

Chapter Sages

What is a sage?

In his book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*, author Zalman Schachter-Shalomi defines a sage or elder as a person who:

- Constitutes wise, prudent leadership
- Offers their experiences and wisdom for the welfare of society
- Expresses their hope in the future by the contributions they make for the generations that come after them
- Gives generously with encouragement
- Mentors younger people who are drawn to their wisdom and models a life that finds validation, self-worth, and meaning from within.

Gordon McMullen Bozeman, MT

Nominated by Ken Emerson, Northern Rockies Woodworking Guild

Gordon McMullen is the Northern Rockies Woodworking Guild's most versatile turner—the guy most of us turn to when we have a problem with our lathes or a turning project. Gordon began turning seriously about 25 years ago, as he approached retirement from his long career as a plumber.

He began with kitchen-sized bowls, and did a lot of greenwood turning. As time went on, he grew more interested in really large bowls, and his small Delta lathe couldn't handle the big pieces he wanted to turn. So he designed and built himself a bowl-turning lathe that would handle really big stuff. It was such a good design that a lot of other people in the area liked it, too, and he built several more for people in this part of the country.

Gordon is especially inventive about designing tools for turning. Last month, he gave a demo to the group about making small tools from drill rod. He's an accomplished metal worker and a

Across North America, turners revere a well-seasoned member who is the linchpin of all chapter activities. Join us in a celebration of AAW chapter sages. We love these guys!



welder, so there's not much he can't do himself in tool-making.

Gordon is a real believer in demonstrations as well as hands-on learning. Two years ago as our group reactivated, he gave informal classes on Saturday mornings to anyone who was interested. Whenever he teaches some skill or technique, he never says to us "This is the 'correct' way to do such and such." What he does say is "There are lots of ways to do this. I do it this way; but try out different ways, until you find one that works for you." He's a great asset to the club, and we are lucky to have him here!

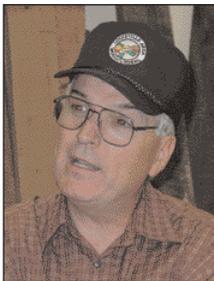
Marvin Ewing

Louisville, KY

Nominated by Buddy Riley, Louisville Area Woodturners

Marvin Ewing is one of the founding members of the Louisville Area Woodturners. He has served as president, vice-president, mentor, librarian, and all-around friend to any and all turners who wish to further skills. No one in the club has done as many demonstrations as he, or offered his shop and home to an outside demonstrator, allowing the club to have large meetings there.

Marvin will undertake any and all challenges in any new endeavor to try to master any



technique and relay his success or failure to all club members, allowing us the benefit to use his skills to our advantage. You need a big lathe? Go to Marvin's. Need to learn firsthand how to use a hollowing rig?

Come on by Marvin's shop Saturday morning. He enjoys the time to talk woodturning and to relay his expertise to anybody who wants to learn.

Marvin took me under his wing and taught me all that I was willing to learn. He offers advice and criticism in such a manner as

to never hurt your feelings, but you want to do your best as not to disappoint him.

Marvin has now retired from his job at Ford Motor Co., and he says he doesn't know how he had time to work. In addition to fishing with his wife, Marvin instructs at the local Woodcraft store and also tries to get all the things done around the house that he promised to make for his wife—but put off to turn with us. However, he still says, "Drop by and we will spin a piece of wood and make some shavings."

Marvin is someone that all clubs need.

Earl Bowers

Athens, AL

Nominated by Andy Woodard, Duck River Woodturners

Using a T-model engine and a flat-fabric belt, Earl Bowers built his first woodturning lathe in 1931. At the same time, this inventive 21-year-old also built a bandsaw using wooden-spoke T-model rims. He has been woodturning ever since.

Currently, Earl Bowers—known as Uncle Earl by everyone—is interested in segmented turned work and handmade inlay. Over the years he has built more than 50 poster beds. His greatest satisfaction was making circular crown mold on a dare. He proudly displays several ingenious novelty machines that he made over the years to settle his nerves while teaching 27 years

at a local community college.

He says he brags a bit about the fact that in all of his years teaching students, no one lost a finger. Friends estimate that Uncle Earl's good teaching skills probably saved at least a bushel basket of fingers over the decades.

