oil finish plus 3 coats of Minwax furniture polish. This type of finish will allow downstream surface injuries to be sanded down without the bother of stripping off varnish.

My wife enjoys the table and is happily making her comfort birds.



Epoxy and butterfly joints used to secure the end cracks



Slots and threaded inserts to receive the “C” channels



Legs and are stretcher are mounted



After sanding to 400, Bush Oil is liberally applied

Sawdust...

This is it for the current season. There are no newsletters for July and August, unless there is some shop-shattering news. Many sincere thanks to the contributors of the fine articles seen over the last season. There would not be a newsletter without your dedication.

I'll not pester for contributions until early August for the September issue. Have a safe and wonderful summer!

- John

By Wally Cook

Joe Larese demonstrated a turned box, primarily using the skew. For this demo, Joe turned a box in the style of Benoit Averly. Averly's domed and carved boxes are iconic with a signature finial. Joe showed how a similar box can be completed, using a couple of skews and a gouge for hollowing.

Skews are not typically used as the major shaping tool for creating boxes, but Joe explained that skews can perform a peeling cut, as well as a planing cut. His workhorse skew chisel is a radius grind at a 35-degree angle – that is, ground 17.5 degrees on each side. This geometry results in slightly curved and acute edge. Such an edge will need to be sharpened frequently, but when presented flat to the spinning blank, can be effective in quickly peeling down the diameter of the cylinder.

The curved surface of the edge helps to prevent catches. The tool is engaged slightly above the centerline and the handle is raised while keeping steady pressure on the cut. The result is similar to peeling veneer from a log. The cut is tidy, but not a finish cut. Joe shaped the rough design with peeling cuts and used the planing feature of the skew to leave a finished surface.

Working backward from the final, all the detailing was completed with the skew. The short point – or heel – of the skew was the lead cutting surface. Tight spaces required entry from the long point – or toe – of the skew. Joe has rounded the corners of the tool's short point edge to assist with beading but keeps the long point edge square for slicing cuts.

Once the lid and the base are parted, a blunter skew (40/40-degree grind with a raised burr on one side) is used to square the mating surfaces of the box and to define the lid tenon which fits into the base. A jam chuck is employed to hollow the inside of the lid, which is done with a half-inch gouge.

No sanding was needed, due to the fine cuts produced by the skews.



Joe Larese discusses the shaping the domed box



Completed table with wax finish



Completed Averly-style box required no sanding



KWA gang looks on while Joe sets up for the peeling cut

Classifieds

Lathe tool holders for sale. I made these for Showcase/Totally Turning as a fundraiser. They were not as popular as I had hoped. I want to offer them to the membership.

The outer dimensions are 20" x 33"; the pockets are 11" deep inside, with pockets offset from each other. Total pockets per each is eleven. I am asking \$20.00 for each with \$13.00 dollars going back to the club.

I am only hoping to recoup the cost of the fabric, the buckles and the trim. The fabric is Ottertext, which is a waterproof canvas used for backpacks. If anyone is interested in one they may email me, Learay Rayburn-Silvia, at justmom99@outlook.com and I will arrange to get them to you. The colors available are shown in the bag image.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs):

Adirondack Woodturners Association (AWA) - The AWA is active throughout the year. General Meetings and Bowl Turning are held the first Wednesday of the month (except in January and July when it is the second Wednesday), at the NWA Learning Center located at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY from 5:30 PM to 8:45 PM. **Contact:** Vacant

Spindle and Pen Turners plus Introduction to Woodworking - Meets Mondays 9:00 AM to noon and Mondays 5:30 PM – 9:00 PM, including holidays except Christmas. **Contact:** Pam Bucci at (518) 429-6440 or woolglass2@gmail.com. Wednesday "Learn and Turn" sessions occur on alternate Wednesdays at the NWA Learning Center. These sessions run 5:30 PM to 8:45 PM. www.adirondackwoodturners.com **Contact:** Pam Bucci at (518) 429-6440 or woolglass2@gmail.com.

Kaatskill Woodturners - Also an AAW Chapter. Meetings are held at 12 noon on the second Saturday of the month at the KWA Shop, 2076 Sawkill-Ruby Road, Kingston, NY. **Contact:** Stan Pressner 917-535-4195 or spressner@me.com.

NWA Crafters - Meet Tuesdays and Saturdays 9:00 AM to noon. They provide public service woodworking for various charitable organizations, including the Double H Hole in the Woods camp for children, Saratoga Builders Association, the Warren Washington and Albany Counties ARC (A Respectful Commitment), and the Northeast Construction Trades Workforce Coalition which is the non-profit arm of Curtis Lumber. Sharing information, fellowship, education, and relating experiences are a major part of these sessions. **Contact:** Rick Bird biggrbird@gmail.com for more information.

The NWA Wood Carvers SIG - Meet Thursdays 5:00-8:30 PM all year at the NWA Learning Center located at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY. The goal is to promote the art of wood carving and to have a good time doing it. The only prerequisite is a desire to carve while making new friends. Wood, tools, and patterns are available. **Contact:** Diane Balch at (518) 885-9899 or dbalch1@nycap.rr.com.

Hand Tool SIG - Meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00-9:00 PM in the Herm Finkbeiner Education Center at 97 Railroad Avenue, Colonie, NY. **Contact:** Dave Parkis at (518) 429-6581 for further details: dparkis@nycap.rr.com.

Scrollers SIG - Meets Mondays 5:45 to 8:00 PM - new scrollers welcome. Wednesdays 5:45 to 8:00 PM - machine qualified scrollers only (possible demonstrations) **Contact:** Stephen Koonz (518) 290-0722 (text only)-

NWA Musical Instruments SIG - Meets at 97 Railroad Avenue shop 6:00 to 8:00 PM, second Tuesday of the month. **Contacts:** Jon Hedman, jonwhedman@gmail.com, (518) 399-7849; Ray Puffer, Ray.Puffer@gmail.com, (518) 272-6421; Eric Marczak, epm03@hotmail.com, (518) 872-9324.

CHAPTERS

NWA Mid-Hudson - The address and hours for the Mid-Hudson shop to be changed. **Contact:** Bill Sterling wster1156@aol.com or Wally Cook wally.cook@gmail.com for details.

Boat Building SIG - Tuesdays at Rich Cerruto's shop in Gardiner, NY from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm with a lunch break. r_cerruto@yahoo.com.