

Anniversary Profiles Robert Molloy, Member #436

What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

My principal hobby was pottery for 20 years prior to 1986. I attended workshops both in ceramics and blacksmithing at [Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts](#) in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. During my first woodturning class with Dale Nish, which was followed by a week with Rude Osolnik, Dale approached me about joining. He was an avid advocate for the newly formed AAW. Very supportive and enthusiastic, Dale suggested that membership could become an important part of our turning experiences.

I joined the AAW in 1986 and have enjoyed my ongoing enhancement of woodturning knowledge for thirty years. I was a founding member of the [Tidewater Turners](#) in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

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

When I look at my turnings produced in 1986, I see warped, very large cherry bowls turned from green wood that have numerous, large cracks. At the time, we filled the cracks with fender putty. Since then, Rude has introduced me to Super Glue®.

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

Woodturning has become a more sophisticated craft with ever-increasing choices of lathes, tools and finishing materials. I would recommend that a novice woodturner visit a local AAW affiliated chapter. Talk to multiple members with different interests and skills: bowl, pen, ornament, finial and spindle turners. Visit their workshops to look at their lathes, turning tools, related support tools and accessories. Consider becoming an AAW chapter member. Search the Internet to become familiar with the many excellent craft schools and see what courses they offer. Watch some of the many available woodturning videos both on YouTube and on various woodturning product suppliers' web sites.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?



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 Robert Molloy

A founding member of the Tidewater Turners, Bob came to turning after an almost twenty year-long serious relationship with pottery, and careers in construction, wholesale electrical distribution and commercial real estate.

In addition to the list of skills we read about in his profile, add planning and perseverance: over the course of three years he laid a 15,000 piece cobblestone drive by laying forty stones a day before driving off to work.

A Baltimore native and the youngest of five boys, Bob graduated with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Maryland in 1953, the same year he married and joined the Air Force. Skillfully juggling multiple interests and activities appears to be a lifelong habit!

Bob lives in Virginia Beach,

I have had many great teachers, all of whom have helped me as a turner. I don't have only one great teacher because all of them had their own approaches to the craft of woodturning, and each helped me develop my current skill set.

Myron Curtis, an architectural wood turner from Virginia Beach got me started with very large bowl blanks and tools. At Arrowmont, my workshop teachers were Dale Nish, Rude Osolnik, Stony Lamar, Ray Key, Bonnie Klein, Liam O'Neill, and Al Stirt; at [Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill](#) in Kentucky: Peter Hindle's ([Ashem Crafts](#)) [Shaker chair-making workshop](#).



Bob's Shaker rocker, before taping

What was your funniest turning moment?

My funny moment was a wood purchasing transaction with Rude Osolnik. He was offering bowl blanks for sale from the back of his pick-up truck. Prices for the blanks were reasonable. I asked Rude "What would twenty dollars buy?" I was offered three very large pieces of wood. After the purchase, I hastened to the band saw to make *many* blanks from the three large pieces. Rude counted the number of blanks that I cut and commented, "I consider myself an outstanding trader and now you may have to be added to the list of outstanding traders"

What was your happiest turning moment?

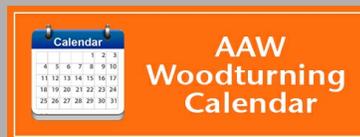
My happiest turning moment recurs every day when I keep in mind all the hazards that exist with multiple pounds of unbalanced wood rotating at high RPMs and knowing I can proceed in a safe environment.

Virginia with his wife of more than sixty years, Geraldine. They have three children and three grandchildren.



The Shaker rocker, completed

Want to learn more?





Bob's workshop. See more images of his shop [here](#)

What are your favorite tools and why?

My favorite tools have to be my three bowl gouges ground with an Irish grind and long handles. Liam O'Neill ground two of the gouges and made the handles. My protégé El Halley made the third one, a massive $\frac{3}{4}$ " HSS bowl gouge.

I have a Conover lathe with an eight-foot wood bed to turn chair parts using rounders and trapping planes. I also have a Oneway 2436 lathe with an outboard extension for left-handed turning of large bowls and platters.

Favorite wood?

My favorite woods are cherry and hard maple. The cherry turns well and finishes to a beautiful color with exquisite grain. I use the maple to make charger plates, platters and other serving plates.

My self-made finish is a mixture of beeswax and mineral oil.



Bowls, a platter and a sphere, all in cherry



Burl plates and wooden utensils

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

Since I started, there have been many significant, inter-related changes in woodturning which build on each other. In descending priority order:

- Multifunctional lathes, improved tool steel, specialty tools devices) and support tools, such as band saws and CBN grinding wheels.
- Reference material and instructional videos on the Internet.
- AAW knowledge-sharing through its many publications, the website, and sponsoring of local chapters, local and national conventions, provides a platform for exchange of ideas.
- Materials and products being offered such as finishes, plastic turning media, and exotic wood assortment.
- Local and national conventions, demonstrations and shows.

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

I would become a potter, blacksmith, weaver, glass blower, U.S. stamp collector, and work more in my wife's garden. I currently do many of these activities and still find time to turn.

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

I have recently read through all of the *American Woodturner* magazines starting with number 1 while riding my stationary bicycle in my shop, saving many of the articles and passing on the others.

Favorite piece turned by another artist?



*Above: A few favorite pieces from Bob's collection.
Below: Another favorite - a Liam O'Neill beaded bowl*

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