He believes in drawing plans for his projects and taking his time making them. His nephews bring him to our monthly woodturning meetings, which mean a great deal to him. He is quick-witted and willingly and respectfully shares his knowledge. He relishes new ideas and uses our chapter library resources regularly.

Uncle Earl turns at two lathes.

One is over 100 years old and is capable of turning a seven-foot-long bedpost—the tool rest alone is heavier than most small-scale modern lathes. He built his other lathe, which has a custom-threaded spindle and handmade wooden pulley system.

Uncle Earl is currently recovering from some challenges to his health. He recently made the remark "They might keep me from driving, but they can't keep me out of my shop. I have to get back to work to get well again." He anticipates his 94th birthday in July.

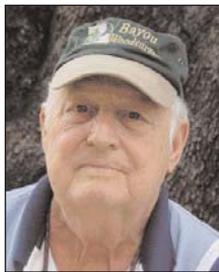
Godspeed to you, Uncle Earl!

Continued

O.B. Lacoste Lafayette, LA

Nominated by Eddie Castelin, Bayou Woodturners

O.B. Lacoste had only been turning about seven years when I met him, and he is by far one of the most proficient and prolific turners I've ever met. I remember him starting the demo of bottle stoppers with the statement "the only thing you can do wrong is not turn."



I knew I had encountered a true character when the demonstration started with a real Cajun story. But O.B. really stands out from the crowd because he's be the first one to step up and show something new, take the time to explain it to even the most novice turners, and then show us how to make it better. It

isn't enough for him to try a new technique; O.B. has to figure out how to do it well, make it simple, and then teach it to others. We can always count on him to lead the gallery portion of our meetings with a lengthy dissertation on the finer points of turning and some new technique he perfected.

O.B. also is an innovator. When testing a new version of an old

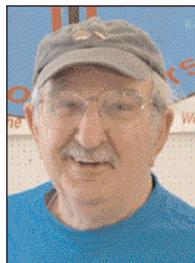
Jim Hilburger Colden, NY

Nominated by Ray Bissonette, Western New York Woodturners II

Twelve years ago, Jim Hilburger arrived at one of our meetings, curious, but unable to turn. Now, at age seventy-five, he is the spark plug of our club. In fact an award named for him is given annually to a member who stands out in contributing to the mission of the club.

What struck us immediately was his combination of energy, talent, and generosity. He knew, for example, how many of us

hoped in vain for some of the alluring but pricey turning tools gracing the pages of the catalogs. Soon, Jim began arriving at meetings with cartons of homemade versions—equally effective, but available at cost to any of us.



Fairly credible rumors suggest that members a little short of cash but full of motivation might pay little or nothing. It wasn't long

before you understood.

Jim shared what he had with others so they could do the same. What device or wisdom couldn't be brought to the meetings was dispensed in his shop outside of Buffalo to the

almost daily procession of pilgrims who came to the oracle with problems. They left with solutions and often a couple samples of his handiwork.

Russ Fairfield Post Falls, ID

Nominated by Charlie Benson, Spokane Lathe Artists

Russ Fairfield has been turning wood for 50-plus years and has never stopped teaching, helping, or mentoring. It makes no difference whether he is teaching high school students, novice club members or contemporaries; his preparation is always complete.



straight. He doesn't stop until the last person is satisfied or can't absorb any more. I have attended every session and will continue to attend—even when he starts over with the basics. His classes cover tools, sharpening, bowl-making, hollow forms, penturning, Christmas ornaments, and segmented turning. These classes also include glues, finishes, bandsaws, and woods.

Russ's knowledge, whether it is chemistry, metallurgy or any other subject related to turning. It is not just beginners that are inspired by Russ, as accomplished turners also enjoy his classes. His sly sense of humor adds to the enjoyment of learning.

Once each month, Russ opens his shop for our club and will stand and teach for six hours

There seems to be no end to

Each quarter Russ demonstrates for the local high school shop class and works with the students afterward. He also presents at symposiums and

lathe, he contacted electronic experts for help in revising the controller to work the way real woodturners work.

O.B.'s shop is always open for novice turners, and he even welcomes in a few seasoned turners for tune-ups.

And, of course, there's the one about Boudreaux, down at the funeral parlor, who....

The tools and products of his hobby crowd every inch of the barn in which Jim works his magic. But amid the clutter is the key to the man and his tireless drive to learn, to teach, to share.

