



# Wood Turners Worldwide

worldwidewoodturners.org  
The Art of Making Shavings

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**On the cover:** Tim McCoy's pieces, Caged Sphere, and Urchinz Series. Caged Sphere is multi-axis cherry on a cherry base. Turned, carved, and embellished. Urchinz is maple on a cherry base. Turned, base is turned, carved, dyed, and embellished.



Howard King



David Swain



Waukeene Vinson



Joe Gibson



Bruce Butler

**Clockwise from top left:** Mesquite live edge vessel with walnut finial; Buckeye hollowform, dyed; An assortment of Christmas trees; Lidded bowl of Hawaiian wood - possibly mamane; Sassafras bowl. **Facing page, clockwise from top left:** Dyed hackberry platter; Manzanita root burl and resin hollowform; Segmented salt and pepper grinders in segmented bowl stands; Ambrosia maple multi-axis vase.

**Your art belongs in our newsletter! Email hires images to [editor@worldwidewoodturners.org](mailto:editor@worldwidewoodturners.org). Include a brief description and make sure you identify yourself!**





Bob Grinstead



Tom Kenny



Joaquin Juatai



Ron Pollman



## Meet the Turner: Mark Sillay

**By Joaquin Juatai, Editor**  
**Photos courtesy of Mark Sillay**

Eighty-two-year-old Mark Sillay of Tucker, Georgia, has built a career teaching people to use woodturning tools in a unique way. He coined the term "wood slicing," a technique that uses a sharp blade that is in line with the rotation of the wood, rather than the wood coming into the blade and scraping the surface. Mark developed a blade geometry that consists of a parabolic curve on the top and a convex grind on the back rather than a concave grind you traditionally get from a sharpening jig and grinding wheel.

"My first project on a lathe was a set of candlesticks I designed at West High School in Rochester, New York," said Mark. "They were made using scrapers, but that was my first experience. In ninth grade, I worked on other lathe projects, though nothing sophisticated."



After school and serving in the Army and in Viet Nam, Mark owned Atlanta Tree Trimmers and saved crotch wood and burls from tree-trimming projects, selling them to local woodworkers.

One day, a man walked by, knocked on Mark's door, and introduced himself. His name was Sam Reider, and he worked at Highland Hardware. "What do you do with all these burls?" Reider asked.

"I save them and sell them to woodworkers," Mark replied. Reider said, "Well, I'm a woodturner." He explained that he turned burls and figured wood into artwork on the lathe, and Mark sent him home with an assortment of burls.

About a month later, Reider returned, knocked on the door, and said, "Here, I want you to have this." He gave Mark a bowl labeled

\*Cherry Burl Bowl, Number 37\*.

"I still have it in my showcase at home," said Mark.

For two years, every night after work, Mark sat in his old Archie's chair with that cherry burl bowl on a nearby table. "I would pick it up, feel its smoothness, and hold it," he said. "I told my wife, Barbara, 'You know, when I retire, I'd love to turn wood again. I was fascinated by it in school, but my dad never owned a lathe.'"

Two years later, under the Christmas tree, a lathe and a set of tools appeared.

Mark spent four years in his basement teaching himself to use tools with which he had no traditional experience. A turner named Frank Bowers visited to buy burl and crotch wood. Seeing Mark's lathe setup, Bowers said, "So you're getting into this, huh?"

He examined Mark's tool sharpening and said, "Mark, I've never seen such horrible sharpening in my life."

"I didn't know any better," Mark





admitted. "But I've figured out how to take this wood and these tools and slice it without using sandpaper."

Bowers was intrigued. "What?"

"I'm a curious guy," Mark said. "I've learned how to finely sharpen these tools to do the job."

Mark struggled with turning small pieces like finials until Bowers invited him to a demonstration by Cindy Drozda at the local turning club. "Right in the middle of her demonstration, she pulled the tailstock away and turned a tiny finial," Mark recalled. "I said to myself, 'Mark, you're the dumbest rock on the planet.' I'd never thought of pulling out the tailstock."

That night, Mark put a piece of wood in the chuck and turned a finial down to toothpick size. "I stayed up until 4 a.m. turning," he said. "I was thrilled. That changed my entire turning career. I was off to the races."

