



LEFT: Tom Stovall at work on a new project. TOP RIGHT: Tom says it takes a light touch and the right tool at the lathe. BOTTOM RIGHT: Gouges and hollowing tools are among the tools used for cutting, shaping and smoothing the wood.

His Turn Now

Tom Stovall, an Alba native, has a thriving woodturning studio nestled near the shores of Lake Louise, not far from where he grew up. But it took more than four decades for him to make his way back home. Since his sophomore year at Alba High School he's been interested in architecture. So after graduating, he began his advanced education at Tyler Junior College and then transferred to the University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his degree in architecture.

In Austin, Tom met his soon-to-be-wife, Allison. While she completed school, he worked at a firm in Austin for several years, and then as a couple they followed their work paths to Houston. Allison spent most of her career in social work at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Tom worked for an architecture firm but eventually started his own company. Through the years, he became most known for his beautiful and functional church designs. In 2003, as he and Allison looked toward retirement, Tom knew he wanted to find a hobby that would allow him to continue his creativity, so he took a one-day woodturning course. And that was the day he decided he loved it.

He bought his first lathe, set it up in the garage of their townhouse in Houston and began to study and hone his new craft. From the beginning, Tom decided he wanted to turn

wood, as opposed to making larger and more complex furniture. His finished pieces generally take about a day and a half to complete. He says; "I am not a very patient person. I tried using hand tools. But I liked woodturning because on the first day of class I came home with a bowl. I liked the instant gratification of it."

Woodturning is quite a bit more complex than Tom makes it sound, but he says; "For me, woodturning is a continuation of what I did as a design architect. It gave me an opportunity to stop doing what I was doing as an architect but to continue the creative process." Plus, he says, "It's fairly meditative."

Over the 42 years that the Stovalls lived in Houston, they made many friends and also enjoyed spending time at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The relationships they fostered at MFAH led to a long-term creative project for Tom that started with a 2008 natural disaster, Hurricane Ike. By then, Tom and Allison had retired and moved to their vacation home in Alba, but had kept their close ties and friendships in Houston.

Ike had a devastating effect on one of the museum's historic garden properties, Bay Bend. The 14 acres were the former home of Ima Hogg, the daughter of the 20th governor of Texas. She, along with her brothers, had developed a mansion with a

series of gardens meant as outdoor rooms for entertaining. In 1957 Ima, also known as “The First Lady of Texas,” donated that storied home, filled with early American furniture and art, to MFAH. Since 1966, it’s been open to the public as a museum, and thousands visit it annually. Unfortunately, Ike had annihilated many of the towering pines, American hollies and other mature trees such as white oak, pecan and elm that lent the home and gardens such grandeur.

Bayou Bend, its history and its trees have long held a cherished spot in the hearts of Texans and especially Houstonians. But even though the trees could not be saved, the wood could be salvaged. With that idea, Bonnie Campbell, the director of MFAH’s Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, sought out artisans and woodturners to transform the garden wreckage into beautiful and saleable pieces of art. Tom was on that short list and readily accepted the challenge. Since he began working with the Bayou Bend wood, he’s made well over 300 pieces from the harvested trees. Even today he is still receiving wood from the grounds and delivering finished art to the museum shop for sale.

Tom enjoys the rewards of the creative process, and says that being able to use materials that are so meaningful is an honor. “There is a lot of freedom in what I do. And it’s very rewarding.” The museum gives him the wood to turn. He decides if it will be a bowl, a lidded container, a hollow vessel or a sculpture, and then he returns the finished pieces and is paid a wholesale price. The museum puts the pieces in their

shop, marking them for resale. With Tom’s skills and reputation as an artist of collectible works, and patrons’ desire to own a bit of Bayou Bend history, his pieces sell out very quickly. But Tom also gives credit to the museum. He says, “The lady that runs the shop is very good. She sells. She knows the people to call who will buy.”

