

## 10 MINUTES SAFETY PRESENTATION

Reprinted in part from an AAW article by Hilda V. Carpenter.

### ON THE EDGE OF DISASTER

While working in our shops, we woodturners sometimes tempt disaster. The very nature of standing in front of a lathe with a hunk of wood balanced between two points spinning anywhere from 400 to 4,000 RPM, attacking it with a hunk of strong steel is like “ A matador facing the bull in the arena “

Another suitable metaphor could be “ Like a skater on thin ice “

Knowingly or not woodturners take risks, with danger lurking under their noses, literally.

After the recent loss of Joan Gilmer, a talented and experienced turner; safety came at the forefront for all the AAW demonstrators which now wear a full faceshield, no exception, at all the symposium rotations with the lathe turning.

I think all of us should follow their lead and use eye and fullface protection at the lathe.

In this, the first of a series of 10 minute presentations, we will start to bring to your attention one of the common sources of potential trouble.

### WOOD FLAWS

It is in the nature of a living organism to have flaws.

In the case of wood flaws sometimes are readily apparent sometimes they are not.

The key is to be on the lookout for cracks and grain changes, way before you decide how to mount your blank on the lathe.

A large crack is obvious to the eye; however, less obviously, small fissures is where the danger lies.

A blank with hidden flaws may not show its true danger while being roughed out at relatively low speed, but when the speed is increased and the form is refined the weakness in the wood will come calling! It is a good practice to inspect a piece that had a surprising and unexpected premature departure from a spinning lathe, assuming you can find all the pieces now scattered around your shop. The wood flaws will be readily apparent by examining the edges where the cracking took place. Remember a sound blank will stand some turning abuse and even some tool catches but a weak blank can be sent flying even by the smallest catch.

Will pouring CA glue into large deep cracks handle it? I would not bet my right eye on it, but for small surface cracks, that glue works well. Be sure, though, that the crack is a surface event.

Throughout the turning process, periodically check the progress of your work to make sure you have consistency of wall thickness and be alert to unexpected vibrations and changes of sound as your tool cuts through the wood, these could be a warning that all is not well. Be aware of where you are in relation to the bottom of the bowl or vase, we all know what happens when you cut through the bottom, funnel shards can be lethal.

Punky, soft wood does not hold well when fastened in a four-jaw chuck. Neither does cracked wood. Gnarly, unsound wood can be successfully turned, but only if you know proper methods of stabilizing it while it whirls around, attached to the lathe.

In conclusion it's wiser to use sound wood.  
Wood is far less expensive than repairs to your body parts.

Our next 10 minutes safety presentation will deal with chucks, faceplates and fastening wood to the lathe.