

## Meet The Turner - Stan Wellborn



### How long have you been actively turning?

My dad gave me an old, no-name tabletop lathe in the early 70s, and I pretty much taught myself, reading Dale Nish books. I attended a few demos – I remember one by Christian Burchard on turning spheres and another in North Carolina where I first saw David Ellsworth straddle a lathe bed while hollowing. I recently returned to serious turning after a hiatus of 15-20 years, when I spent limited time at the lathe because of family and work schedules.

### How much time do you spend turning?

With retirement approaching, I'm ramping up the turning schedule. I've reoriented my shop, rejoined AAW, CAW and MCW, and visited Patrick O'Brien, Phil Brown, and other studios. So, probably 10 hours a week now – and more to come if and when I can ever give up my day job.

### What do you typically like to work on?

Mostly bowls and platters. I've started experimenting with carving, color, and other surface decoration.

### What is your most memorable moment in woodturning?

Back around 1970, I wandered into a little gallery in downtown Washington, which had on display Bob Stocksdale bowls – probably 35 or 40 of them. They were stunning, and at the time cost only around \$50-\$75 apiece. Back then I couldn't afford such extravagances, but I have kicked myself many times over the years for not going into hock and buying a couple when I had the chance.

### If you had to choose a favorite piece you've made, what would it be and why?

A 12-inch platter of extraordinary crotch walnut from my uncle's farm in Missouri. I'll probably never give that one away.

### What are the largest and smallest pieces you have made?

Biggest so far is a 16-inch sycamore salad bowl. Smallest are tool handles and door stops.

### Have you entered any competitions, shows, or exhibits?

No juried shows. The 100 Bowls of Compassion charity auction this year was the first public display of anything I have turned. I might explore selling at small-time craft fairs in the future, but for me turning is really just a leisure pastime – and like most turners I make things to give to friends and family.

### What is your favorite wood to work with? Least favorite? Why?

I really like dogwood. It has a consistency like boxwood, which you rarely see these days. It's dense and straight-grained, nice pinkish tones, and its plentiful in this area. All my neighbors give me logs when they take a tree down. Least favorite wood so far is box elder. I'm not crazy about the color and I find it difficult to cut the end-grain cleanly. For the same reasons, I avoid open-grain woods like oak, ash, and elm.

### For someone considering woodturning as a hobby, what advice would you give?

Wade right in. Don't be tentative. Make mistakes. Remember that old adage, "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment." Don't turn when you are tired or in a hurry. Always wear eye protection. And, don't assume you can make a living at it.

### Is there anything you've never tried to turn?

Holiday ornaments, pens, and kitchen ladles. Oh, and baseball bats.



Maple bowl

## Meet The Turner (Continued) - Stan Wellborn

### What lathe do you use? Can you tell us your likes / dislikes about your lathe?

I have two lathes now. My old faithful for many years is an Oliver manufactured in Grand Rapids around 1960 – a terrific machine that I still use, and it’s virtually maintenance-free. This year I splurged on a Robust American Beauty – and I love it. I wanted a lathe that had bigger capacity, and the Robust has a 25-inch swing with a tilt-away tailstock and a sliding headstock. And, it operates at full torque down to very low speeds. The slowest speed on the Oliver is around 900-1,000 RPM, which for safety reasons limits what you can do, particularly with large, out-of-balance stock. The Robust is heavy and solid, and cleverly designed with turner ergonomics in mind. Brent English builds the Robust himself in the good old USA – and it literally has no deficiencies that I have found.

### Tell us about your workshop.

It’s a single-car garage on a dead-end alley, looking out on a playground. Lots of natural light. Easy to unload wood and chain-saw it 10 feet away from the lathes. My shop is too small, but what else is new? It’s also clear that I’m going to have to install a better dust-collection system.

### What are your favorite turning tools? Why?

It has been a pleasant surprise to see the innovations over the last 30 years that weren’t around much when I started turning – instant glues, new kinds of finishes, vacuum chucks, Abranet sandpaper, Stebcenter drives, carbide-tipped hollowing cutters, Wolverine sharpening jigs – and videos! The catalogs and trade shows are just amazing now, and there is so much on the web and a variety of magazines.

My favorite tool is a half-inch Jerry Glaser bowl gouge with a modified Ellsworth grind. I’d like to get more Glaser tools, but they don’t seem to be making them anymore. I also use a flip-down magnifier attached to a visor that I found in a fisherman’s fly-tying catalog. It’s great for close-in detail work. I have an Alan Lacer diamond hone that I use constantly. A one-inch thick foam floor mat is easy on the legs and back. And my old Rockwell band saw is great.

### Where are you from originally?

### Where do you currently live?

I grew up in small-town Kansas and have lived in Washington, DC, for the past 40 years.

### What else do you like to do aside from woodturning?

In the spring and fall, I officiate rowing races at regattas on rivers and reservoirs throughout the mid-Atlantic region as a licensed US Rowing referee.

### What is your occupation / past occupation?

For about 25 years, I was a reporter and editor, mostly with *U.S. News & World Report* magazine. I have worked in communications for nonprofit organizations since I left journalism. I also freelanced many articles for *Fine Woodworking* magazine during its startup years.



### Tell us something we don’t know about you?

During a reporting trip to Antarctica, I stood at the South Pole. And I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana.

### Is there anything else you would like to add?

I’m constantly impressed and grateful for the way woodturners share their expertise and techniques with others. And I’m amazed by the exceptional quality of work being produced by amateur and hobbyist turners.