In creating a piece, he does not sketch out his ideas. Tom says, “I go to bed at night, and I’ll get a thought, and I sleep on it. Then when I go to work, I have in mind that I’m going to do a bowl or some other thing.” Then he selects the piece of wood that he thinks will best fit the project. The first crucial step is to clamp it onto the lathe. For safety, the wood must be secure, or it could become a dangerous projectile, flying off the lathe when the machine begins its high-rpm turning. Once the lathe is spinning, Tom selects the particular type of tool for the operation he plans to perform. Gouges, hollowing tools and others, as well as power carving tools—each is used for various cutting and shaping techniques. For example, a bowl gouge can rough out the middle of a bowl, but special gouges must be selected for smoothing or making rims or shapes.

Once a tool is selected, the magic begins. Woodturning, Tom explains, takes a light touch. Resting his gouge on the tool rest, he lightly touches the quickly spinning wood. As he moves the gouge along the length of wood, small chips begin to fly off of the rough material. Then it’s all about adjusting the speed and selecting the tools as the object takes shape. Woodturning is really a sculptural process, and it is mostly about what the

LEFT: Tom’s functional art pieces can be found on display at Bank Texas in Quitman and in the art gallery collection at Yale University. RIGHT: Tom with his wife, Allison.





Tom's work highlights the natural beauty of the wood. He enjoys taking his work on the road and frequenting local art festivals.

artist removes to reveal the final piece. Tom says that what's exciting about woodturning to him is the discovery process; because wood is organic, there are knots or burls and lovely grains just waiting to be revealed, and you never know what's there until you uncover it.

Beyond turning pieces for the museum out of Bayou Bend wood, Tom also makes his own retail pieces using locally found or bought wood. He and his good friend and watercolorist Joe Synan like to participate in juried art festivals with their wives, who are also both artists. Allison creates fiber art and Joe's wife, Susan, makes jewelry and objects from fused glass. Also, the couples travel quite extensively together to artists' havens like Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Aspen and the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina, where they participate in workshops to advance their skills and creativity. Just recently, indicative of his advanced skills, Tom was accepted into a woodturning master class at Anderson Ranch Arts Center.

Between travels to festivals and schools, Tom prolifically and expertly turns. Over the years, his artistry has gained somewhat of a following. People bring him wood from trees that were important to them or to the lives of their families. Repeating his model of turning disaster into cherished beauty, he's manufactured four pieces for a Dallas customer from a beloved red oak that was destroyed in an ice storm. Another customer in La Grange has commissioned him to make 22 pieces from a live oak. Then, Tom says, "fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it," he recently

acquired some very important camellia wood from Bayou Bend that has a direct relationship with Ima Hogg. In 1929, she had planted 28 camellia bushes that grew into gorgeous trees. But over the years, the trees died off, leaving only two—and one of those acquired a fungus. It had to be chopped down to prevent it from infecting the remaining tree. That camellia wood has been turned by Tom's hand into one-of-a-kind original art, and its history has been preserved.

Reveling in the creative process and the almost Zen nature of the work has it rewards for Tom. But too, he says, "Frankly, I like to sell." He explains, "I am not a big extrovert, but I enjoy going to the art festivals." He said that the act of selling is not about the money, but more a validation of the work because someone has placed enough value on your art to buy it. Depending on the time, complexity and materials, his pieces range from \$50 to \$800.

Some of Tom's work remains on semipermanent display at Bank Texas in Quitman, where he regularly rotates pieces. Two of his Bayou Bend pieces also have found their way into the art gallery collection at Yale University.

Tom Stovall's constantly evolving work can be seen on his website at studio185woodart.com, or by appointment at his private Alba studio by calling (903) 765-3272 or emailing tsto6312@aol.com.

Tom and Allison Stovall have been members of Wood County Electric Cooperative since 2001. Wherever their travels may take them, they always turn homeward to pursue their art.

