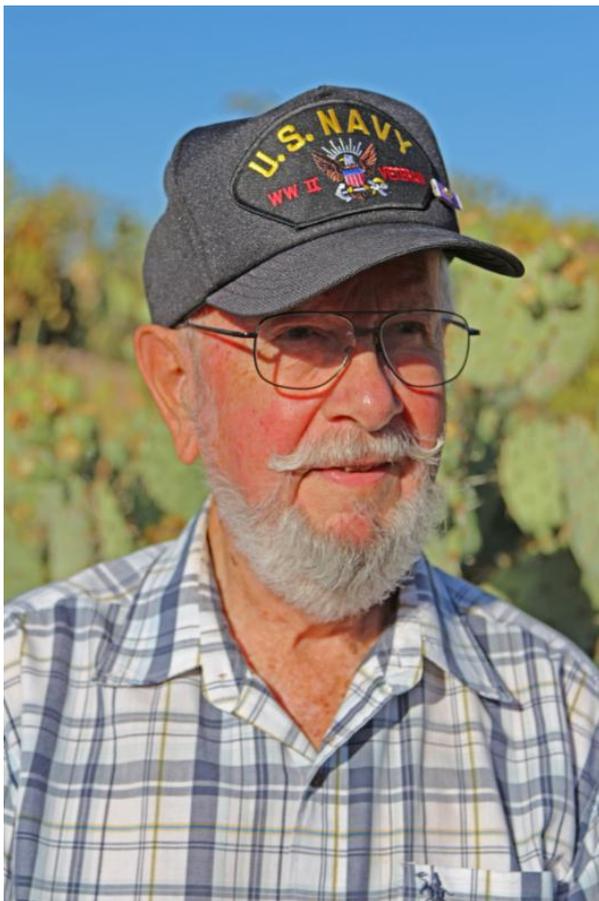


## Anniversary Profiles

### Wally Dickerman

#### Member #164



#### **What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?**

There were very few woodturners to learn from in my early days of turning. The few that I knew were flatworkers turning things like table legs. I wanted to turn bowls. AAW sounded like a wonderful opportunity to meet other turners, including some of the well-known turners. I was delighted when I heard of the new organization and I sent in my application immediately.



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 Wally Dickerman**

A self-taught turner, Wally Dickerman bought his first lathe in 1936 at the tender age of 15, after figuring out how to turn a bowl on the Oliver lathe in his high school shop.

A Washington State native, Wally served in the Navy before beginning a career in the wholesale sporting goods business, and raising a family. Throughout those busy years he was still turning, but it wasn't until he retired in 1986 that he was able to give the lathe his full attention. Shortly thereafter, Wally became a full-time woodturner and started teaching, demonstrating and regularly selling his work through galleries.

A well-respected teacher, Wally estimates that he has taught more than 500 students, mostly beginners. As a self-taught turner, he believes in the value of quality in-person turning instruction.

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

In 1986 I was selling through a couple of galleries but my work was very different than today's work. In the early 80's there were no commercially made hollowing tools available. I used a shop made boring bar which was very limiting. In 1985 Jerry Glaser came out with an articulated head boring bar which was an improvement, but still limiting. A couple of years later a much better tool made by Dennis Stewart became available. The armbrace tool. Nearly 30 years later I still use mine.

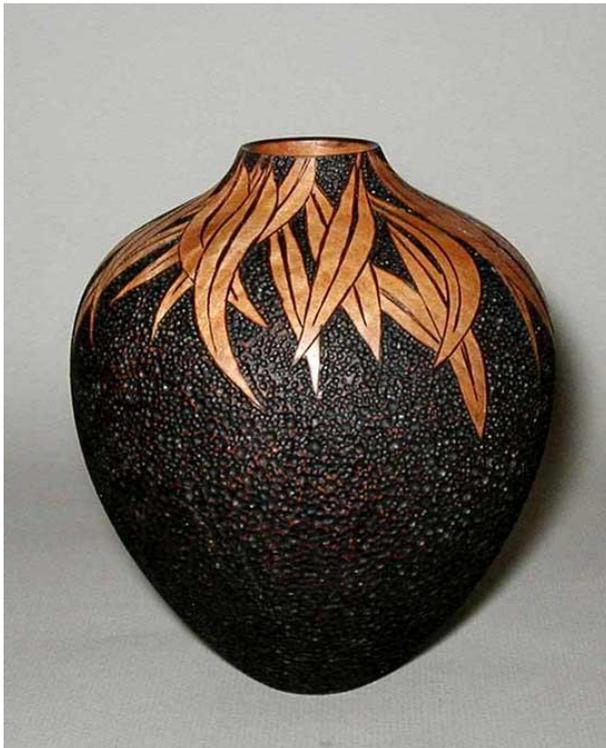
**What was your funniest turning moment?**

There haven't been many funny moments in turning. There is one that comes to mind. I used to save my rejects. Cracked pieces, broken rims, etc. When we had evening guests I would casually toss a couple of pieces in the fireplace.

Not knowing that these were rejects, this got some gasps from the guests. One friend quickly jumped up and rescued one. It ended up on display in their living room. One side was charred, the other side had a broken rim so my reject became an art piece.

**What was your happiest turning moment?**

I've had quite a few happy moments in woodturning. One of the best was my first experience with a gallery. This gallery had an annual month-long wood show. Furniture mostly. I was invited to participate with their first showing of woodturning. I submitted 28 pieces. Hollow forms, bowls, weed pots, candle holders and boxes. At the end of the 30 days I went in to see how I'd done. They'd sold all but three pieces! I was amazed and delighted. They invited me to show on a regular basis. In those days not many galleries carried woodturnings.



*Smoky Leaves*

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

He has demonstrated at both the national and local levels.

Wally has been married to his wife Jane for more than 70 years. They live in Portland, Oregon.

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At about the time AAW was formed, many turners were experimenting with art forms rather than conventional functional pieces. AAW became a large part of that with the American Woodturner and the annual symposiums. In 1986 there hadn't been much change in lathes for the past 100 years and more.

The best lathes available were really designed with the spindle turner in mind. Twelve-inch swing, Reeves drive for speed change and no reverse. Faceplates, collet chucks and screwchucks were used. Over the next few years things changed greatly. The 4-jaw chuck came on the market in 1989. Larger swings, electronic speed controls and much more became available on lathes. New tools were high speed steel and many were designed for the bowl and hollow form turners.



*One of Wally's pierced vessels*

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

AAW has affected my life a great deal. Over the years I've attended many symposiums, learning a great deal plus making many lasting friendships and seeing other parts of the country. I've belonged to several AAW affiliated clubs, and was a part of forming two of them. Presently I'm a member of [Cascade Woodturners](#) of Portland, Oregon. Woodturning has been a wonderful lifelong journey.



*Wally specializes in hollow forms*

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

If I could give some advice to my 30 years-younger self it would be to find a teacher or mentor whose work I admire and get some lessons. I'm completely self-taught and sadly have never had a lesson. Having taught woodturning for many years I know the value of hands-on learning.

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