



Tom enjoying a show and tell event in 2008

Anniversary Profiles

Tom Gall, Member #1312

What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

After learning to turn through trial and error for several years, I saw an ad for a woodturners' conference to be held at Alfred University in upstate New York, sponsored in part by Cryder Creek Wood Shoppe. At the conference, a general meeting was held and several woodturners were on stage, with names unknown to me at the time (Ellsworth, Sharpless, Conover, LeCoff and some others.) They announced that a new organization was recently formed, the AAW, and they were looking for new members. Sign me up!!!

Sometime around 1989-90, two other turners and myself organized the New Jersey Woodturners. We met informally for a year or so, picking up a few more members every month. We became an AAW Chapter in January 1991, when Palmer Sharpless (AAW Chapter



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 Tom Gall

Tom Gall has been turning since 1982, when he purchased a no-name lathe, motor, and tools for \$50 at an estate sale. A founder and active member of the New Jersey Woodturners, he is also a member of one of AAW's oldest local chapters, the Bucks Woodturners. Tom enjoys reading (lurking!) on several woodturning forums, and considers himself a late-in-life computer convert.

A former high school music teacher-turned-construction guy, he went full-time on the art and craft show circuit from 1988 until he was forced to retire due to an accident in 2006. He lives in Hillsborough, New Jersey.

liaison) attended our meeting and made it official.

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

Actually, I had been doing some shows (selling boxes and a few simple turnings) and didn't have any pieces a

t home that hadn't been sold. However, after a decade or two I did get to see some early pieces gifted to family members...not too bad, but a little clunky looking!

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

Experience? Repetition? Early on I did a lot of semi-production items and learning to change cutting methods to improve the quality and reduce the time to make an item really improved my turning.

What was your happiest turning moment?

Not necessarily the happiest, but perhaps the most enlightening. Back in 1988 I saw Del Stubbs at the Philadelphia symposium. To make a point, he was turning with a hatchet. My take on this: the wood doesn't know what tool is cutting it...the edge meets the wood and cuts it! In theory, all I needed was one tool! Just think of all the money I could have saved!

What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

My 1/2" (5/8") bowl gouge (also 3/8" bowl gouge) because I probably use this tool for about 80-90% of my turnings. Wood? Burls and cocobolo - back when I was doing shows anything made of these woods would always sell first.



Works by Tom Gall, 2008

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

The sheer number of tools and chucks available, videos, books, magazines, etc., symposiums, and hands-on opportunities with master turners/teachers. These were hard, or impossible, to come by back in the early '80's.

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

Golfer??? I used to enjoy the challenge that golf provided...similar to being a new turner! Can this really be this difficult?... (my first golf outing with an experienced golfer teaching me the ropes took 7½ hours...a score of 148 with do-overs).

My first time at turning.. it took two days to successfully scrape my way through six spindles for a kitchen project, using my brother's \$99 AMT tube lathe. I thought there must be a better way...and there was...with a lot of practice!!!

I was actually decent at the golf game until I got involved with turning and doing shows. Time was at a premium. And now, my turning time and ambition is extremely limited due to physical problems.

Do you still have American Woodturner back issues?

Yes. Volume 1, No.1 (1986) through 2008 are in a filing cabinet. The newer issues are stacked on shelves. I have them all!

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

Hm. Now that I think about it, almost all my friends are woodturners! Being exposed to the fantastic work I see in the AAW journal and at chapter meetings keeps me inspired. Always looking to improve and try new things.

What's your favorite project/piece? (and send us a picture!)

I always like to say..."the one I'm working on now." So, no pictures.

Favorite piece turned by another artist?

Too many to mention.

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

Try to find other turners and not continue in obscurity. Although that was difficult to do in the early days, I did run into Palmer Sharpless at a show, we talked at some length and he invited me to attend a Bucks Woodturners meeting in 1988. It was great to see others with the same interest and to see their work

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