Prevent Wildfires

Wildfires are considered to be one of the most powerful natural disasters known to humanity, and in our state's hot, dry climate, the late summer and early fall seasons are times to exercise extra caution.

Most Texans remember the severe wildfires of 2011, when more than 31,000 fires around the state destroyed 4 million acres of land and thousands of homes and businesses, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service. And more recent fires across the country serve as a deadly reminder that wildfire dangers are ever-present.

Although some fires are caused by lightning—on average, about 10,000 per year nationally—nine out of 10 are caused by humans. But there are things homeowners can do to reduce that risk. Take these measures to help prevent fires from happening near your home.

- ▶ Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks. This prevents stray embers from igniting your home.
- ▶ Remove dead vegetation from under your deck and within 10 feet of the house.
- ▶ Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.
- ▶ Screen or box in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- ▶ Remove flammable materials (firewood stacks, propane tanks, dry vegetation) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don't let it touch your house, deck or porch.

▶ Wildfire can spread to treetops. If you have trees on your property, prune them so that the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.

▶ Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are a perfect fuel for wildfires.

▶ Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. Dispose of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.

▶ Inspect shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.

▶ Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.

▶ Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screens with metal mesh to prevent ember entry.

Keep your home and family safe this fire season. For more tips and information, visit Firewise.org.



Nine out of 10 wildfires are caused by humans. Learn what you should do to prevent fires.



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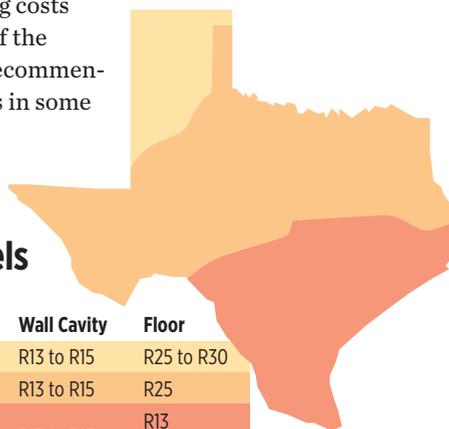
Insulate for Comfort and Savings

BY JAMES DULLEY

Checking your home’s insulating system is one of the fastest and most cost-efficient ways of using a whole-house approach to reduce energy waste and maximize your energy dollars. A good insulating system includes a combination of products and construction techniques that provide a home with thermal performance, protect it against air infiltration and control moisture. You can increase the comfort of your home while reducing your heating and cooling needs by up to 30 percent by investing just a few hundred dollars in proper insulation and weatherization products.

Adequately insulating a home saves money for homeowners every month. It also helps conserve vital energy resources—energy-efficient houses help lower air pollution emissions from the combustion of fuels for heating, air conditioning and ventilation.

Check the insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors and crawlspaces to see if it meets the levels recommended for your area. Insulation is measured in R-values—the higher the R-value, the better your walls and roofs will resist the transfer of heat. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends ranges of R-values based on local heating and cooling costs and climate conditions in different areas of the nation. The map at right shows the DOE recommendations for your area. State and local codes in some parts of the country may require lower R-values than the DOE recommendations, which are based on cost-effectiveness.



Recommended Insulation Levels

New, Wood-Framed Homes

Heating System	Attic	Cathedral Ceiling	Wall Cavity	Floor
All	R38 to R60	R30 to R38	R13 to R15	R25 to R30
All	R30 to R60	R22 to R38	R13 to R15	R25
Gas, Oil, Heat Pump Electric Furnace	R30 to R60	R22 to R38	R13 to R15	R13 R19 to R25

Where to Insulate

Adding insulation in the attic and to walls, floors, basements and crawlspaces may be the best way to improve your home’s energy efficiency.

Insulation Types

Insulation can be made from a variety of materials, but it usually comes in one of four forms—batts, rolls, loose-fill and rigid foam boards. Each type is made to fit in a different part of your house.

Batts are made to fit between the studs in your walls or between the joists of your ceilings or floors. Batts are usually made of fiberglass or rock wool.

