

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

SERVING TURNERS WORLDWIDE FOR 30 YEARS 1986-2016

Anniversary Profile: Jeff Trotter

February 11, 2016

Anniversary Profiles Jeff Trotter, Member #1663



Jeff with his favorite piece: a working scale model of a Civil War-era cannon

What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

I am not sure when I first heard of AAW; it could have been through a woodworking club I belonged to, the Alaska Creative Woodworkers. I was teaching woodworking at Wasilla High School and wanted to improve my turning skills to share with my students

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

More graceful and not so heavy looking pieces.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

Ray Ferguson was my favorite teacher. I met him at Arrowmont and we later became good friends. Ray would often travel to Alaska from Florida to join me for some salmon fishing.

What was your happiest turning moment?

My happiest turning moments were watching my students have success with their turnings.



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 Jeff Trotter

A retired Career and Tech Education teacher and accomplished turner, Jeff Trotter was born in Dawson, Minnesota. He moved to Colorado in 1960 before continuing his journey west (and a little north) to Alaska in 1976.

Jeff's work has been published in *Fine Woodworking*, and been exhibited at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and the *Alaska Artistry in Wood* show. One of his madrone pieces was selected to represent the best of the Northwest region in the national exhibition *Rounding the Four Corners* at the AAW Gallery of Wood Art.





Jeff and three students from a local high school; although retired, he still demonstrates at local schools.

What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

My favorite wood is Madrone burl.



Jeff's madrone burl piece, included in the AAW 2008 Rounding the Four Corners exhibition

What do you see as the biggest change in the field? Artistic turnings have become very popular. I prefer functional pieces with simple flowing lines.

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

Flyfishing would be right up there with turning.



A 19-pound pike Jeff caught during the Mat-Su Pike Derby

Do you still have American Woodturner back

Hippopotamus for Christmas.
Jeff developed these holiday hippo^tpami for an AWA demonstration. Building toys for kids at Christmas is a Trotter family tradition; their son Daniel, a high school welding teacher, enjoys toy-building, too.
(Click [here](#) to hear a version of the song that inspired the project.)

A founding member of the Alaska Woodturners Association, an AAW local chapter, Jeff has helped teach valuable turning skills during AWA classes and demonstrations at club meetings. He helps with AWA events and has served on the board for several years.

Jeff's sharing spirit is also evident in his involvement as an elder in his church and his service on the local school board, and through his work with [SkillsUSA](#), an organization supporting career and technical education programs and student development.

He lives in Palmer, Alaska with his wife Gretta, a real estate agent. Although officially retired from teaching, Jeff continues to demonstrate turning at several local high schools.

Want to learn more?



issues? Where do you keep them?

All of my *American Woodturner* magazines have a special place in my closet.

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

AAW has been a special part of my life. I was the first recipient of an educational grant to Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. The week I spent at [Arrowmont](#) really gave me the momentum to improve my turning skills and enjoy turning. I am grateful that AAW selected me for the scholarship.

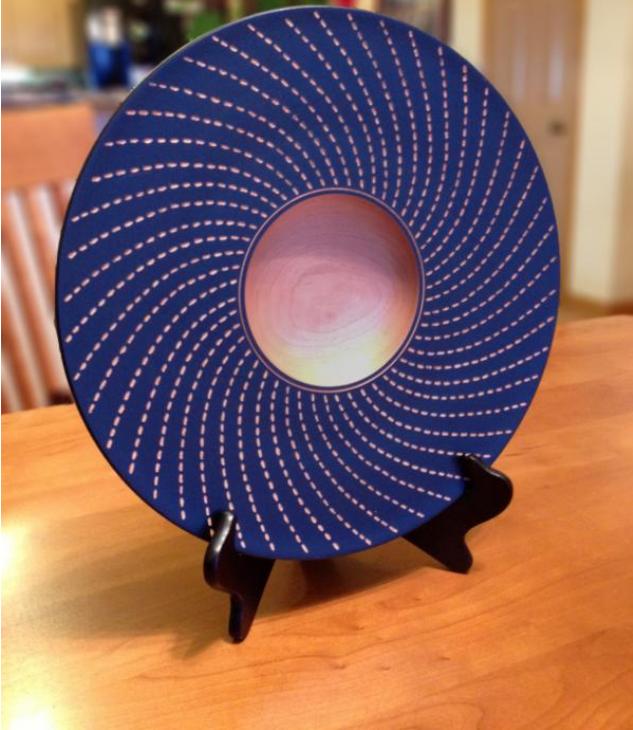
I am a founding member of [Alaska Woodturners Association](#) and have served on their board of directors and as president. My wife Gretta and I host the annual picnic every year at our home.

What's your favorite project/piece?

My favorite piece is a scale model Civil War cannon. It has thirty-seven turned parts, and was by far my most challenging work. The cannon does fire, and we fired it at the AWA picnic last spring. My father also had a cannon when we lived in Minnesota, and he would fire it as part of parades and town celebrations. (*Jeff's cannon is pictured at the top of the page.*)



Never stop learning. Jeff and fellow local chapter members at a workshop taught by Al Stirt of Vermont, another 30-year AAW member. A close-up of Jeff's piece is shown below.



*These boxes were turned from moose antler base.
The lids are ebony and with dall sheep horn finials.*

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