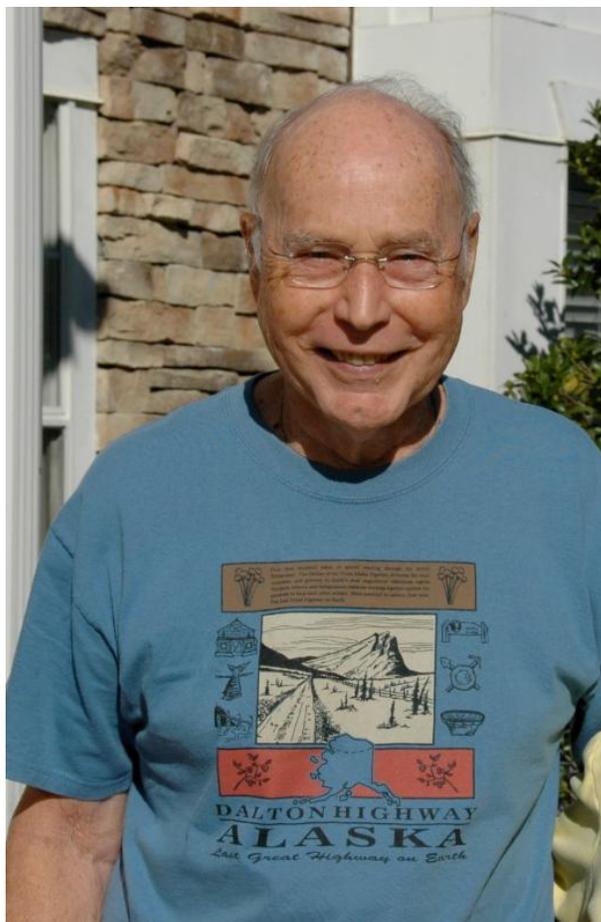


Anniversary Profiles Ray Ferguson Member #1265



Ray Ferguson in 2010

Editor's Note: This week's profile is a very special one, not just because Ray's life has been filled with artistic and personal achievements, but because his wife Lois, with the encouragement of their good friend Jeff Trotter, took up the task of compiling the information and photographs so that Ray's story could be part of this series.

Lois explains it best:

"Let me preface Ray's profile with a brief explanation. As some of you know, Ray suffers from Parkinson's and Alzheimers. The first subtle indications of memory loss were evident back in the early 2000s.



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 Ray Ferguson

Born in Pennsylvania, Ray attended Penn State where he received his MEd and BS. He served as an art illustrator for the United States Army, then as an art supervisor in several different Pennsylvania school districts. In 1962, he moved our family to Florida where he taught courses in pedagogy, woodworking, silversmithing, ceramics, and computer graphics --a course he developed-- at the University of Florida (UF). He also supervised student teachers in the field.

At the University of Florida he "inherited" several shops, including a wood shop where he learned woodturning on an old Wallace lathe. He retired from the university in 2003 as professor emeritus, and his creative sense of design and love of wood, always strong, really took off.

An active supporter of the arts and artists, he was president

about ten years ago he was forced to give up turning. He locked his shop and an important chapter in his life was closed. With lack of purpose and the joy of designing and turning gone, his memory took a real hit. As Ray's wife I will attempt to write his profile for him; please keep in mind I'm lacking much information and Ray is unable to provide any."

Choosing an insightful and loving wife was clearly one of Ray's greatest accomplishments. -Tib Shaw

What motivated Ray to join the fledgling AAW?

Ray felt it would be beneficial and of great interest to him personally to meet and talk with other turners from around the country and to see what other turners were doing.

Who or what was his greatest teacher?

He is completely self-taught. There were fewer turners back in the sixties when he first started to turn, so he learned on his own and soon created a class on woodturning at the University of Florida (UF) where he taught. It was only after he retired that he was able to turn full-time.



What is his favorite wood and why?

Ray's wood of choice was walnut for two reasons. He liked the color and the way it finished and people preferred to buy walnut salad bowls compared to other woods. When doing commissions he would sometimes be asked to work in other woods.



Laminated walnut bowl with shaped oak twigs, and maple veneer

How has the field changed since Ray started?

In discussing the evolution of turning (bowls and vessels) Ray often commented how over the years "the plain" had become decorated and embellished.

of the Center for Modern Art in Micanopy, Florida; and president of [Florida Craftsmen](#), later serving as a board member. He was very proud of receiving their Lifetime Achievement Award. For 15 years Ray was also the Southeast representative to the [American Craft Council](#); and he served as education show chairman for SIGGRAPH, the annual international computer graphics conference.

