

In 2011, floods devastated much of my home state of Queensland.

The personal cost to the population was incalculable and in my city of Brisbane the damage was hard to comprehend. On the day the waters began to subside, we witnessed an astonishing outpouring of community spirit as tens of thousands of people whose homes had not been affected arrived in convoys armed with shovels, wheelbarrows, trucks, and machinery. In self-organized groups they went from street to street, providing food and drink to stunned victims, cleaning homes of debris, and offering seemingly unlimited goodwill.

As I drove through the streets, I came across a huge Jacaranda tree that

had collapsed under the weight of water. It had crushed a fence and lay half across the sidewalk. There were tons of wood to remove and when I offered help, the owner told me I was welcome to have as much of the wood as I wanted. *Flood Bowl* is the result of that encounter and is my way of remembering all of the people who helped their fellow citizens.

In writing about *Flood Bowl*, I want to emphasize how I developed the idea. There are many ways to learn about turning technique, but finding original ways to use hard-won technical skills remains a challenge for many. In a turning world where so much has already been done, the search for original ideas and a personal voice has become increasingly

difficult. So, unlike many how-to stories, my intention is not to show how to reproduce this particular piece, but to encourage lateral thinking and ways of using personal experiences to enrich our work.

Inspiration from the wood

As I unloaded the tons of wood at my home, I was particularly taken by the convoluted shape of some of the pieces of the trunk and how the folded growth rings formed a wavelike effect in profile. I had already started thinking about how I could make something to reflect the flood and this idea immediately crystallized. I had in mind something being borne along on the crest of the wall of water that engulfed Brisbane. ▶

Flood Bowl, 2012, Jacaranda, 5" x 16½" x 9" (13 cm x 42 cm x 23 cm)

Finding Inspiration *Flood Bowl*

Terry Martin





1 The profile of the wood triggered images of a wave. The growth rings are indicated with chalk.

I know that Jacaranda is easy to work when wet, but immensely hard and strong when dry, so I took the piece straight to the lathe and marked out the growth ring lines (*Photo 1*). Wood that is cut across the grain is always weaker, but it was apparent that if I followed these lines it would be strong enough to make the piece very thin.

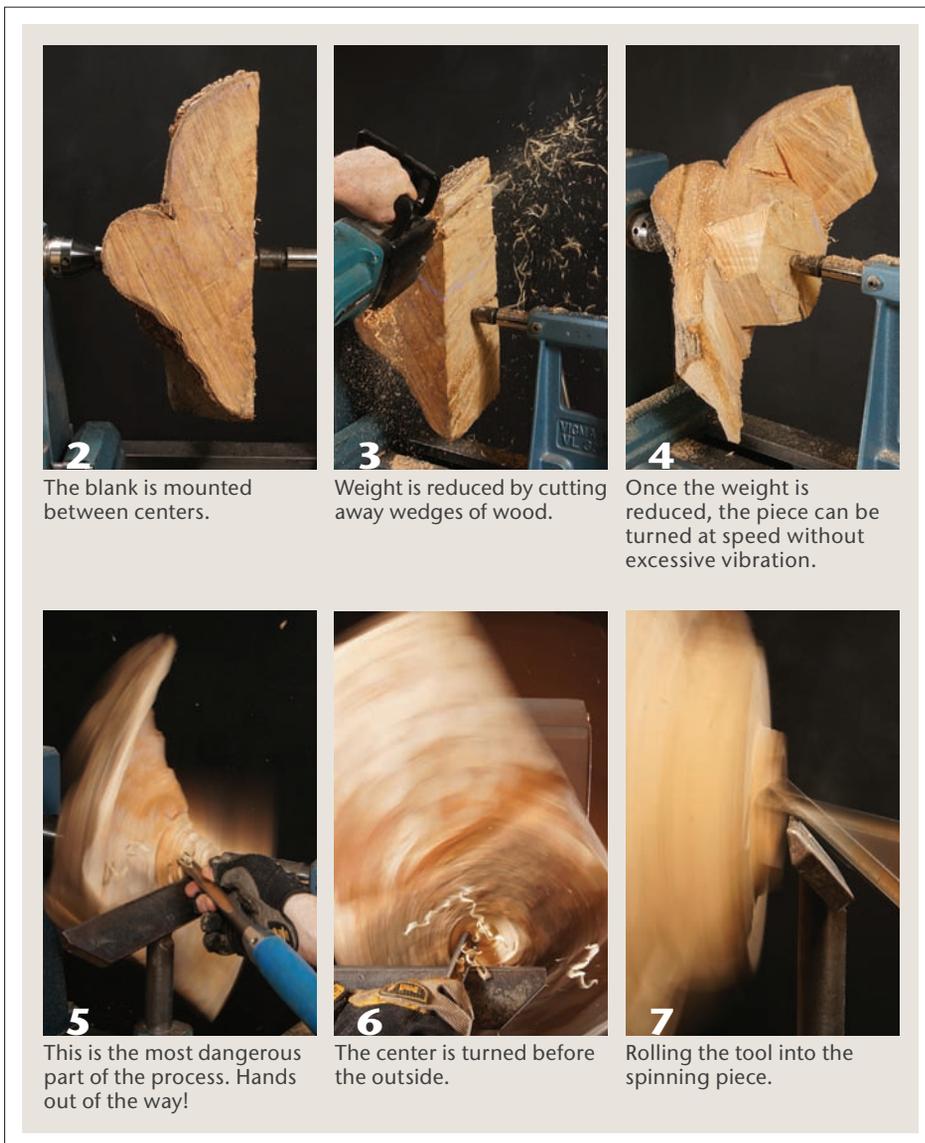
I mounted the wood between centers, moving the contact points with the oversized drive dog and live center till it was as balanced as it could be with the apex of the “wave” in the center (*Photo 2*). After locking the spindle to stop the wood moving, I marked out wedges of unwanted wood with chalk then removed them with the chainsaw to reduce weight (*Photos 3, 4*).

