

# Turning Southwest Hollow forms

– Al Hockenbery

In 1996 I tagged along with Sherry, my wife, to Phoenix where she attended a biology convention. While we were there we visited the Heard museum where I became fascinated with the shapes of pottery on display. I began doing my stylized version of these forms. I think these forms provide a wonderful surface for displaying wood.



My Process:

**Tools:** ½” bowl gouge, ½” spindle gouge, Stewart system boring bars, Jamieson handle, and laser pointer.

**Wood selection:** I turn my forms from unseasoned half log sections. I like to find wood with unusual features on the bark side where I will make the opening.



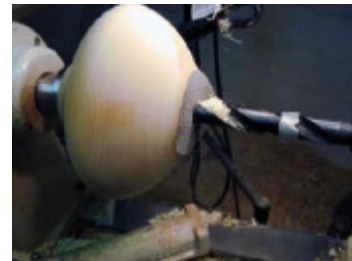
**Rough turn:** I mount the blank between centers with base toward the tailstock. I turn it to round and reposition the centers to balance the grain or keep certain features on the surface of the vessel. I turn a waste block and a rough version of the form.



**Finalize the form:** To me the outside surface is the most important feature of the vessel. It is what people see and touch. I mount the rough form on a faceplate and refine the form. I shear scrape the surface to remove the tool marks. I don't sand on the lathe so I want the smoothest surface I can get.



**Hollowing:** I drill the center to within a ½ inch of where I plan the bottom. There is no graceful way to recover from drilling too deeply. My openings are from 2-3 inches in diameter. I hollow most vessels to a 3/16-wall thickness, finishing the inside surface with a scraper cutter. I pay special attention to the surface just inside the opening and on the bottom of the vessel.



**Turn off the waste block:** I mount a jam chuck on the lathe. This is a cylinder of wood with a diameter slightly less than the opening and long enough to reach the bottom of the vessel. It is slightly concave on the end. I measure the bottom thickness. I place the vessel over the chuck with a foam pad to prevent burning or marring of the inside surface. I bring the tailstock up and



through trial and error center the vessel. I turn the waste block away, keeping in mind the bottom thickness, and form the bottom of the vessel leaving a ½” diameter pin of wood to support the vessel from the tailstock. I use a shear scrape to blend the newly turned surface to the existing surface. I then turn the pin smaller near the base and remove it.

**Drying:** I usually put the vessel in a paper bag overnight, then allow it to dry on a shelf for several days.

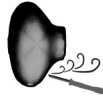
**Sanding:** I use 3" Velcro pads with the finest grit that will work. I sand keeping the swirls in line with the growth rings to hide the sanding marks. I seldom sand beyond 320.

**Finish:** I usually apply 3-4 coat of Waterlox and then buff.

About me:

I bought my first lathe in 1975 and have been learning to turn wood ever since. I joined AAW in 1990 and the Chesapeake Woodturners in 1992. I teach woodturning at Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts. I teach the Basic Woodturning and the introduction to hollowing portion of the Intermediate Woodturning. Sherry and I teach a woodturning course for kids 10-16. We both gave up our day jobs in 2001. This gives us more time for turning, teaching, and traveling. My work is in shows and exhibitions in and around Annapolis. We both have work in the Annapolis ArtFX gallery, in April we had a show there. Last summer I did a 6-week show by invitation at the Maryland Federation of Art, Baltimore City Gallery.

I have had the good fortune to have weeklong classes at Maryland Hall with Liam O'Neil, David Ellsworth, Michael Peterson, Christian Burchard, and Johannes Michaelson. Most recently I have had the pleasure of helping out while Lyle Jamieson and Trent Bosch taught a masters class at Maryland Hall sponsored by the Chesapeake Woodturners.



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