



The Smoky Mountain Woodturners Chapter of AAW meets each month of the year on the 3rd Tuesday of the month starting at 6:00 pm. Our meetings are in-person and on ZOOM. To attend zoom, visitors should send their email to jvogelsang@charter.net. Guests are always welcome. MEETING Location: 8023 Kingston Pike in Knoxville. *Woodcraft Knoxville* (our sponsor) is near Trader Joe's and one block west from West Town Mall.



May 2026

Newsletter

Pauline Bayne, editor



May's meeting was great, with 37 people in attendance. Jake did a fine demonstration on making a Christmas Tree Topper. He also addressed his preference on hollowing tools when he is working on the globe. At the end he shared a little about adding color. Thanks, Jake. I look forward to seeing the blanks that he handed out being transformed into beautiful toppers.

We had a great Saturday morning May 16 at our hands-on help session. We are working on the schedule to have another. Stayed tuned for the date. You don't have to wait till the next open shop time for assistance. You can reach out to one of the mentors anytime. Just look for their names on our website. Several members are heading to Raleigh for the AAW Symposium. I am sure they will be willing to share their experience with you, if you ask. June's demonstration will be by Ron Comtois so let's have another great attendance to support Ron.

Things are changing at Wears Valley Ranch. Be sure to read the Ranch section of the newsletter. Bob Law developed this program more than 10 years ago. I'm pretty sure he had assistance from Jake Niedling and Randy Fritchman for the duration along with many other club members. Many kids have been exposed to woodturning because of the support of our club. Thanks, Bob, and I hope you get some well-deserved rest.

July 7 is our next board meeting. If you want to be more involved in the club, please join us at Woodcraft that evening.

See you in June. Remember, Life is Good when we are making shavings so keep them coming.

2025 Club Calendar

General Meetings 3rd Tuesday: 6 pm, Location: Woodcraft Knoxville
 Board Meetings, 2nd Tuesday, 5 pm, Location: Woodcraft Knoxville - open to all

- January 6 - 1st Quarter Board of Directors meeting, 3rd Wed of Jan, April, July, Oct, 5 pm, Woodcraft
- January 20 - Cindy Drozda: *Finial Box —an IRD, Interactive Remote Demo*
- February 17 - Jack Harris & Colin Chambers: *Carving your Turnings*
- March 17 - Pauline Bayne: *Pyrography Techniques for your Woodturning*
- March 20-22 - Arrowmont Turning Workshop
- April 7 - 2nd Quarter Board of Directors meeting, 3rd Wed of Jan, April, July, Oct, 5 pm, Woodcraft
- April 21 - Michael Anderson: *How to Turn a Neil Turner Urchin-style Box*
- May 16 - Members Workshop: 9 am - noon, Wood Craft. Bring a project; get some help.
- May 19 - Jake Niedling: *Christmas Tree Topper*
- June 16 - Ron Comtois: Offset Napkin Holder**
- July 7 - 3rd Quarter Board of Directors meeting, 3rd Wed of Jan, April, July, Oct, 5 pm, Woodcraft
- July 21 - Ted Pelfrey: *Embellishing Hollow Forms*
- August 18 - TBD
- September 15 - John Lucas - *Using a Router at the Lathe*
- October 6 - 4th Quarter Board of Directors meeting, 3rd Wed of Jan, April, July, Oct, 5 pm, Woodcraft
- October 20 - Cindy Drozda: TBD
- October 24-25 - **Fall (demo & workshop, Sat & Sun, 9 - 3**
- November 17 - John Jordan - TBD
- December 15 - **Christmas Party**

2026 Officers, Board, & Committees



President
Bill Thurman



Vice President
Gordan Sloane



Treasurer
Jack Harris



Secretary
Gordon Fowler

Board of Directors:

Randy Fritchman, 2024-26
 Pauline Bayne, 2025-26
 Maria D'Elío, 2026-27
 Colin Chalmers, 2026-2027

Committees:

Beads of Courage / Wig Stands: Bill Thurman
Education/Wears Valley Ranch: Robert Law
Fantasy of Trees: Ron Comtois & Maria D'Elío
Membership: Maria D'Elío & Jerry DeLaurentis
Mentoring: Ron Comtois
Newsletter Editor, Pauline Bayne
Pens for Troops: Randy Fritchman

Photographer: Randy Fritchman,
Assisted by Terry Fritchman
Program: Gordon Sloane, Colin Chalmers,
 & Jake Niedling
Safety Officer: John Jordan
Video/Internet: Jim Vogelsang, Website
 Andy Milligan, Video

Open Shop/Mentoring Saturday, May 16, 9 am - noon

Jake Neidling gave a report on this past Saturday's open workshop, where about 18 members had a chance to share coffee, doughnuts, design ideas, sharpening tips, woodburning advice, and turning techniques. Four lathes were in use, and there were lots of productive interactions between "students" and mentors. Everyone had a very good time. When shall we repeat these events?