A large sign reads: "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I hope that I would have not a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me.' "

clubs across the country.

Russ Fairfield is highly thought of in our club and has a large Internet following. Russ contributes to woodcentral.com (Russ's Corner), penturners@yahoo.com, and his personal site, woodturnerruss.com. Many Internet sites include reference to Russ's articles or his methods.

Yes, Russ Fairfield is our chapter's gold mine. Every club should be as lucky as the Spokane Lathe Artists.

Ron Browning

Lecanto, FL

Nominated by Randy Leach, Hands-On Woodturners Club

Ron Browning is the "do it all, get it done guy" for the Hands-On Woodturners Club. In addition to serving as our president, he also is our newsletter editor and webmaster.

Ron never misses an event in a our busy club. He keeps all of the club's equipment at his shop, and sets up at our functions. He then does most of the demonstration that goes on at our civic events.

Ron also holds sawdust sessions at his shop from 6 to 10 p.m. every Sunday night. Twelve to 18 members regularly attend these sessions. I have heard comments by the attendees that range from "This is just like going to Mr. Wizard's shop" to "I have attended classes on woodturning, but I learn more on Sunday nights from Ron." We bring any projects we are having a problem with, and Ron gets us going in the right direction. We also make and sharpen tools, build jigs, and turn on the lathe while receiving pointers from Ron. If nothing else is going on, he will demonstrate for us, always showing new tools or techniques he has picked up.

Ron, who has been turning for about 40 years, teaches woodturning at the local technical institute and demonstrates at various club meetings in the state. He does all of this while holding down a full-time job as a radiation protection specialist at the local nuclear power plant.

Ron comes wrapped in a big smile and willing to help.

Dr. Bob Bahr

Fort Wayne, IN

Nominated by Robert Smith, Chiselers and Turners of NE Indiana

Maestro and sage Dr. Bob Bahr not only is founder and CEO of our club, but he keeps our funds securely under his bed. He opens his house and full basement shop each Wednesday evening for members and friends to gather, learn new techniques, gossip, and discuss problems. We often wonder at the vast numbers of turning tools our sage has purchased, used slightly, then stored where only he can locate each one.

Our membership includes beginning, youthful turners, old, arthritic, and senile geezers, and a few pretty ladies. Doc sets the example of inviting anyone to his shop to learn turning techniques.

Doc Bahr is our most frequent demonstrator, most accomplished raconteur, and laughs the loudest when the joke is on him. Some members, without ever turning on a lathe, pay dues and attend all meetings just for the entertainment. For our "Show and Tell," he continues to match (often replicate) recent *American Woodturner* articles. The only complaint we have heard from Doc is that he can imitate what the great turners do, but he doesn't initiate anything new!

Doc Bahr organizes our club's Woodfest annual symposium. This year, Doc expanded the event to 12 demonstrations including marquetry, pyrography, guitar making, and turning a hat.

Continued

David Friedman Boynton Beach, FL

Nominated by Carl M. Schneider, Palm Beach County Woodturners

Dave has been involved in woodworking for 65 years. On his first visit to a woodworking tool and supply store in Cleveland in the late 1970s, he observed a woodturning demonstration by Stanley C. Stary. He was hooked on turning. It was Stan's attitude as a teacher that was most notable, and Dave has done much to pass Stan's enthusiasm on to others.



Dave and a few fellow woodturners drove to Akron for AAW chapter meetings and eventually started their own chapter in Cleveland. Some of them accepted Dave's invitation to attend a weekly gathering in his shop. Dave attended seminars to expand his own knowledge and demonstrated his craft at chapter meetings and in his weekly workshops.

Bob Hawks Tulsa, OK

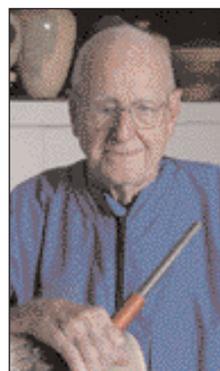
Nominated by Ron Fleming, Northeastern Oklahoma Woodturners Association

Whether flipping burgers for our annual picnic or organizing another woodturning show, Bob Hawks is deeply engrained in activities for the Northeastern Oklahoma Woodturners Association. But Bob's involvement goes far beyond helping organize a club in 1989 and holding several offices, including president.

