

Vice President's Message for April 2015

It's pretty tough to do something new and innovative in woodturning. Those that do innovate often find very similar ideas and/or products on the market in a surprisingly short time period.

Woodturning artist Douglas J Fischer recently posted images of another turning making and selling pieces nearly identical to those of his own work. These were not turnings influenced by his style but deliberate copies of his work with only minor modifications. They were also not turnings for her own personal use/display, they were on display and for sale in her booth at an art show and on her website.

We've all seen demonstrations or read articles and then rushed to our shops to try out the techniques, tools, or procedures for ourselves. What I hope happens after that is we take those techniques and ideas and apply them to our own work – to put our own twist on it, sometimes quite literally. I think woodturners on the whole share their ideas and techniques freely. There's a reason that we attend symposia and why so many woodturners produce videos, articles, and do demonstrations. Ask most woodturners how to make something or how a particular tool or technique works and they'll not only tell you how they'll invite you over to their shop to show you too.

My best example of this happened a few years ago when I found myself traveling through Utah and in possession of Mike Mahoney's telephone number. He had previously indicated to me that he would point me towards some of the wood lots where he sources most of his turning stock. I happened to be passing through on a Saturday when the municipal wood lots were closed so he invited me over to his house and not only gave me a tour of his shop and home but he also gave me healthy pile of wood straight out of his shop. My kids fed his chickens with Mike's wife while Mike helped me load my trailer.

Now I find myself in a position that has me a bit conflicted. I've developed what I believe to be a pretty innovative tool; albeit with fairly limited use. I plan to show it off at our club and it will be heavily featured during my demonstrations at the AAW convention in Pittsburgh this summer. While I'm happy to share the concept I don't want to see it copied as I've invested a significant amount of time and a not insignificant amount of money into the concept. The limited use and restricted potential customer base means that it's not commercially viable and the cost of obtaining a patent far exceeds any potential profit. So for now it will remain a concept for which I hope to receive credit that will be shared and that will hopefully inspire others to innovate and create something that they can truly call their own.

Jason Clark -- Vice President, Arizona Woodturner's Association