REPORTS

Fantasy of Trees - Ron Comtois & Maria D'Elio

Ron and Maria are ready to accept donations. Do take advantage of tonight's demo as a lesson in ornament making. Please start turning ornaments.

Pens for Troops - Bill reporting for Randy Fritchman

Bill reported that Randy has blanks and kits for you to turn.

Beads of Courage & Wig Stands - Bill Thurman

Bill is also ready to accept your donations of both products. There were 21 wig stands and 2 Beads of courage boxes delivered.

Wears Valley Ranch - Bill Thurman reporting

The last classes of the year occur this month. The Ranch is not having summer enrichment classes.

Feedback needed

Please give feedback to Jack Harris on the sandpaper distributed.

Business Meeting - Bill Thurman:

Reminders:

- Read our newsletter, written by Pauline, always superb!
- The club's bandsaw-blade tightening tool is available to all members
- Please join AAW; the national symposium will meet in Raleigh, NC on June 4-7
- Jack needs feedback about the free sandpaper's performance
- Please let Jack know what topics interest you for Cindy Drozda's October demo
- Send or call Gordon Sloane with suggestions for general meeting demos

Colin announced that the city of Knoxville sent out a survey. You should have received notification with a link. The city manages, cuts down, removes, prunes trees all the time, and if there is enough interest, they will provide a place to pick up wood for free. Please find and fill out the survey in order to be notified of the details.

Wood Raffle Contributors

Gordon Sloane, Roy A. Cuff, Jake Niedling,
Harry Ford

ARROWMONT WINNER - Ron Comtois

May Attendance
37 present, plus 5 on ZOOM

Safety Message

John Jordan brought in several face shields & eye protectors and discussed their relative benefits and cost ranges. One was a respirator for use with toxic substances. Remember how important these safety aids are when turning.



SMWTS Mentors Session
May 16, 2026 / 9am - noon
Woodcraft Class Room

We had a great mentoring session on Saturday May 16th at Woodcraft. There were about 18 people in attendance. We had 4 lathes going, tool sharpening assistance, hands-on wood burning, and lots of discussions on a variety of turning questions. Donuts and coffee were provided as well. It really was a fun morning of sharing together.

—Photos & summary from Jake Niedling



DEMO: Jake Niedling

A Christmas Tree Topper

—reported by Gordon Fowler
 Also see Jake's Handout on SMWTS.ORG



Jake's own Tree Topper

The tree topper has three parts: a base, the globe, and the finial. His instructions can be applied to many ornaments that use a globe.

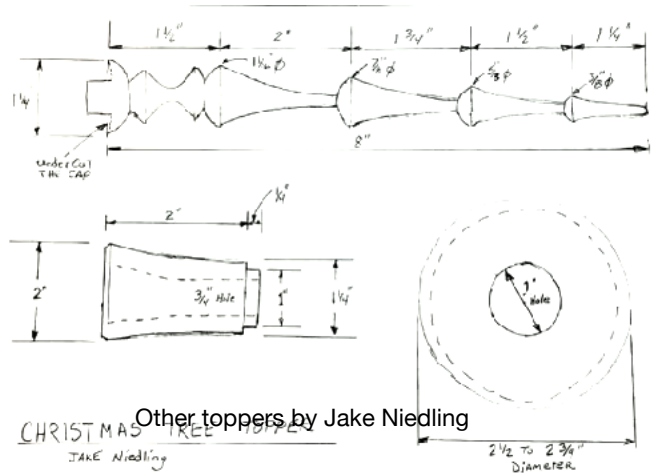
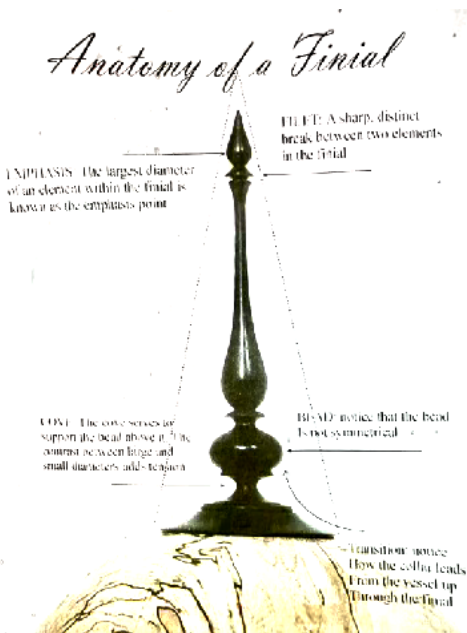
He used 3 blanks:

- Base - Round 3.14" diam.. x 3.75" h., 1.15"
- Globe - Square 9" l., x 2.25" w.
- Finial - Sq. x 3.5" l.

1. **GLOBE:** Finished diameter of about 2 1/8"
 Place the blank with a tenon into the chuck and shape the outside. Then drill a 1" hole through the entire blank, and hollow it. Unlike an ornament, the wall of this globe does not need to be extra thin or exactly consistent, but the more consistent the better, aiming for about 3/16". Now, sand and part off. Turn a tenon shape on the waste wood still in the chuck to make a jam chuck. Reverse the globe and finish the other side, both inside and out.



Jake's project was inspired by Bob Rosand's concept from 20 years ago. He began by discussing the fundamentals of proportion, what Rosand calls the "anatomy of a finial". **If you envision a finial as occupying the space in a triangle form—the elements—an onion shape, coves, beads, etc.—will work if everything fits in that triangle.**



Jake's Drawing of the Topper with Dimensions

Hollowing the Globe: Jake demonstrated a his homemade tool made by soldering a cutter tip onto square steel stock which is glued into a handle. He showed another made from an Allen wrench, and a commercial “gooseneck”-shaped tool as well.

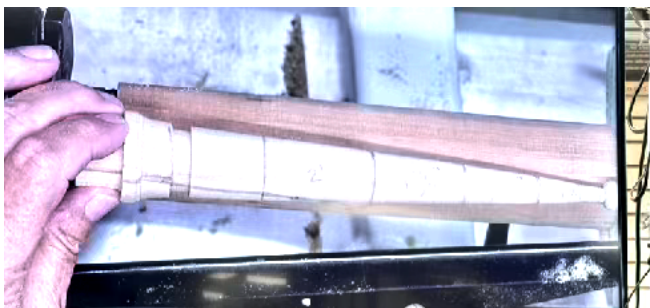


Homemade from an Allen wrench soldered to a rod with silver



A gooseneck tool, commercially made

2. FINIAL: Place the round blank with tenon into the chuck, and rough out the taper shape. Do this by laying out the elements from the headstock diameter of 1 1/4” to the pointy end. Jake uses tailstock support, completes the finial, and then removes waste wood at the tailstock end.



Work from the tailstock end to the base of the finial, shaping each element. Form a 1” tenon on the headstock side (to go into the globe), undercut the 1.25” base of the finial, sand, then part off.

3. BASE: Place the blank with tenon into the chuck. Drill a .75” hole through the entire blank. Shape the outside (usually a gentle cove shape). Open up the bottom of the base to go into the globe. Sand and part off.

Jake also gave tips for remounting the finished globe in case you need to refine it’s shape, remove catch marks, for coloring, etc.

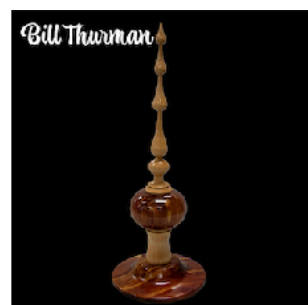
Alternative way to hollow a globe: Mount and turn the globe blank between centers with tenons on both ends.. Rough out the outside shape leaving a flat in the middle, then part the globe into two. Hollow out each half—similar to removing material from the inside of a bowl—and then glue the halves back together.

Jake gave away several “kits” for members to make their own toppers.

THANKS, JAKE! This was a very instructive demonstration and should help members in making ornaments as well as the tree topper itself.



Other toppers by Jake



By way of encouragement, Bill showed a topper that he turned after only about a year and a half of experience. He saw Jake’s demo in Chattanooga and wanted to give it a try. —You can do it, too!