Sillay has since shared his wood-slicing techniques with clubs nationwide, doing demonstrations and hands-on teaching sessions.

About a year and a half ago, Mark suffered strokes that paralyzed the right side of his body—his leg, arms, and hands. "I couldn't even hold a cotton ball or feed myself," he said. "I still don't drive, but through therapy, I've relearned to turn."

The Atlanta Turning Guild held a president's challenge to see what members could make from a wine stopper block that wasn't a wine stopper. "I started making a tiny ornament body with a long, toothpick-thin finial," Mark said. "I won a \$50 gift certificate."

"During recovery from the strokes, I went through several learning curves," he added. "The first pieces weren't as good as what I'm making now, but everything's a learning curve. You learn by your mistakes in woodturning."

Over the past 30 years, Mark has developed a

wealth of woodturning knowledge and demonstrated his techniques across the country. His advice? "Woodturning can be full of frustrations, and you have to learn one thing at a time to overcome them. Don't use crazy four-letter words."

Instead, Mark advises analyzing the frustration: "Let me see now: what's

one thing I can do about it? Then, what's another? How can I change this grind for this application? How can I prevent vibration or avoid tear-out?"

Mark applied this approach to his stroke recovery, returning to the lathe as part of his therapy.

Mark teaches the following mantra: "Sharp tools, tiny bites, and how slow can I go?"

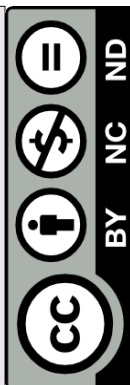
You can find Mark Sillay's wood-slicing presentations by searching his name on YouTube, including his talks for the World Wide Woodturners' YouTube channel.



#### Wood Turners Worldwide

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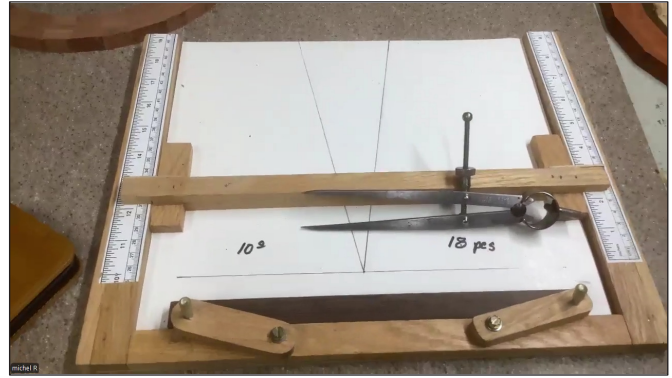


## Michel Richards' Segmenting Jig

Michel Richards suggests using a jig to calculate the length of segments for a segmented bowl.