Rolls or blankets are also usually made of fiberglass and can be laid over the floor in the attic.

Loose-fill insulation, usually made of fiberglass, rock wool or cellulose, is blown into the attic or walls. Cellulose is made from recycled materials treated with fire-retardant chemicals.

Rigid foam boards are lightweight and provide structural support, and they generally have an R-value of 4 to 7 per inch. Rigid board insulation is made for use in confined spaces such as exterior walls, basements, foundation and stem walls, concrete slabs and cathedral ceilings.



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POWER TIP

Save ENERGY • Save MONEY

During summer months, our homes can be extremely hot, making living conditions uncomfortable. But while you’re putting your air conditioner to work, try adding a ceiling fan into the mix—fans can help you raise your thermostat setting by about 4 degrees and still feel just as comfortable.

But remember to turn fans off in unoccupied rooms. Fans cool people, not rooms, and you’re wasting energy by leaving them on if there isn’t anyone in the room.

Did You Know?

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Before the Rural Electrification Administration and electric cooperatives came to Texas in 1936, only 2 percent of the farms and ranches in the state had power.

Today, electric cooperatives light up the farms, ranches, homes and businesses of more than 3 million people across the state.

Keep Cool While Power's Out

Severe summer storms or extreme heat can cause outages that last for days. When a power outage occurs during hot weather, take steps to maintain safety and comfort until power is restored.

High winds that topple utility poles and power lines cause many summer outages. It's important to stay clear of downed power lines at all times, even during cleanup efforts. Be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard.

Assume that any dangling wires you encounter are electrical, and treat all downed or hanging lines as if they are energized and dangerous. If you are driving and come upon a downed power line, stay in your vehicle, warn others to stay away and contact emergency personnel or your electric utility. Also when driving, be careful at intersections where traffic lights may be out.

If power to your home is out for a prolonged period, know and understand important safety precautions and steps to cope with heat until power is restored:

- ▶ Remember to call your electric utility immediately to report the outage.

- ▶ Dress in loose, lightweight clothing and stay on the coolest, lowest level of your home.

- ▶ Use natural ventilation to cool homes, and consider purchasing battery-powered fans.

- ▶ Drink plenty of water and avoid heavy meals and caffeinated and alcoholic drinks.

- ▶ Keep refrigerator or freezer doors closed. A freezer that is half-full or full can keep foods frozen 24 to 48 hours. Foods can stay safe in an unopened refrigerator up to four hours. If an outage lasts longer than four hours, remove and pack meat, milk and other dairy products in a cooler with ice.

- ▶ Use safe alternative food preparations. A barbecue grill is an excellent way to prepare food. Always grill outside.

- ▶ Check on friends and relatives—especially children, seniors and those with medical conditions or disabilities. These people may need to seek emergency cooling shelters.

- ▶ Keep a first-aid kit in your home and one in your car. Make sure that it includes scissors, tweezers, safety pins, aspirin, eyewash and rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.

- ▶ Close all drapes and blinds on the sunny side of your residence.

- ▶ Take your family and pets to a basement or other cool location if you have one. Also consider going to an air-conditioned public place during warmer daytime hours.

During an outage, turn off electrical appliances and unplug



While Wood County Electric Cooperative works diligently to keep the power on 24/7, outages can occur due to storms, accidents and other causes. If an outage does happen, let us know and rest assured, we'll get the power back on as quickly as possible.

major equipment, including air-conditioning units, computers and televisions. Power sometimes comes back in surges, which can damage electronics. Your circuits could overload when power returns if all your electronics are still on and plugged in. Leave one light on to indicate that power has been restored. Wait a few minutes, then turn on other appliances and equipment one piece at a time.

If you use a standby generator, make sure a transfer safety switch is used, or connect the appliance(s) directly to the generator output through an isolated circuit before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, a condition known as "backfeed." Backfeed creates danger for anyone near lines, particularly crews working to restore power.