

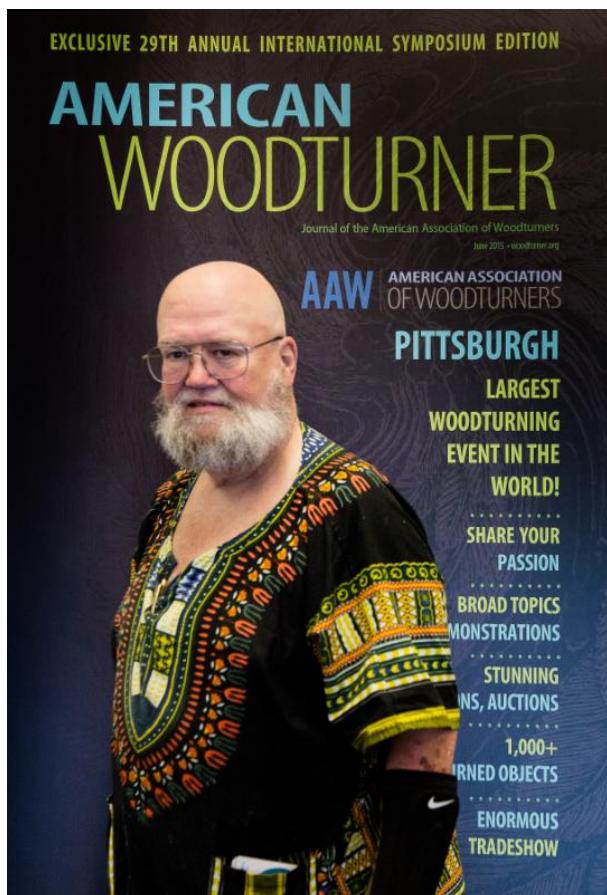
AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

SERVING TURNERS WORLDWIDE FOR 30 YEARS 1986-2016

Anniversary Profile: Dick Gerard

January 28, 2016

Anniversary Profiles Dick Gerard, Member #13



What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

I went to Arrowmont's "Vision and Concept" conference with the goal of starting a woodturning group. Along with 12 others, we formalized the idea on the back porch of the Red Barn, and the AAW was born. So, I naturally joined!

When you look at your pieces from 1986, what do you see?

Average design and form, average tool control, above average finishing. Nothing special, just an aspiring turner who needed help.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

There were many: David Ellsworth, Rude Osolnik, Palmer Sharpless, Mike Hosaluk, Richard Raffan and



In the thirty weeks leading up to AAW's 30th Anniversary Symposium in Atlanta, we will be sharing the stories of members who joined in 1986 and are still members today. We hope you enjoy their memories and insights!

Click [here](#) to read this and other profiles online.

About Dick Gerard

Although his career was as a computer program writer for the Department of Defense, Dick Gerard has always had an omnivorous appetite for learning. Interested in the bigger questions of life, nature, and art, over the course of his college career he studied chemistry, philosophy, photography, and pottery, among other things.

After a stint driving spikes by hand as a gandy dancer on the C. & O. Railroad, he graduated from Ball State University in 1972. He started with the Department of Defense in the mid-'70s and married his wife Nancy in 1976.

Dick took up woodworking in 1979, but a 1981 article on turning in *Fine Woodworking* caught his eye and he started turning. There was no network of turners to look to for information or advice, a void the beginning turner felt was

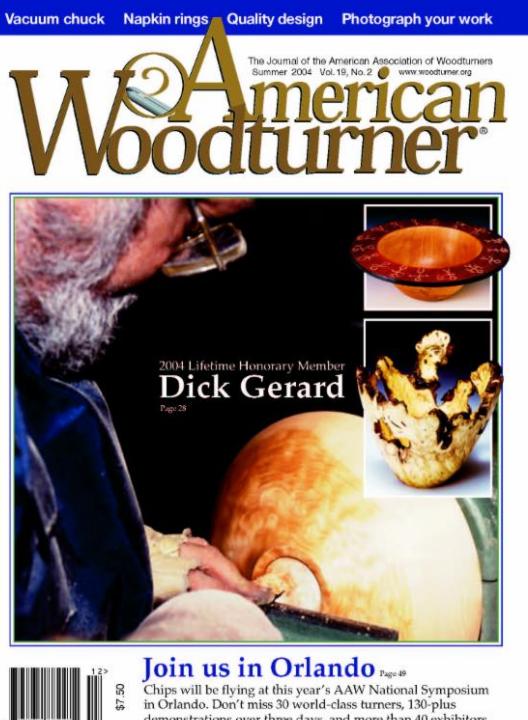
Father Time...time spent at the lathe, time spent with the "big dogs" of wood turning.

What was your funniest turning moment?

At one of the early symposiums (either Philadelphia or Seattle, David Ellsworth would know), we were in desperate search of a knock out rod. I picked up a long piece of rebar...maybe 15-20 feet long. I slid it into the head stock, totally unaware that the other end had contacted some live electrical equipment. Needless to say, there was a loud BANG, and sparks flew! Fortunately, no one was hurt and the lathe and equipment were unscathed. The pucker factor, however, was off the charts!

What was your happiest turning moment?

In general, I'd say my happiest turning moment(s) were being accepted by every turner I have ever met. But, there is one stand out moment ... receiving the AAW's Lifetime Membership Award.