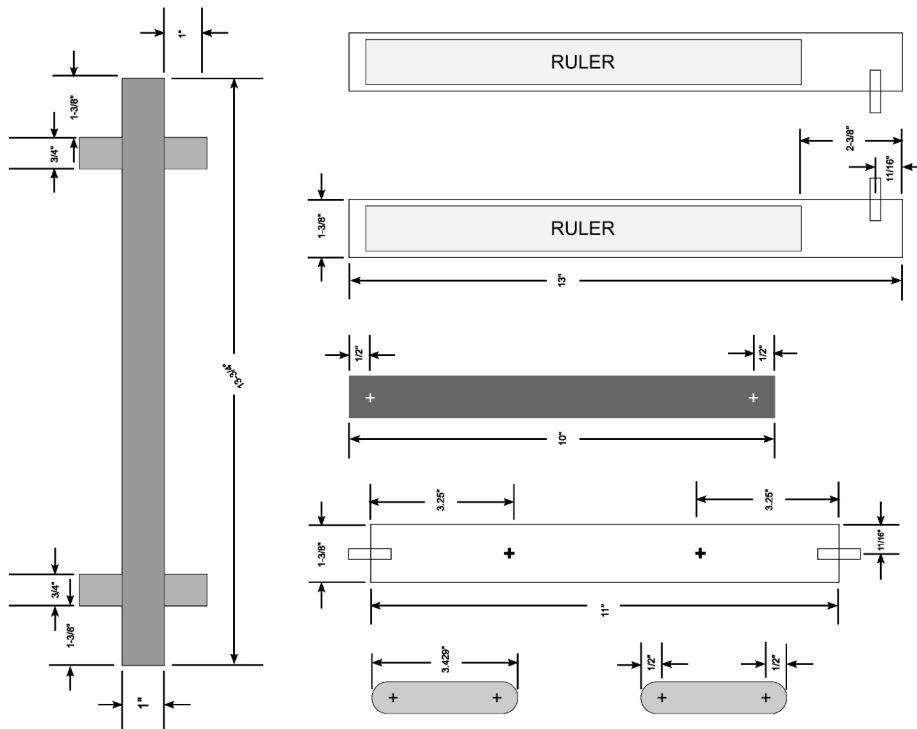
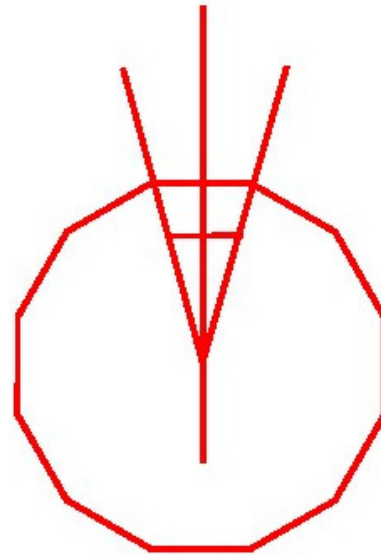
For an open segment bowls, Michel Richards' jig may require some minor adjustments, but, that would depend on your personal adjustment for desired gap. Typical for open segments, you might choose to use 66 – 70% of the length of a closed segment.

This article describes the use of the jig for a closed bowl. Michel's original suggestion is found on the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYe-Zm5ELH0>.

