

Anniversary Profiles

Leland Wesner

Member #323



Lee with his grandson, a potential future turner

What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

At the 1986 George School symposium Albert LeCoff suggested to me that a movement was afoot to form a national woodturning organization. He asked me if I was interested in joining. For some reason I didn't say yes right away, or, I suspect my membership number would be in the double digits. I did join a few weeks later and my membership number is 323.

Our local chapter of AAW, the [Keystone Woodturners](#), began as a small neighborhood group meeting in the assembly room of a church camp. One evening, as we sat crowded together on plain wooden benches my peripheral vision sensed a full, salt and pepper beard next to me. I stole a quick



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!

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About Leland Wesner

Leland (Lee) Wesner started woodworking as a boy, first learning from his father, then taking shop in junior high where he enjoyed flatwork and won an award for a record cabinet. Early in his career as a music teacher, he was working in the Poconos and made a few small items in the school's shop, but didn't feel "serious" about the lathe until he decided to make a pair of candle holders for his wife. Most of his turning at the time was practical in nature - he decided that the legs and spindles in a purchased settee set kit were not quite strong enough, and set about making his own. Since then, he has expanded into bowl turning, and particularly likes the challenge of doing segmented work. He also enjoys creating pens to give as thank-you gifts.

Lee's interests are broad: he

glance and realized I was seated next to David Ellsworth. David's home community is about twenty miles from our location, but he had come to encourage the growth of our fledgling group. Over the next several years David came several times to Keystone as a demonstrator, always for an intent audience, as this picture shows.



David Ellsworth demonstrating for the Keystone Woodturners

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

Two events that really thrust me into turning as a serious woodworking hobby were the symposia held at the George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania, organized by the LeCoff brothers, Albert and Alan, and hosted by Palmer Sharpless, instructor at the school. The 1977 symposium had a star-studded guest list, including Steve Hogbin, Russ Zimmerman, Paul Eshelman, Frank Knox, and Bob Stocksdales. I would have to say that these artists were my first serious inspiration in woodturning. The 1986 symposium featured, among others, David Ellsworth and Liam O'Neill. I purchased a bowl gouge from Liam that is still a significant tool at my lathe.

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

In recent years the biggest change in woodturning, as I recognize it, is the adventure in ornamental turning and the use of mixed materials, exotic designs and added colorations.

My own turning continues with relatively small items, including pens, small bowls, Christmas icicle decorations and German lace bobbins. The lidded box shown here was made for a holiday gift exchange and I chose to make it as a practical game box/board.



What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

My interest in woods leans toward the exotic, such

has a life-long affiliation with the Boy Scouts of America, and is a recipient of the Silver Beaver award for distinguished service. He has brought his musical talents and leadership skills to several performing arts groups, from the [Coventry Singers](#), a choral group for which he also served as president, to a role singing in the barbershop quartet in a 2014 staging of the Music Man.

Lee's interests overlap: he has a passion for history as well as music, and since 1956 he's played with the Third Brigade Band, which was founded in 1881. For some years he directed the 40-plus member band, but is now its historian and euphoniumist.



An article about the [Third Brigade Band](#), which Lee has been part of since 1956

For more than a decade Lee has also been a Revolutionary War re-enactor, an activity he has combined with his woodturning by creating period tent finials, plugs for muzzle loading muskets and other items that would have been used during that era. It remains to be seen if he can combine woodturning with another of his interests: a recently-restored 1956 MG MGA.

Lee and his wife Sandra live in Perkiomenville, about an hour north of Philadelphia. They have two grown sons, both of whom have done a bit of turning, and two pre-school aged grandchildren.

as purpleheart, padauk, and zebrawood - woods that work well in small turnings. But a wood that I find particularly fascinating is boxelder, because of its unpredictable revelations of color. And, of course, when reproducing historic pieces, there is nothing to match cherry, walnut, and the maples.

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