Let's Look at Finishes: Opinions of SMWTS Club Members

Pauline Bayne asked several members of our club to contribute their opinions on the topic of finishing wood. She discussed this topic by phone with 6 members the week after our May meeting. Questions included:

- What is your favorite finish or finishes and why?
- Do you have tips on application techniques or drying times?
- Are different finishes suited to different turning projects?
- Are there any finishes that you avoid and why?

COLIN CHALMERS - Member since 2022, Current Board of Directors / Mentoring: All Topics

There are several finishes in Colin's list of favorites, depending on the purpose of the work.

1. **Osmo Oil** is used for woodworking and floors, but he likes it for turning as well. It is a natural oil with a wax base: microporous, water repellent, and durable. Clear Satin: #3043. He only started using it last year for goals. When applying, it does not smear and dries nicely.
2. **Mahoney's Walnut Oil** is a favorite for salad bowls.
3. For hollow forms and other items "that stay on the shelf," he prefers **spray lacquer**, using either a spray can or spray gun. He uses **Deft Clear Wood Finish** in either satin or gloss. If gloss, he cuts it back with steel wool. It is good for things like vases or earring stands, etc.
 - A. For decorative items that don't get a lot of wear, he likes **Deft Clear Wood Finish**. It is a brush-on lacquer that dries fast for multiple coats. It resists brush marks as well.
 - B. **Mohawk Classic Instrument Lacquer** (quart cans from Sumac; it is used for guitars) is a very good but expensive lacquer. He sprays it on with a spray gun for decorative items.

Colin hasn't used wipe-on poly in a long time, but he has lots of favorites to use depending on what he is producing.

RON COMTOIS - Member since 2022, Past President, Chairman for Mentoring & Fantasy of Trees / Mentoring: Segmented Turning & All Turning

1. Pepper Mills need durability. Ron chooses **oil-based polyurethane**, either wipe-on or brush-on.
NOTE: Water-based polyurethane does have some advantages: no vapors, dries quicker, but requires more coats and is not as durable.
2. Bowls
 - For his bowls that are small, artistic, display pieces, his choice is **wipe-on poly** so he can control the look with multiple layers.
 - For salad bowls and other culinary pieces like coffee scoops, he uses **walnut oil**, or **Danish oil** finished with **friction polish**. He does not use food-grade mineral oil because it then needs wax and there are better options.
3. For decorative pieces, Ron likes a technique called **French Polish, also called OB Shine and Myland's Friction Finish** (very similar). It is a traditional wood finishing method using thin layers of dissolved shellac, producing a mirror-like sheen that enhances the wood's grain. He combines boiled linseed oil, denatured alcohol, and Bullseye non-wax shellac in equal thirds. So he makes batches of 9 oz. (3 oz. each) mixed by shaking. 3 cans of the ingredients last him a year. Application: On the lathe, use paper towel to drench the piece, and turn up the speed. A coat dries very quickly (30 seconds to a minute) so it is possible to do 10 coats very quickly. Let it set up over night. The result is a unique sheen (brilliant, glass-like). It is food safe but doesn't hold up well, not for something that will be handled a lot. The wood needs to be quite dry before finished this way so it doesn't fog up. This material is also good for pens and spindle work, like ornaments.
4. Ron has a warning about lacquer due to its volatility and vapors. However, if he is doing a lot of ornaments, he will use lacquer and hang them up outside to dry. He does wear a respirator when using it.

Ron's Friction Wax Recipe (by weight): It is probably the same as those Tom Fowler sites from YouTube.

Ingredients: 16 oz mineral oil, 4 oz. Diatomaceous Earth (DE), 4 oz. bees wax

Directions: Use a double boiler to melt the bees wax with mineral oil until clear. Mix in DE and remove from heat. Keep stirring the mixture until you get a peanut butter like consistency. Use a rubber spatula to move friction wax to small plastic containers. Clean up the mess. NOTE: Use friction finish on any wood product. Apply a small amount to a paper towel and apply while the lathe is turning or apply by hand to flat work.

