

# Turner's Challenge:

*When it came time for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual woodturner's challenge, all our author asked for was some green wood and some well-seasoned guild members. These Cincinnati area turners might just put the Ohio Valley Woodturner's Guild on the national map!*

**F**ree wood and walnut to boot! Add a chainsaw, four guys from Cincinnati, and let the fun begin! John Lannom, Joe Keeler, Gary Brackett and Dave Morrical got together earlier this year to cut up a good-sized walnut log into various chunks, each turner walking away with a custom-sized piece. The results are spectacular and unique to each turner.

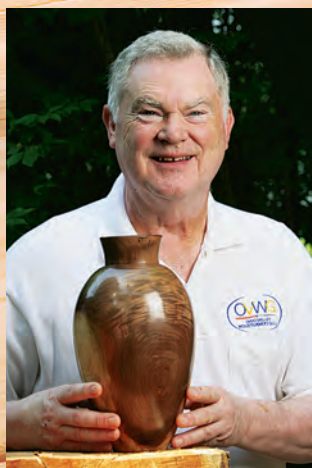
Green-wood turning, right from the log to the lathe, is a delightful experience, and in fact, that's the only way Joe and Dave's hollow turnings could easily be accomplished. Gary's natural-edge bowl cut like butter, and John's large, crotch-figure platter dried crack-free. Skipping the kiln-drying process ensures that black walnut's rich, chocolate heartwood remains vibrant, while the delineation between sapwood and heartwood is distinct. Joe, Gary and Dave took advantage of this for their designs, while John decided to bleach the rim of his walnut platter to provide contrast for the intense crotch-grain pattern.



By Betty Scarpino



# Year Four



**Dave Morrival**



**Gary Brackett**



**Joe Keeler**

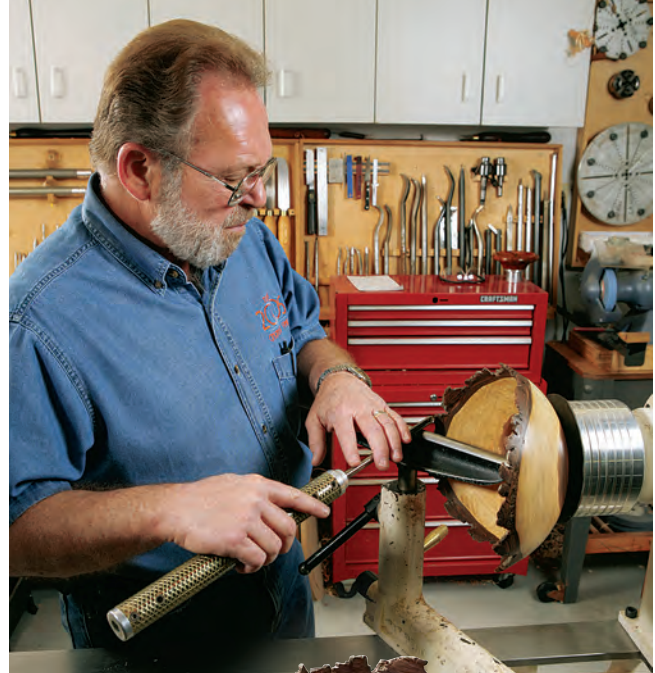


**John Lannom**





**Dave Morrical demonstrates how to end-grain hollow a vessel. Depending on how narrow the vessel's opening is, much of this work is done "blindly" and by feel. It's a skill that can only be honed by many hours of practice.**



**Gary Brackett shows how he would turn the outside of his walnut, natural-edge bowl. Its thin walls and uneven shape pose challenges for tool control.**



### Turning Club Activities

Woodturning is the activity that brings these men together, and the Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild (OVWG) is a key ingredient. Each of my "challenge" turners either holds an office or has held one in the past. Dave, for instance, is the current president of the guild. As I talked with each turner, the conversation quickly came around to their club activities.

The second weekend in May found all four turners, plus four other club members, demonstrating their craft at the Appalachian Craft Festival at Coney Island on the Ohio River. Organizers of this three-day event supplied a tent for the woodturners, and they attracted large crowds throughout the weekend.

The other major event for OVWG is a semi-annual symposium, held this year in October. They limit attendance to less than 400, which keeps the affair manageable. It's a first-rate conference, with meals provided and demonstrators from all over the world.

### Dave Morrical

Dave's first experience with a lathe was when he was a high school freshman. Additionally, his dad owned a Shopsmith®, so Dave was around woodworking much of his younger life. He started his college career as an industrial arts major, but switched to business education and became a teacher in the public school system where he also coached soccer. He is now retired, and turning is his passionate hobby. He has been president of OVWG for four years, vice president for six years and treasurer for three. "It's a labor of love," he says.