What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

My favorite tool is my collection of design notebooks that I have created over the years. This was an idea I stole from my friend, Clay Foster. I have many of these books filled with sketches, photos, and other reminders of things I have seen that could be used in my turnings.

If you mean an actual turning tool, I have to say that a good sharpening system is my choice. Without a sharp edge, all tools are equally bad.

Favorite wood? Whatever wood I am currently working on. But if pushed to pick, I would say big leaf maple burl and cherry.

What do you see as the biggest change in the field?

Technical changes: Advances in metallurgy (better tools); 4-jaw scroll chucks; electronic variable speeds with reversing capabilities; CBN wheels; and new

in strong need of being filled. By chance, Nancy heard about a woodturning conference that was to be held at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in 1985. As he was preparing to give the welcoming address, event organizer David Ellsworth remembers that Dick came on stage with an armload of papers on how to start an organization. "The rest," Ellsworth notes, "is history."

By the end of the event the foundations of the organization were formed, and the AAW officially incorporated in 1986. Dick was asked to join the AAW board a year later, and served for six years of the AAW's formative years, four of them as treasurer.

After leaving the board in 1992, he had more time to throw himself into turning, and he did: he studied with David Ellsworth, Rude Osolnik, Mike O'Donnell, Mike Hosaluk, Ray Key, John Jordan, Clay Foster and many others, and travelled to the four corners of the United States, including Hawaii and Alaska, as well as to Australia, Mexico, and the Bahamas, all in pursuit of his turning passion.

He started exhibiting at local and regional shows, but by 1995 realized that although he was making (and selling) what people wanted, he wasn't satisfying his own creative needs, and he cut back to spend more time on new ideas and forms.

Dick's service to the field of turning and to the AAW was officially recognized in 2004, when he was made a Lifetime Honorary Member, an honor that was richly deserved.

Still excited about the possibilities after thirty-five years behind the lathe, Dick continues to explore new ideas and techniques. He and Nancy live in Indianapolis, Indiana. They enjoy spoiling their kids and grandkids. Sharing a love of felines, they are looking forward to

lathes designed by wood turners for wood turners as opposed to metal working lathes "designed" to be wood lathes.

Other developments I see as big changes: AAW itself; local chapters ... the brain child of Palmer Sharpless; the youth program with Bonnie Klein; regional symposiums; multi-axis/off center turnings; and the addition of color to turnings.

If you couldn't be a woodturner, what would you do instead?

Blacksmithing and fishing.

Do you still have *American Woodturner* back issues? Where do you keep them?

Yes, and I keep them in the smallest of three bedrooms. We call it the computer room/library. However, I periodically donate back issues to Marc Adams School of Woodworking for their reference library.

Has being a part of AAW affected your life and work? How?

Oh yes! My wife would tell you that AAW and turning are my life. While on the Board of Directors, I was privileged to work with some of the greatest woodturners. And, because of the far-flung members, as I traveled around I was able to connect with other turners. Being a member of AAW has opened many, many doors and lets people know that I am part of a quality organization whose primary focus is on the members who make up the organization.

What's your favorite project/piece? (and send us a picture!)

Ghost Vessel ... it is a bleached bigleaf maple burl hollow form.



adopting an older rescue cat in late February.

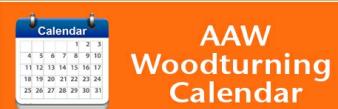
You can see more of Dick Gerard's work on his [website](#).

Read about his Lifetime Honorary Member award [here](#).

Want to learn more?

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

AAW Connects [AAW Connects](#)



AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

Like what we do?

Join or renew!

You'll get *American Woodturner* journal and have access to information, resources, tips, projects, videos, free digital publications like *Woodturning FUNdamentals*, and our huge library of relevant woodturning content.

[woodturner.org](#) | 877-595-9094 (toll free)



Favorite piece turned by another artist?

This is truly a difficult decision. I love all of Derek Weidman's work, especially the dragon, the rhino and the multiple piece display that was on view at the 2015 Symposium in Pittsburgh. From the past, I would select a piece by Bob Stocksdale that was made from macadamia wood. The shape is sublime. Sorry, I don't have pictures.

That being said, I really love work done by (in no particular order) Mike Hosaluk, Betty Scarpino, Clay Foster, David Ellsworth, Al Stirt, Richard Raffan, Jennifer Shirley, Robin Horn, Glen Lucas, Hannes Michelson, Kelly Dunn, Barbara Dill, Mark Sfirri... the list goes on and on and on.

If you could give your 30-years-younger self some advice about being a turner what would you say?

Get some one-on-one instruction ASAP. Learn to sharpen, focus more on form and design, less on equipment and tools. The turner makes the tool work. No tool and no amount of sanding will make up for poor technique. A great finish on a bad piece is still a bad piece. A poor finish on a great piece can be fixed!



The Three Magi, by Dick Gerard. Donated to the AAW Permanent Collection in 2007. Dick cites the natural world and the indigenous artists of the Americas, Polynesia, Australia and Africa as influences on his work.

American Association of Woodturners
222 Landmark Center, 75 5th St W, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
651 484-9094 | www.woodturner.org
[Feedback](#)

Copyright © 2016. All Rights Reserved.