

Anniversary Profiles Philip Moulthrop, Member #1475



*Philip Moulthrop at the lathe.
Image courtesy [Wikimedia](#).*

What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

I began turning in 1979, and had been to several exhibits and met a couple of wood turners. I wanted to become more active in turning, and when I attended the symposium at Arrowmont in 1985 I felt that this was essential to continuing in the field of woodturning.

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

Many of my early pieces were heavier looking and did not always have fluid continuity in their lines.

If you could give your 30 years-younger self



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 Philip Moulthrop

Although Philip Moulthrop began his professional career as a lawyer, he was interested in science and did his undergraduate work in chemistry and biology. A veteran of the United States Navy, he served in Vietnam, where he became interested in photography. He graduated from Woodrow Wilson School of Law in 1978, then specialized in insurance and construction law.

Philip started learning the ways of wood from his father, acclaimed turner Ed Moulthrop, when he was about ten, but he moved on to other passions. Over time he was drawn back to wood, and in the mid-70s he left his law practice to work as a full-time turner alongside his father. They would later be joined by Philip's son Matt.

Talent for fine craft runs on both sides of the Moulthrop family: Philip's mother, Mae,

some advice about being a turner what would you say?

The more pieces that you turn, the better you will become. Attend demonstrations of other turners to see how they approach various situations. Try sketching and turning different shapes. Observe shapes in nature.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

I would have to say that my father, Ed, was my greatest teacher. He taught me how to turn and finish. He also taught me how to make tools and to make a lathe.

What was your funniest turning moment?

One of the collectors I deal with also supplies me with wood from time to time. He called to tell me that he was sending someone to my studio with some unusual logs to use. I was thinking of logs about 18" diam and 24" long. When the logs arrived they were 48" diam and about 6' to 7' long. They were so large they could not be moved and had to be cut one piece at a time to be used. Now when someone calls me with some logs to bring to me, I always ask the size.

What was your happiest turning moment?

One of the happiest turning moments was when I was making my first "Mosaic" bowl. It took me about a week just to glue up the small cross sections onto the surface of another bowl which was acting as the form. After gluing all of the pieces, I turned a smooth exterior, and then the interior form bowl was to be cut out of the inside. I was extremely concerned that I would not know when I had cut the interior form bowl out and might then cut through the outer pieces. This would cause a week of work to be lost. As it happened, the cutting tool made a very different sound when it began to cut into the back of the outer pieces. As I cut, I kept listening for the changing sound. When I had finished, I put my hand into the bowl and found that the cuts had followed the exterior exactly with a perfectly smooth curve.



Mosaic vessel by Philip Moulthrop. White pine and epoxy.

What is your favorite wood and why?

The most fun wood for me to turn is boxelder (*Acer negundo*, also known as ashleaf maple.) It is soft, which makes it cut easily, and the bright red color is wonderful.

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

was a gifted weaver and active with the Atlanta Guild. Philip's decision to become a professional turner wasn't entirely anticipated. In a 2001 oral history interview, she related this story: "Well listen, he was a lawyer, but he said, you know, "I could do lots of things, but I could never stand in front of a lathe and just turn out bowls all day long. That's something I couldn't do." So then, one day we were standing together, Ed and Philip and I, and Philip said - Ed was standing right there - and he said, "Do you think Dad would teach me how to turn, to do wood turning?" And I said, "Well, why don't you ask him yourself? He's standing right there." [Laughs] I never could figure out why he did that." He took to the work, and quickly became an expert.

Philip's work is now in many major museum, private and corporate collections, and the family has been featured in countless newspaper and magazine articles. They were also featured in the PBS series, *Craft in America*.

A Georgia native, Philip is married to his college sweetheart, Renée. They live in Marietta.



American holly piece created by Philip for the 2016 POP exhibition and [auction](#), Patterns.

You can learn more about the Moulthrops' work at the AAW Symposium. Philip and Matt Moulthrop will present a special lecture open to registered AAW symposium attendees on Thursday, June 9, at 7:00 p.m., entitled, "Material Selection and Creation of Turned Objects Using Personalized Tools and Methods." They will discuss specialized turning

I believe that the huge growth in the popularity of woodturning has caused a vast number of resources to be created. When I began turning 37 years ago, there were only two or three companies that sold lathes and tools and they were all tailored to production turning. Since computers were not in use by individuals, it was extremely difficult to find others in the field. Now there are multiple companies that make lathes for many types of turning and also many types of tools. The Internet has made connecting with companies and other turners so much easier.

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

I would probably build furniture pieces and do photography.

Do you still have *American Woodturner* back issues?

I do not have all of my back issues of *American Woodturner*. I ran out of storage space.

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

It has given me a connection to the other people who are also turning wood. I can see what is being done in other studios and also see the different techniques being used.

What's your favorite project/piece?

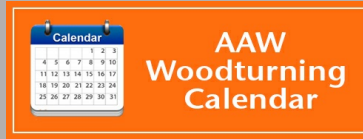
It is hard for me to pick one thing as the favorite, however, last year, my son Matt and I did an exhibit at the Phoenix Botanical Garden in Arizona. We made all of the pieces from indigenous woods. This was both a challenge and a new experience; using woods we had never used before made it exciting. (View pieces [here](#).)

Favorite piece turned by another artist?

I have always liked the earlier works by Bill Hunter with the fluted exterior. They have nice shapes and pleasing lines.

techniques, their turning tools, and how they select wood for projects.

Want to learn more?



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