Making sure to keep my hands well out of the way of the spinning “wings” of wood, I turned a spigot on the bottom of the piece so I could remount it in a chuck (*Photo 5*).

After reversing the piece, I turned out the center of the bowl (*Photo 6*), retaining the bark because I wanted a visible reminder of the outer parts of the tree in the finished piece.

When I turned the wood away from the outside of the bowl, it was an intermittent cut with the tool only in contact with wood for about 50 percent of each revolution. I find the best way to maintain control for this kind of cut is to start with the handle down low, maintain steady pressure downwards on the toolrest, then to lift the tool handle so the edge rolls into the wood (*Photo 7*).

Once the partially embedded bowl was revealed, the turning was complete (*Photo 8*), but I kept the piece on the lathe as it is a perfect mounting for carving. The wood can be rotated freely and then the spindle can be locked, giving stable access to most areas. I used a combination of a battery-powered pruning



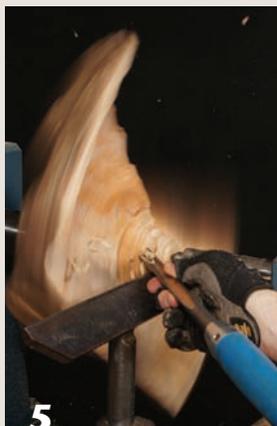
2 The blank is mounted between centers.



3 Weight is reduced by cutting away wedges of wood.



4 Once the weight is reduced, the piece can be turned at speed without excessive vibration.



5 This is the most dangerous part of the process. Hands out of the way!



6 The center is turned before the outside.



7 Rolling the tool into the spinning piece.



8 Once the bowl is turned, the carving proceeds.



9 As much carving as possible is completed with the piece still on the lathe.



10 The final carving is done off the lathe.



11 The fine work is done with a high-speed air tool.

Safety precautions

There are inherent risks in making out-of-round pieces and carving wood while it is still on the lathe, so here is a checklist of basic precautions:

1. Wear a full faceshield or helmet.
2. Wear gloves. When an out-of-round piece is intermittently passing the toolrest, if a finger inadvertently crosses into the no-go zone, the flicking of the wood against the glove may be the early warning sign that will save you. I know this because I have a permanently bent finger from my preglove days.
3. With out-of-round work, always turn down the speed of your lathe or select your slowest pulley before you turn on the lathe. Only increase the speed gradually.
4. Keep your fingers behind the toolrest at all times. The side the work is spinning on is a no-go zone.
5. If you are chainsawing a piece on the lathe, lock the spindle to prevent the wood rotating. Avoid cutting toward metal parts as much as possible.
6. Only use an electric chainsaw—the fumes from a gas-driven saw will fill your workshop in seconds.

chainsaw and an Arbortech carver to further reduce the bulk (*Photo 9*) before removing it for finish carving. I used a Foredom flexi-shaft tool to finalize the thickness (*Photo 10*) then textured the surface to resemble flowing water using a round burr in long sweeping cuts along the grain. It was important to give an impression of the speed and power of the water, so I carved the leading edge to look like frothing water (*Photo 11*), then extended the froth pattern around the base of the bowl to blend the turned and carved sections.

It's easy to explain how such a piece was made, but a lot more difficult to explain the thought processes that went into it. A lot of creativity is instinctive, but I think the most important thing is to develop the habit of thinking outside of the usual parameters. For turners, these days that often means that the turning is only a starting point for developing further ideas. In this case, I was already thinking about the flood while I was cutting the wood. My thoughts were along the lines of "What story does this wood have to

tell?" I thought "flood," and I saw "wave." In this case, the bowl is more than a bowl, it is a container for ideas. My hope is that those readers who are ready to break into truly creative work will use what I have done to stimulate their own creative processes. Good luck and enjoy! ■

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