Bob's fine craftsmanship is part of the story. Before Bob was asked in 1993 to donate a vessel for The

White House Collection of American Crafts, turned pieces didn't get much attention in the Oklahoma art communities.

Bob parlayed his White House recognition into local acceptance for woodturners. Fortunately Bob is respected and networks well among Tulsa decision makers. (Because Bob has been a commercial



photographer in Tulsa since 1948, he has worked with most corporations and galleries.)

In 19??, Bob helped organize the first juried exhibit of turned work at the respected Philbrook Museum of Art. Then to help us get prepared for the jurying process, Bob photographed all the members' entries. The

Bill Kelly Rancho Palos Verdes, CA

Nominated by Curtis Thompson, El Camino Woodturners Guild

After looking over your definition of a sage, I'm convinced that we have one of the critters in our guild. Bill Kelly immediately came to mind—no reflection necessary.

Bill is our current president. He's been turning for many years and is "long in tooth," as the saying goes. His willingness to contribute his time teaching woodturning and working with



the youth in our community is unquestionably one of his strongest attributes.

Bill is no slouch with the tools either. He fancied the work of Stuart Mortimer a few years back and now is the master of twisted turnings in the Southern California area, demonstrating and teaching this skill to many of the area guilds.

Bill has led teams of turners on

Even before moving to Florida seven years ago, Dave contacted the Palm Beach County Woodturners. Since then, Dave has been actively involved in every aspect of the chapter. He opens his home and shop to our board meetings, committee meetings and professional event workshops. He personally hosts visiting professional demonstrators, provides financial

contributions toward major chapter purchases, demonstrates aspects of his own techniques at our regular meetings, serves as a teacher at workshops, and encourages new members to participate in chapter activities. He built our library storage cabinet, built shelves and signs for our shows, and contributed substantially to the building of the chapter's antique treadle lathe.

This exhibit was great exposure and really elevated our turning. He's also organized our turner booths at local festivals, including the Tulsa State Fair and Tulsa Octoberfest, and the Blue Dome Festival.

Bob semi-retired from commercial photography in 1987—long before the advent of digital photography. Yet he's embraced digital cameras and has taught many members how to take jury-quality images of their

own turned work.

In addition to demonstrating photography at AAW symposiums and shooting photos for many AAW exhibit projects, Bob has demonstrated photography and turning techniques for chapters. He's also mentored turning in his own shop and organized hand-on turning sessions at the Forrest Heritage Center in Broken Bow.

We're all lucky that Bob took up turning when he retired.

three of our collaborative challenges for the AAW symposiums in the Glendale Woodturners Guild. Yes, I said Glendale—Bill belongs to several of the turning guilds in the Southern California area.

For the past three years, Bill has been the liaison for three local AAW chapters, getting them involved in the "Youth Top Sail Program" featured in the Spring

2004 issue of *American Woodturner*. He's either at sea with the kids or turning something for the boats, keeping the tall ships in good repair.

Bill is a highly respected turner and teacher of our youth and elders alike in the Southern California area. Turning is surviving and thriving because of members like Bill Kelly.

Dave Hardy

Sellersville, PA

Nominated by Dave Souza,
Keystone Woodturners

As a retired master machinist, master craftsman, and woodturning enthusiast, David Hardy has been promoting woodturning and lathe creations for more than 25 years. A consummate teacher, David is quick to try a new approach, generously sharing his results and encouraging others to give it a try.

As a teacher and mentor, David has directly affected hundreds of lathe artists throughout the Mid-Atlantic states with his teaching, demonstrating, and open "Hardy Nights." Once a month, for more than 20 years, David has opened his shop doors to all interested in woodturning. His motto is "Come, learn, and pass it on."

These Hardy Nights have given birth to dozens of demonstrators, woodturning teachers, and individuals who today pursue the craft as a profession. The early attendees of these open turning nights have gone on to become today's woodturning leaders and sages in clubs including Bucks, Keystone, and Lehigh Valley chapters.

Yet, even the most accomplished woodturners still turn to David with a difficult project, or a challenging question at the lathe. David is truly a "sage's sage." The Hardy approach of teaching, mentoring, and promoting woodturning is at the very core of the AAW.

Thank you, David.