HARRY FORD - Member since 2014 / Mentoring topics: Bowls & Spheres

1. For the last few years, Harry has had a preference for friction polishes. His method is:

- Start with **Yorkshire Grit**, the original which is a brown color in a black can. Here's how he uses it: apply on the piece while the lathe is running, let it set for 5 minutes, and then use paper towels turning at high speed to buff it out. Harry uses the original (black can) and finishes with microfine (white can), which gives a really smooth finish. COST: about \$21 each, original and microfine. Both available from Woodcraft.
- You can also use **Hampshire Sheen**, (some call it Hampton Sheen) in a green can; apply it with the lathe running, let it set for 10-15 minutes, and buff out with a soft cloth or paper towel.

NOTE: Another set of paste wax is called **ACK'S Abrasive Sanding Paste & Polish/Restoring Paste** and is a knock-off of Yorkshire Grit / Hampshire Sheen. It is made in Florida; Harry says that they are 95% like the originals from England and cost less. COST: Available from ACK's at about \$35 for the set.

2. **Mahoney Oil** for larger bowls and platters..

He learned a lot about finishes from Glenn Lucas, who uses oils because he prefers a soft luster more than shiny surfaces. So Harry started with Mahoney's Oil (a boiled walnut oil, that is non- or less allergenic, and paste wax. He uses these especially if the items will be used for food..

TIP: Wet-finish sanding with Mahoney oil is a technique he also learned from Lucas. It is especially useful if you don't have a dust-collection system or an efficient one. When applied on a turning lathe, the oil makes a paste and quickly sands the piece to the equivalent of 300-grit sand paper. The material grinding off builds up on the paper, sanding really fast. It gives a good finish and cuts dust in the shop. Final Thought: there are so many types of finishes out there that you can bounce around forever and never find one that totally suits you. Just got to find one that does what you want it to and stick with it. This is especially true with the oils.

Making Your Own Finish

Wood Protectant - Dennis Fuge

Ingredients: **Clear Coat Shellac mixed with Denatured Alcohol in a 1:10 ratio.** Apply it with a spray bottle. It will flash off quickly allowing further coats.

Sanding Sealer - Jimmy Clewes

Ingredients: **70% Clear Coat Shellac mixed with 30% Denatured Alcohol.** Apply with a spray bottle. It will seal fairly quickly.

Gallery-Quality Finish - Tom Wirsing

Ingredients: **Equal parts of Pure Tung Oil, Polyurethane Varnish, and Oder-free Mineral Spirits.** This mixture will remain liquid. According to Harry, *it is usually hand rubbed, and is NOT a fast process.*

Directions: Sand through 400-grit on the lathe, then Cross-sand by hand with dampened 500-grit Abralon* pad.(form-packed abrasive made by Mirka). Saturate the surface with mixture, hand rubbing until wood rejects oil. Wipe away excess until wood stops rejecting the oil. Put aside for a week or so to cure. Then re-coat the piece with finish, applying with the 500-grit Abralon pad. Scrub radially (rim to center or vice versa) with effort. Wipe away until wood rejects more oil. Let set overnight. Re-coat as many times as necessary to obtain the desired sheen, using the same process. A final rubdown with a water-dampened 1000-grit Abrasion pad will produce a soft sheen. The comment from Harry: *He really liked the soft sheen but only did the whole process once because it takes real energy and is time-consuming.*

Rubbing Wax Finish - Jerry Kermod

Ingredients: **80% Mineral Oil, 20% Beeswax, and 100 gm. Carnauba Wax.** *Directions:* Add mineral oil to heated beeswax and stir to equal consistency before adding carnauba wax beads. Mix repeatedly to equal consistency. Pour into a low container for cooling. Expect medium hard consistency. Apply by hand-rubbing.

DRUE HOGLUND - Lifetime Member, Member since 2009, Past President

Drue's basic philosophy is **finish for your desired outcome**. If you are looking for a quality finish that will last, **wipe-on poly** is a good long-term solution. Apply (mostly he does it with the piece on the lathe), dry, buff out. For Drue, 3 coats is the minimum. If you are doing production work, you need speed, so **friction polishes** may be the choice. However, they don't last that long.

An interesting history: Al Hudson, a beloved master woodworker and engineer (at TVA) from Knoxville, Tennessee, was widely known as the "Dean of Woodworkers" in East Tennessee. Hudson was a long-time, inspirational leader in the East Tennessee Woodworkers' Guild (ETWG) and a celebrated guest on TV programs like *The Highland Woodworker*. He was a furniture maker, not a turner, but **Drue did finishes on much of Al's work**.