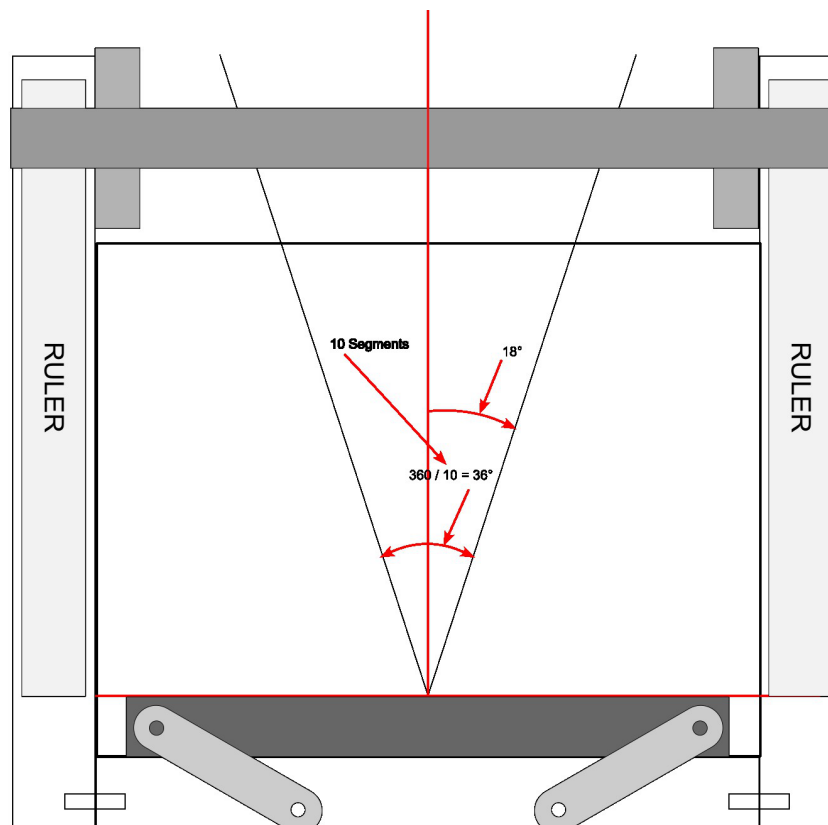
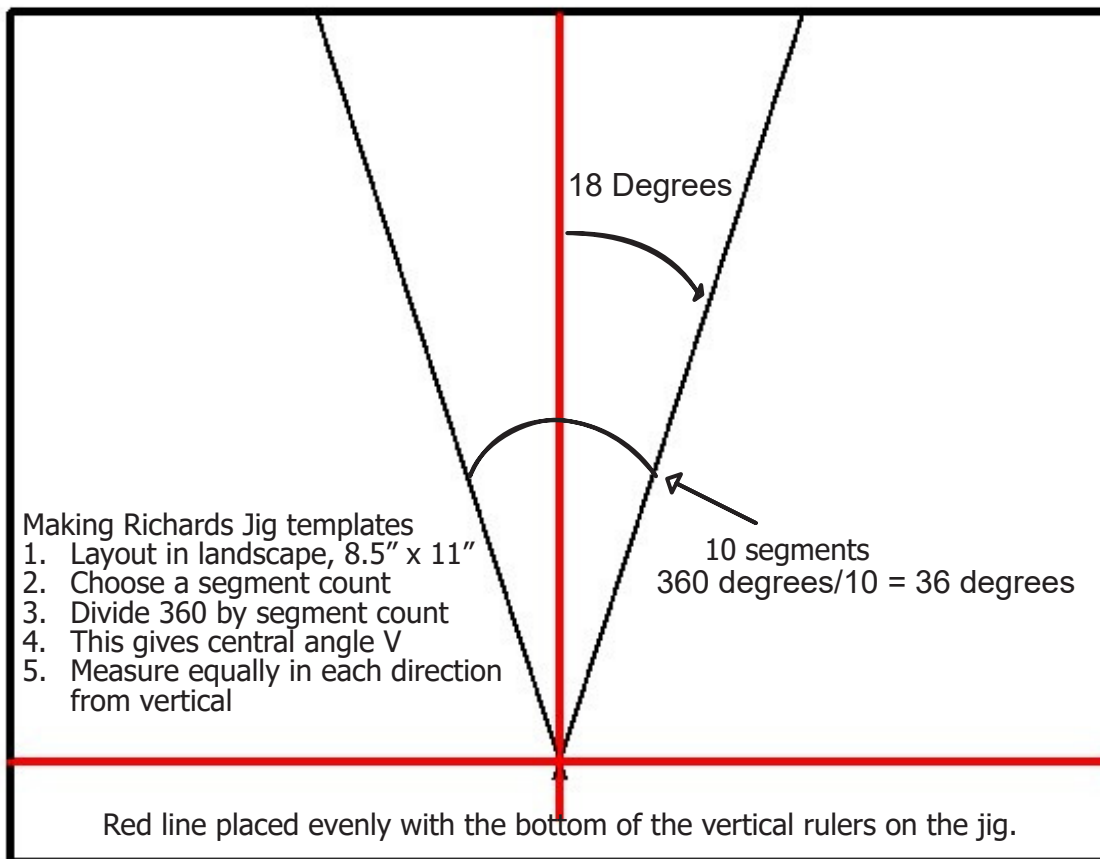


For an N segment Bowl (N being the number of segments intended):

- Create a drawing with a wedge that would be a  $360/N$  degree center angle (ex:  $360/12 = 30^\circ$  for a 12 segment layer). Each line of the V would be  $180/N$  (ex:  $180/12 = 15^\circ$ ) off a vertical line.
- If you make a 12-segment wedge, 12 wedges together would create a closed 12-sided polygon.
- For any given layer, figure out what radius the bowl should be at that layer.
- Look up the center line of the V (or up his side measuring strips of the jig), to a bit more than the radius wanted for the bowl at that layer.
- Position your slider at that radius above the wedge vertex.
- Measure across horizontally from line to line of the V.
- You now know the correct larger edge of the segment trapezoid you need to cut for that layer.











Gerald Jensen



Patrick Hoggard



Jeffery Neff



Jeff Walters



Jim Duxbury

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## Tuition Cost \$160

Includes all training &  
Evening Meal

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[levelup@worldwidewoodturners.org](mailto:levelup@worldwidewoodturners.org)

More details to come!!!



Dave Kingsley



Dale Slaughter

**Clockwise from top left:**  
Great Lakes clock with segmented Jatoba frame;  
Dragon pen; Cherry burl bowl;  
Small hollowform; Segmented three-axis pepper mill; White oak charred whiskey goblet;  
Hand carved cherry box.