

Member Spotlight, Meet Your Fellow Member

John Hampton #8837



Fellow members, meet John Hampton who in the past 55 years has become a fine woodworker. John grew up on the central Washington coast in the small city of Raymond, on the shores of Willapa Bay, which empties into the Pacific Ocean a few miles to the west. He has been involved in woodworking since his early Jr. High days, making tables, furniture, and cabinets. It was not until the early 2000 that he learned about IWCS when he met longtime IWCS member, Ted Bartholomew who was a master wood turner. John was so impressed with what Ted was doing that he enrolled in one of his classes and his woodworking world changed. Ted was his friend and mentor for many years and now John's woodturning makes up 95% of his wood working efforts.

I visited John in his new shop, just outside of Raymond WA that he's been in now for about 4 years. His shop is tidier than mine or most other woodworkers that we meet. I was totally impressed with it all. A wood storage room would make us all envious. There are as many as 5,000 rough turned bowls and other wood of every size one would want. A large percentage of these pieces were local woods and just a few exotics. When I asked, "What is your favorite wood to work with?" his answer after a bit of thought was, "I believe it is the wood I'm working with at the time." Does that sound like a "Happy Wood Worker" to you?

His display area is full of beautiful wood creations that would impress most wood lovers. The one item that immediately caught my eye was a display of wooden Cowboy Hats, some wearable sizes and a few miniatures. This must be something a lot of folks will like to know about, so I had John explain it in some detail as follows:

I start with WET, freshly cut wood. Lighter colored wood is usually best and usually a piece will weigh about 50 lbs. I turn them to a finished hat without stopping. The brim is turned first, from the outside edge to the body of the hat. I then turn the outside body of the hat with a tenon on top so that I turn it around to hold the tenon in the jaws of the chuck. Next, the body is hollowed out. I aim for a 3/32" wall thickness, just under 1/8". Now, I take the hat out of the chuck and turn it around and place it on a "Jam Chuck." Now I can remove the tenon and finish the top of the hat. Once I am done turning, I put the hat in a jig to bend the brim and shape the body. It takes about 7-10 days to dry enough to sand and put on a finish. I usually use lacquer as my finish.

I have made over 100 of these hats; but I must give credit to Johannes Michelson, the original Hat Man. The Bending Jig was originally created by Johannes and I have modified it a bit for my own use.



Hat Bender



Std. Cowboy Hat



Large & Miniature Cowboy Hat

In mid-2000 John entered into the art of making Segmented Vessels and he has produced some sizeable and remarkable vases. The 30" high vase is just one of his segmented pieces.



30" Segmented Vase with 1691 Pieces

John is also quite active in demonstrating woodturning for schools and groups interested in woodturning. He has traveled from Portland to Kent doing demonstration and also demonstrates at the local Pacific County Fair every August.

When I asked about his turning advice to anyone interested in getting started, he suggested, “Don’t buy a lathe until you have taken a class from a good wood turner to make sure this is for you. Start with small projects and develop your skill.” He also discouraged starting with a full size Cowboy Hat until they have a lot more experience. This first one took over 8 hours of straight turning to complete.



Stained Maple Bowl



Maple Bowl w/ leaves