

Anniversary Profiles Myron Curtis, Member #2082



What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

AAW is a good source of woodturning information. Two other things, the joy of turning and encouraging people's interest in turning, but more than anything else when it boiled down to it, when I finally realized, I like to teach. I really like to teach. It's a pleasure to see people learning.

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

I see criticism from Sue Barton Harris [his wife] in every one of the pieces. Sue is an artist in her own right. She taught art in the Norfolk Public Schools, elementary and high, and holds a bachelor's degree in art and a master's degree in human resource development and adult education. A good example, that plate that's over on the table. One day she said, "Would you turn me a plate for so-and-so," so I went out and turned a plate, brought it in and she looked at it and she said, "I'm keeping this, would you turn me another plate?" So I turned another one. That



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 Myron Curtis

A taste for woodworking came early to Myron Curtis, who has been turning since he was in the eighth grade. He went on to build his first lathe as a tenth grader, in 1937. Sparing you the math, Myron has been turning for over eighty years!

For the last few decades Myron has run an architectural turnings business, but had a twenty-seven year career as a vocational education teacher. He holds both a bachelor's and master's degrees in vocation education. Myron had additional career: for 21 years he was a Naval Aviation Machinists Mate and later a flight chief on the WV2 Super Constellation NC-121K.

apparently was the first piece that really qualifies for everything that passes her design muster.



Two of Sue's favorites. They are over forty years old.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

[Points to Sue first] ...well, Del Stubbs would be one. Aah, basically there's a little different answer to that question than you might expect. I haven't stopped learning. At Arrowmont School, I've taught there ten or eleven times, and about ten times I've been an assistant and about eight times I've been a student and all of that was learning and from day one it's been a continuous thing. My students have been some of my best teachers.



Myron with Sprouting Spindlers students, 2008

What was your happiest turning moment?

That plate has gotta be one of them; I was pleased with myself that I finally had a turning which met Sue's tough design requirements. Solving technical problems involved in the production of architectural turnings keeps me interested and excited with woodturning.



The plate that passed Sue's muster



In demand as a teacher, Myron also taught ElderHostel courses at Arrowmont for sixteen years, and has presented turning programs in fourteen states, including demonstrations at eight national AAW symposia. He was featured in the AAW-produced DVD "Myron Curtis: Architectural Woodturner and Teacher," and has been the subject of several AAW articles.

A founder of the Tidewater Turners, Myron is also committed to nurturing young turners through the Sprouting Spindlers program.

Myron and his wife, artist and teacher Sue Barton Harris, live in a house they designed and built themselves, nestled into twelve acres near Virginia Beach, Virginia. He will be celebrating his 96th birthday in November.



Myron's shop

You can read much more about Myron Curtis in [this article](#) by Steve Wilson, editor of the Tidewater Turners' newsletter.

Many thanks to the members of the Tidewater Turners and to Steve Wilson for their invaluable help in creating this profile.

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What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

Oh, the round nose scraper with a dropped nose, because anyone can make this tool and put it to use quickly with very little time or expense.

I have a couple of favorite woods: sapele and ambrosia maple, both of which are a pleasure to turn.

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

Using the *American Woodturner* as a guide to what is changing in the field of woodturning, shows a range from wood art to the broad field of utilitarian turning. The December issue of the journal had two good articles that deserve note: "Turning a Five-sided Box" by Ted Rasmussen and "Creatures, Connections, and Circular Cuts" by Michael McMillan. Many woodturners can turn the five-sided box, whereas the creatures article is interesting, but few turners have the skill to accomplish this level of work.

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

In all probability I'd be down at the Military Aviation Museum (in Virginia Beach) working with them.

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

Yes, I have all of them in a cabinet.

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

It was an honor to be selected as a featured demonstrator at the 2008 AAW Symposium. AAW has kept me abreast of woodturning trends, given me the opportunity to make many life-long friends, and share my love of woodturning with others.

What's your favorite project/piece?

...the plate.

Favorite piece turned by another artist?

I need to think about that... a chisel in the showcase, I love handmade tools ... it's a piece by Reuben Everett with a captured ring on the end of the handle. We also have some nice pieces by Del Stubbs and a small tulip wood bowl by Rude Osolnik.



Chisel with captured ring by Reuben Everett

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

My late friend Charles Alvis would say, "Take time to smell the roses." I say, "Don't shy away from repetitive / production turning, it will improve your skills immensely."

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