

## My First Symposium

By Kevin Wood

I am relatively new to woodturning and have been turning for about one and a half years. I recall my first exposure to woodturning occurred at a wood working show at the Gwinnett Arena back in the early 2000's. I saw a demonstration on bowl turning. I thought how neat it was that this guy was making a bowl from a spinning piece of wood. I remember going to the Georgia Mountain Fair up in Hiawassee, GA back in the 90's where there was a guy with a booth setup selling wooden bowls. I thought they were cool but remember thinking how I could not afford to pay the prices he was asking. Fast forward, to the summer of 2010 when Scott Phillips was visiting Woodcraft. By the end of the weekend, Scott had somehow managed to convince me I needed to buy a lathe; of course a 20% discount did help with the decision.

Later that year, I ended up joining the Atlanta Woodturners Guild in October 2010 and have tried to attend just about every meeting since. In fact, each month I really look forward to the meetings. For me, these meetings have been very informative and I have learned a lot from both the presenters and fellow club members. I have also learned a lot from videos that are available for rent from the club library. So if I joined the club in 2010 and I get so much out of attending the club meetings, why is it that I did not attend my first symposium until April 2012? What happened with 2011? Well you see the spring / fall symposiums happen to coincide with another passion of mine ....hunting. You see I have been turning for less than 2 years but I have been hunting most of my life. In the spring, I am turkey hunting and in the fall I am deer/hog/bear hunting. So for me to give up an entire weekend during hunting season to do something other than hunt, well for me is a big deal. As my wood turning disease has slowly progressed, I thought I would try to give up ONE weekend this past spring and attend the Southern States XII Woodturning Symposium. I was also impressed with the demonstrator line up which helped in my decision to give up a weekend of hunting. I must add that I did go hunting for a few days just prior to the symposium; in fact I was up in the North Georgia Mountains turkey hunting the morning of the symposium.

The week prior to the symposium, I had been reviewing the demonstrator lineup and was having a little difficulty trying to decide who I wanted to see. I knew that I wanted to see some of Jimmy Clewes and Bill Grumbine's demonstrations but I was still unsure what others I wanted to see. Looking at the schedule of turners, most of the demonstrators were giving each demonstration twice over the course of the symposium weekend. Even with each demonstration occurring twice, I still had to make some choices as to which ones to see or not. When the symposium was over, I saw demonstrations from Jimmy Clewes, Bill Grumbine, Rudy Lopez, Kevin White and Kimberly Winkle.

After getting in a quick morning hunt and rushing home to take a quick shower, I arrived in Gainesville around 1 pm. I was running later that I had planned. I eagerly wanted to check out all the vendors prior to the first demo. I knew I had to be quick since the first demo started at 1:30pm. As I entered the doors of the Georgia Mountain Center and paid my admission, I was filled with anticipation. I think the feelings I was having had to similar to how a woman must feel upon entering a Mall on a big sale day. I quickly made the rounds; scoping things out. I will have to say the one thing I did not like about the symposium was that there was not a lot of time to shop and check out the vendors between demonstrations. For me financially, that was probably a good thing. The demonstration schedule consisted of two demonstrations in the morning with a 30 minute break between the two and two in the afternoon with a 30 minute break. The Symposium did open up around 7:30 am so that gave a little time to shop prior to the first demo of the day scheduled at 8:30 am.

The following is a brief summary of the highlights I took from the various demonstrators. I did not try to take a lot of detailed notes but instead mostly watched and just enjoyed the demonstrations.

**Jimmy Clewes** – Jimmy's demonstrations were very entertaining and educational; much like his videos. Jimmy tried to point out little things that he thought was important from design, turning and finishing. I ended up seeing all of Jimmy's demonstrations; each one very enjoyable. Jimmy demonstrations consisted of making a Square Oriental Box, a Colored Platter, an African Drum Box with silver inlay, and a Natural Edge End Grain Vase from Box Elder.

I believe Jimmy's African Drum bow with silver inlay was made from Cherry with a Makassar Ebony inset lid containing small argentium silver rods placed randomly on the ebony. The goal was to provide little hints are sparkling light when viewing the box from various angles. Jimmy's source for the argentium silver rods and drill bits used drill the various sized holes in the lid



Jimmy Turning a Platter



African Drum Box with Silver Inlay

was Rio Grande Jewelry Supplies ([www.riogrande.com](http://www.riogrande.com)). Jimmy spoke highly of them and thought they had a wide array of jewelry supplies. For finishing the box, he used Deft Sanding Sealer Lacquer for its quickness in drying in a demonstration environment setting and he polished it with Kiwi neutral shoe polish.

Jimmy now has a couple of signature gouges that are being made by Doug Thompson – [www.thompsonlatethetools.com](http://www.thompsonlatethetools.com). These gouges come in two sizes - 3/8 and ½ inch. The both contain a parabolic flute; which Jimmy prefers over U shaped or V shaped gouges. Jimmy was very friendly and approachable by all after his demonstrations. Jimmy seemed very concerned to make sure everyone got their money's worth. Jimmy seemed very appreciative of the fact that it was people like us that enabled him a career of doing what he loved most.