A further note: Drue used to specialize in Bowls, Off-Center Turning, and Rings. He taught many people at Woodcraft classes and served as a mentor to many of us. Drue told me that he is selling his apartment and is about to move to assisted living. We wish him all the best—such a nice guy & mentor to many of us.

DICK HAMMAT - Member since 2012, Past President / Mentoring topics: Bowls, Vases

Dick uses three different finishes for most kinds of wood.

General Finishes (Bowls and most other things):

He applies oil-based **polyurethane cut with 30% mineral spirits** (doesn't like water-based). Using little plastic cups (like restaurant cups for ketchup) to hold the liquid, he applies the finish with a paper towel, doing as much as possible on the lathe. He advises 3 coats, but you can stop at 2 if you want it less shiny. After his third coat, he uses fine mesh steel wool to bring up the shine. He recommends overnight drying time. Really dry wood can take less time, with a second coat on the same day after 6-8 hours.

For Porous Wood:

Zinsser Bulls Eye Sealcoat Universal Sanding Sealer, cut with 30% denatured alcohol, does the job. Let it dry for 45 minutes, you can put 2 coats on in the morning, It definitely cures in under an hour.

Special Wood: Red Cedar

Dick has a supply of red cedar that he likes to use for vases. If there are dark markings (knots where the finish might bubble up), he uses **Zinsser Shellac**, cut with 20-30% denatured alcohol. It may take 2-3 coats to avoid the occurrence of bubbles. You don't want to have to sand away the bubbles and start finishing all over again.

Where to Finish

If he can't do the whole finishing job on the lathe, Dick uses a 12" turntable with plastic material on the top. That makes it easy to spin the work for hand finishing.

Dick's Finishing TIP:

Put your liquid finish in a storage bag. There are several brands, but Woodcraft carries **StopLoss Bags** by Rockler (also Finish Storage Bags from Lee Valley Tools, and others). They save on pouring from the can, which causes early set up of the material. With the bag, you can keep the air out as you continue to use the finish later.

TOM KNIGHT - Member since 2007 / Mentoring topics: Platters & Bowls

Tom responded to my "favorites" question with his top choices based on the need of a turned piece:

1. **Polyurethane** (not water-based) **for durability**, to prevent wear and tear on an item that will be used a lot.
2. **Lacquer for show**, that is it will sit on a shelf and not be a utility item. NOTE: If exposed to high humidity, over time lacquer may turn white.
3. **Walnut oil for culinary items**, making them food safe.

He uses lots of layers of finish. Here's his **TIP**: To achieve a real shine, brush on multiple layers and spray on the last 2 layers.

Sanding Paste / Friction Polish:

Tom likes Yorkshire Grit a great deal but feels it is expensive. He suggests that before using Yorkshire Grit, sand to 400, and turn up the lathe to a high speed when using it. On YouTube, he found a recipe to make it for far less, and he made and uses it. Actually, there are several YouTube videos on this subject: Daniel Vilarino: *Wood Abrasive Paste with Tripoli* and Mike Peace: *Woodturning Abrasive Paste—Make Your Own?* Both use beeswax, Tripoli (diatomaceous earth) and mineral oil. Peace says that he makes a 7-oz batch for about \$9.00. Take a look, if you are interested.



What's Happening at the Ranch in May

It's the end of the semester and the students have completed their traditional school year. St. Andrews School at Wears Valley Ranch had 7 students graduate with their High School Diplomas. Four of them were part of our program during their years at the Ranch. This month, our students turned wooden whistles. A project that Bill Penicks did an excellent job of presenting. We're sure that parents and house parents will be serenaded this summer with the happy sounds they make.... Our program at the Ranch will be on hold for the summer along with Ranching and other elective classes.



The Woodworking program at the Ranch will be changing this Fall as will our organization's involvement. The program is being expanded with a dedicated instructor assuming the responsibilities we've shouldered over the years. This expansion of the program we pioneered will eventually include cabinetry & furniture making. Thanks so much to all of the Chapter Members who have given their time and resources to support this program.

Show & Tell



Colin Chalmers



Andy Milligan



Barry Brandt



Barry Brandt



Bill Thurman



Unknown



Buddy Hewgley



Jake Niedling



Jake Niedling



Jake Niedling



Jake Niedling



Jake Niedling



Dennis Smyth



John Jordan



John K. Jordan



John K. Jordan



Roy A. Cuff



Roy A. Cuff



Roy A. Cuff



Roy A. Cuff