



Gene Kelly
Sacramento, CA

Gene Kelly has been working with wood since 1959, and is currently a full-time woodworker who builds furniture and is licensed as a general contractor in the State of California. While he regularly uses his lathe to produce items like furniture parts (such as legs), music stand uprights, and baseball bats, lately he has become intrigued with segmented turning. He especially enjoys incorporating carvings and pyrography as feature rings in segmented vessels. Gene has four children and five grandchildren. He lives with his wife Lee Marie and one dog, one cat, four chickens and fifteen or so Koi in Sacramento, CA. All of them are very supportive of his busy lifestyle, which also includes cycling.



How did you get started in turning?

Early in school a fellow student had a bad accident involving a lathe, so I was afraid of turning for a long time. However, being involved with other aspects of woodworking, I felt the need to fill that gap in my knowledge. So I sought out a club (Nor Cal Woodturners) and they had a mentoring program with experienced turners. I took advantage of that along with my own self-training.

What kinds of turning are you doing today?

Some of the turning I do is for utilitarian purposes: for example, I turn bats (which required me to build a duplicator for absolute accuracy) and furniture parts. But I am really enjoying the artistic side of turning lately, especially segmented vessels. I recently developed a jig for cutting segments on a table saw so that I could cut them accurately, quickly and safely. Now, as long as I have done the design and the math in advance, I can cut up all of the segments for the entire vessel in well under an hour (depending on its size) and never feel like I have put myself at risk.



What is your favorite tool?

I have many tools that I enjoy using but I am particularly fond of the Hunter Tools that I own.

And your favorite wood to turn?

I think canary wood is fun to turn. I rarely get a chance to turn any green wood any more.

What kind of lathe do you use?

My lathe is a General with a 20" throw. If I turned every day, I would probably change it out for a Robust American Beauty, a Oneway, or possibly a Powermatic.



What is your workshop like?

Too small! My shop is an appendage of, and open to, my oversize two-car garage. I have maybe 1000 square feet. I would like it to be four or five times larger, but I don't have the property for the expansion.

Who or what inspires you?

For my furniture, the human form inspires me. For my segmented turning, I was inspired early on by Ray Allen and Malcolm Tibbetts. I am not one to dwell too long on the designs of others—just long enough to understand how they do what they do.



What makes you proud about your turning?

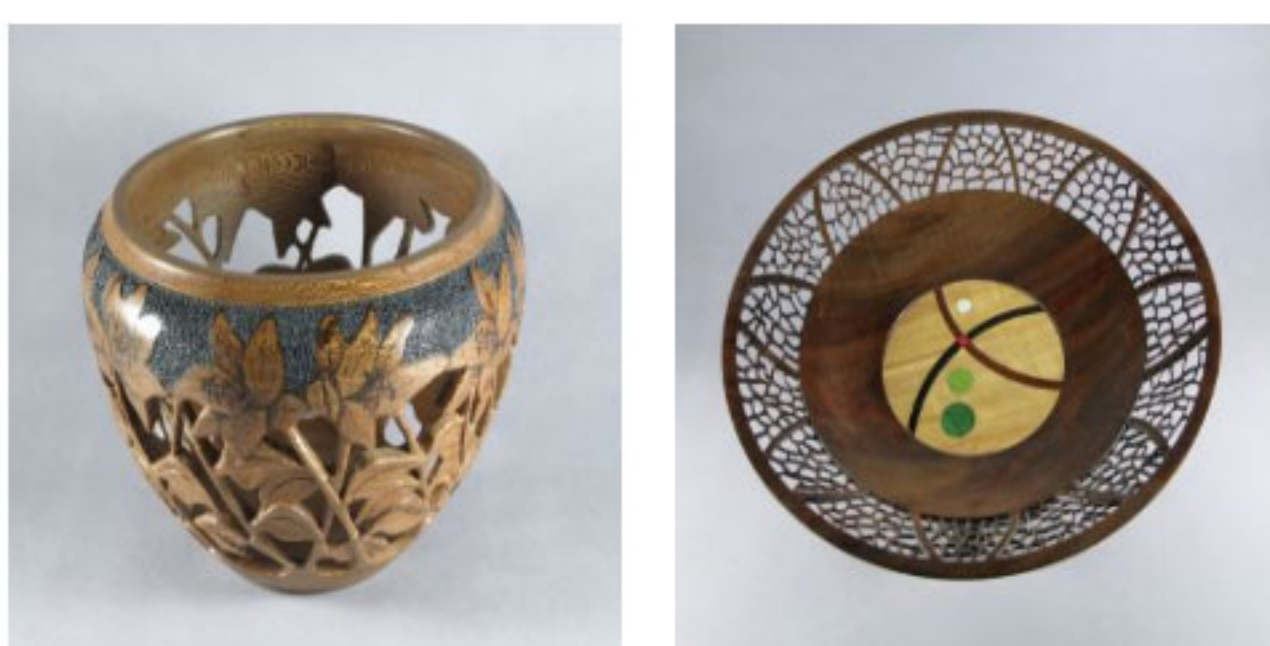
When an experienced turner looks at my work and asks me how I managed to include a particular carving into the design, I get a sense of satisfaction from that.

What are you currently working on?

I have three projects going on right now: a music stand which requires a 36 x 1 1/4" turned upright and turned dowels that are then threaded (as well as other components); a sculpted mirror frame, with a Renaissance sort of feel to it, and a Murphy Bed with a hidden desk and accompanying cabinetry.

What directions do you see your turning taking in the future?

I want to work on more pierced carvings and pyrography. I like the look of Celtic knotwork as a feature in my segmented work—so probably more of that. After developing a certain expertise as a woodworker, I can now allow myself to be a wood artist. Which means that not even I know exactly what is next! That is a great feeling for me.



Any lessons to share with others?

1. Don't be afraid to go slow at first.
2. Learn the correct usage of your cutting tools.
3. Everything will come in its time.
4. Smile.

Visit www.gkellywoodworker.com to see more of Gene's creative work.