Natural Edge End Grain Vase

**Kevin White** – Kevin's demonstration was "From Logs (two) Bowls". Kevin is from Murphy, NC. I believe Kevin said he was relatively new to demonstrating. He encouraged the audience to ask questions. Kevin had various jigs/fixtures he had made that he showed the audience. Kevin also had various finished and unfinished pieces of his work that he talked about during the demonstration. Based on some of the pieces Kevin donated to the banquet and the prices some were bidding for them, Kevin looked to be quite an accomplished turner. I spoke briefly with Kevin after the demonstration and he like others was very friendly and eager to answer questions.

**Kimberly Winkle** – Kimberly currently teaches art and design at Tennessee Tech University. She is known for her interest in milk painting which was another topic of one of the demonstrations she performed at the symposium. The demonstration I attended was "Turning a Small Stool". Kimberly's stool was made from kiln dried poplar. The stool was 12 – 13" in height, the legs were 11". For aesthetics, she liked the angle of the legs to be around 13 degrees for short stools. She like the seat mortises for the legs to be about 2 – 2 ¼ inches from the stool edge. She used 1 ¼"



Kimberly's Milk Painted Stool

diameter forstner bit to drill the mortises. She liked drilling them on a drill press, around 850 rpm. In order to facilitate the appropriate angle of the seat mortises, she created a jig to hold the seat at the correct angle. When shaping the leg tenons, she said a mechanics open end wrench made a good caliper. Regarding glue, if the joint was tight she used yellow glue. If the fit was sloppy, she used epoxy. Nick Cook manned the camera during the demonstration. Kimberly mentioned that Nick has a very good article on his web site on turning a stool for anyone in the audience wanting more information.



Kimberly Winkle – Discussing Stool Seat/Leg Dimensions

**Rudy Lopez** – Rudy's demonstration was Square to Round Bowls and Vases. Prior to the symposium I had not heard of Rudy Lopez. From the bids he was getting for his work at the banquet, I took him to be a somewhat decent turner. Joking aside, his work was commanding some high bids and from the demonstration I attended of his I can see why. I was very pleased with his demonstration. Rudy's demonstration took a piece of wood that had been cut with a bandsaw prior to coming to the symposium, and created a very nice vase that went from square at the top to round at the bottom. Like most turners, Rudy had his preferences for tools, gadgets, etc. For drilling holes, Rudy liked regular bits instead of forstner bits. He liked getting bits that had a #2 morse taper

and he waxed the bit and flutes to facilitate the removal of shavings. I believe he said Wholesale Tool ([www.wttool.com](http://www.wttool.com)) had drill bits with #2MT at very reasonable prices. For sanding, Rudy really liked using thick artist armature wire which is actually used for clay molding. He puts Velcro on the end of the wire so he can attach sandpaper. He liked using it because the wire could be bent to the desired angle yet stout enough for the job. The wire comes in a roll and in diameters up to 3/8" thick which is the size he likes using. You can find it at Blick Art Materials in Roswell. One more tool Rudy liked for reverse chucking his hollow forms was the Rubber Chucky. Being a new turner and not knowing Rudy Lopez, I will say that I really enjoyed his demonstration and look forward to seeing him again.



Artist Armature Wire



Rudy Lopez - Square to Round Vase

**Bill Grumbine – Using the Dreaded Skew** – I had seen Bill's videos and was looking forward to seeing him in person. I am new to using the skew so I definitely wanted to hear what Bill had to say. He stressed that the danger zone for the skew was the



**Bill Discussing Sharpening a Skew**

middle of the tool and to stay away to avoid catches. He pointed out that the two basic catches were from the long point of the skew and the short point of the skew. The short point will produce the pretty spiral catch; which I suppose one might could say was done on purpose if they did not have a texturing tool available. For bowl applications, the skew could be used for making v grooves. To sharpen skews, Bill used the DMT diamond hone which has two sides (fine/course). I believe he thought his hone was like a 200/600 grit hone. After honing, Bill said the wire edge needed removing. To remove the edge, Bill stropped the skew backwards on a piece of birch veneer plywood with some white diamond compound. Bill felt the bevel of the skew should be about  $1\frac{1}{2}$ x the thickness of the blade. If you have seen Bill's videos, then his demonstrations are no different. Just as his video's, his demonstrations are entertaining and educating.

For me the symposium was like getting in eight club meetings all in one weekend. Each demonstration basically presented what you see in a monthly club meeting. I thoroughly enjoyed the symposium and look forward to attending more. I think the next symposium is coming up this September in Helen..... hmmmm.....I think that will be the second weekend of bow season. I guess I need to do some more thinking about this. Since deer season doesn't end till January 1<sup>st</sup>, maybe I can give up just ONE weekend. Now that I think about it, Chattahoochee WMA is only about 5 minutes away from Unicoi lodge, so maybe I won't have to give up the entire weekend.