Ray shared his skills with others as a demonstrator, instructor and judge. He taught at John C. Campbell Folk School and Arrowmont School of Crafts. He judged The State Fair woodworking competition in Palmer, Alaska, the American Turners Exchange with Japan, and numerous shows in Florida.

For several years Ray was editor of the state art magazine, and wrote articles on heatless metal jewelry, crafts, and possibilities for art. In 2011, *American Woodturner* published his article on turning newsprint. He authored a book on laminated bowl construction, and three photographs of his work were published in the book [500 Wood Bowls](#) (Lark Books, 2004).



Ray's [article](#) on turning newsprint for the April 2011 issue of American Woodturner

During a fifty year period Ray's work appeared in over 200 shows, including international, national, regional and local competitions, garnering awards from "honorable

He felt that the variety "out there" was a good thing. In the beginning his turnings were functional in nature and although he branched out and tried new designs and materials, his first love remained functional/utilitarian work.

Does Ray still have his *American*

Woodturners? After living in a house for forty years we moved, and down-sizing was a necessity. His collection of *American Woodturner* was donated to Friends of the Library for sale.

If he couldn't have been a turner, what do you think he'd want to do instead?

If Ray could not have been a woodturner I believe he might have enjoyed dividing his time between teaching others how to turn on the lathe and fishing.



Ray teaching at Arrowmont, here discussing some of the finer points of turning with Jeff Trotter

What were Ray's favorite pieces?

Ray went through a period where he incorporated other materials along with wood. He used pewter, aluminum, copper, Plexiglas, newsprint and veneers. I think his first newsprint turning would be one of his favorite pieces, not because of design, but because of the challenge of learning something new. (When asked, most people thought it was clay.)

In the final analysis, I believe it would all come back to some of his earlier salad serving sets - bowls with hand wrought pewter servers, though he really liked some of his vessels also.



Two of Ray's approaches to salad bowls and servers. Both are walnut, and meant for use. The bowl below is solid - it doesn't lift up from the square base

mention" to "best of show". He did everything from street shows to gallery shows and invitationals. We both enjoyed doing street shows and interacting with show visitors.

Ray received commissions to create religious pieces across Florida and across denominations: Candlesticks for Holy Trinity Episcopal Church of Gainesville; Benches for the First Christian Science Church of Gainesville; a reader's table for a Tampa synagogue; and offering plates for Grace Presbyterian Church of Gainesville, among others.



Ray made this baptismal font for the Presbyterian Church of McIntosh, Florida. Photo by John Peters

His work is in the permanent collections at the University of Florida, the University of Utah, The Arrowmont School of Crafts and many private collections.

However, there was another side to Ray's life. He was involved in his church, and in youth sports and Boy Scout camp-outs and canoe trips when our son was young. He encouraged our daughter's artistic and craft endeavors.



Favorite piece turned by another artist?

A special piece that we both liked and had on display for years was a lidded bowl made by Bill Long of St. Augustine. It was made of cocobolo - a wood rich in color and one Ray had never worked with.

Below are pieces that show the range of Ray's design and woodworking talents:



Spalted oak and Plexiglas



One of seven dulcimers that Ray made; each was made from a different wood.

According to Lois, he taught himself how to play the dulcimer...sort of!

A really big part of our family life was RV traveling and it was a sad day when the last RV left the premises. Today I show Ray photograph albums in the hope of triggering some memory of an event, a trip, a friend or family member he doesn't see often enough to remember. We had several favorite places we enjoyed visiting, but the most special place of all was Alaska. There fellow wood turner and AAW member, [Jeff Trotter](#), would take him salmon fishing. These days Ray spends much of his time sitting in his recliner. He looks at some of his creations and comments he no longer has any idea how to make them. But that spark of recognition is still there allowing him to know his own work.

In summation let me say that my husband was a person gifted with a wonderful sense of design, great patience in teaching others and a work ethic that demanded perfection. They all served him well.

-Lois Ferguson

Small lidded walnut bowl. Lid has crosscut oak branches inlaid in epoxy



One of Ray's early pieces: a laminated walnut bowl; hand carved and burned.



Laminated spalted pecan with walnut top and bottom



small lidded walnut bowl with lid of pewter pieces

Images of artworks above: Chevront Studios

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