

BE SAFE - Safety Tip of the Month (Gary Guenther)

Safety Thoughts from the September Meeting...

Three safety-related issues came to my attention at the September meeting, and I thought it would be a good idea to discuss them.

- Alan Hollar chose to turn burl without a full face shield. This is obviously a personal choice, but I think it sets a very bad example. Burls are notorious for having pieces flying off. It is not true that a demonstrator can't wear a full shield – Bill Grumbine has been wearing his religiously for many years. There's been a lot of discussion on WoodCentral about this recently (www.woodcentral.com/cgi-bin/turning3.pl?read=213629). This post begins with the statement: "As I sit here with a cut over my left eye brow and nursing a knot the size of a large marble with a bag of ice, it is time to assess what I did wrong." What he did wrong was to turn without a full face shield. Many people made that point to him, including Bill Grumbine himself. I will go so far as to say that I would *never* consider turning, under any circumstances, without a face shield. I think it's a big mistake. As I pointed out in the August MCW Newsletter, a turner in Ontario was recently killed at the lathe because he wasn't wearing proper protection. I don't want the fact that Alan, and some other demonstrators, chose to turn without a face shield to be an encouragement for our members to do the same thing. Wear your shield!

- Alan also wore gloves. Clif wears a glove. Some turners like to wear gloves. That's fine if you know what you're doing and recognize the tradeoffs. For those who don't but are considering it, please be aware that a loose glove can catch in a spinning piece of wood or chuck and pull your hand in. Bad accidents have happened this way. If you make the choice to wear a glove, make sure you understand the tradeoffs and dangers *before* you do it.

- For Show & Tell, Russ Iler brought in a lovely box turned from yew. He was not aware of the potentially deadly consequences of handling yew. It is a potent irritant and a direct toxin. It can cause headaches and nausea and is a potentially extremely toxic wood, with various cardiac problems listed. Roman historian and naturalist Pliny the Elder described a case where four Roman soldiers died from drinking water from yew hip flasks. Yes, many people turn yew without being affected, for a while. Be aware that many woods are "sensitizers", like poison ivy. That means that you may not be allergic to them immediately, but over a period of exposure, your body will say "enough" and have a reaction. After that, each exposure provokes a worse reaction. Cocobolo is a classic in that respect. The saying is that there are two kinds of people in the world – those who are allergic to cocobolo, and those who will be. Be very careful with yew, and please review the wood toxicity sheets, accessed from our Web Site Safety tab, or directly at <http://montgomerycountywoodturners.org/LatheSafety.aspx>, before you tackle a wood you are not familiar with.

Happy and Safe Turning!