Like so many others who were involved in turning in the early days, Dave first learned to turn using the scraping method. Bowl gouges, cutting and turning green wood happened for him in the early 1990s. He sells his

bowls and vessels through shows and to individuals. Cherry wood and Norfolk Island pine are his best sellers.

The tall, hollow vessel Dave turned for this story takes advantage of the sapwood by leaving a lovely contrasting oval on each side. The grain is oriented vertically, and hollowing it while it was green makes the process possible.

Dave's advice for beginners is to buy the very best equipment you can afford. If possible, be sure to try out friends' machinery before you buy your own.

### Gary Brackett

Gary Brackett's traditional natural-edge bowl is one of those "how'd-he-do-that" wonders for those unfamiliar with woodturning. The process is fairly straightforward, but it becomes tricky as the bowl is turned thinner: near the rim, the tool hits wood twice and air twice on each rotation. Leaving the bark on is a challenge, and Gary accomplished that quite nicely.

Gary started turning wood in 1989 when he borrowed a friend's lathe to turn some tool handles. He immediately fell in love with turning, and it has been his hobby ever since. Gary is a self-employed manufacturer's rep for JET and Powermatic woodworking equipment in Ohio and Kentucky, so he does his turning on weekends. (As you might expect, Gary owns a Powermatic lathe.)

The Artesian Center in Moscow, Ohio, offers woodturning classes, and Gary occasionally teaches there. He also sells his work through their gallery. He primarily turns green wood, except for boxes and ornaments. In 1990, Gary first encountered green-wood turning at an American Association of Woodturners symposium at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee.

The precursor to the OVWG was the Tri-States Chapter of Woodturners, and Gary was a founding member and



**Joe Keeler sits on the bed of his lathe to hollow vessels. For our story here, turning was just the first step of the process. Then Joe whipped out the carving tools to add more details.**



president of that organization for three years. Gary's advice for anyone wanting to learn woodturning is to start with a small lathe and get one-on-one instruction in the beginning.

### Joe Keeler

In 1992, Joe retired from a career as an engineer and from working for Union Carbide in their purchasing department. His involvement in woodturning began at a craft fair in West Virginia where he met Bob Fleming, then took a class from him at Cedar Lake Crafts Center in West Virginia, a small craft school.

Joe makes a variety of turned items, which he also sells at local craft fairs. The design of his hollow vessel was inspired by John Jordan, a world-class turner. It is turned with the grain oriented horizontally, to create the sapwood detail at the top. It took Joe part of a day to turn the form, then several days to carve and sand.

Joe's basement shop is compact, but neatly arranged. Classical music plays in the background. His custom-built lathe boasts running boards. This way he can comfortably sit on the bed of the lathe when doing hollow turning, keeping him from having to twist sideways during the process of hollowing vessels.

"The mentoring program offered by the OVWG is a great way to learn proper use of woodturning tools," says Joe. "Practice the basics, then explore outside the envelope."

### John Lannom

John is a retired chief design engineer, and his shop reflects his profession. Seven years ago, he moved his shop from his basement to a newly built, 650-square-foot outbuilding. One wall, full of purple, blue and red ribbons, gives a clue to John's abilities. He has won Best of Show from the local Hyde Park Art Show twice and several first



**John Lannom turns the outside of a green bowl as it's held by the chuck. The wet shavings peel away in ribbons — a delightfully easy way to turn wood.**



place ribbons from the Montgomery [Ohio] Kiwanis Art Exhibition. And there are more.

"Flat and parallel" used to be John's passion until he discovered woodturning, but he rarely makes furniture these days and only for his grandchildren. Twelve years ago, John's wife, Carol, gave him a mini lathe for Christmas, so he decided he ought to learn how to turn. He looked for woodturning instruction online, discovered a local member of the Guild and took lessons. His advice for beginners is to join a woodturning club: "You will save yourself time, money and aggravation by getting professional instruction."

John does five or six craft fairs every year in the Ohio area, and Carol enjoys going with him. Although he never initially intended to sell his turnings, the volume of what he produces certainly requires an outlet!

John's large walnut platter is reflective of his mastery of woodturning. The clean lines and elegant form are ideal for accentuating the beautiful crotch-grain pattern.

### Good Folks, Great Turning

On the drive back to Indianapolis from Cincinnati, photographer Shawn Spence and I talked about John, Joe, Dave and Gary, and our experiences that day. We couldn't help but marvel at their positive attitudes, enthusiasm for life, and generosity. It speaks volumes for woodturners!

Hopefully, these guys will inspire you to grab a green chunk from the next downed tree in the neighborhood and give it a whirl. Imagine the possibilities ...

*Betty Scarpino lives and turns in Indianapolis. Her web page is [www.bettyscarpino.com](http://www.bettyscarpino.com).*