

Anniversary Profiles Bill Folger, Member #152



What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

In 1980 I attended a workshop by David Ellsworth at Anderson Ranch. The woodturning facility was just starting up and had only a few lathes, so I strapped my lathe on the ski rack of my car and drove over the pass to Snowmass, Colorado.

David is a great teacher and was very encouraging. We kept in touch and when we met at the 1986 Woodworking West Symposium in Provo, he told me about starting up the AAW, so I joined.

When you look at your pieces from 1986, what do you see? By 1986 I had been turning for eight years. While my skill level had improved, there was still lots to learn.

Some of my designs were acceptable. I had turnings chosen for the 4th national *Lathe-Turned Objects* exhibition at the Highlight Gallery in Mendocino, California; was in *Fine Woodworking Design Book 4*; and was selected for the first *Vessels and Forms* exhibition in Houston, Texas in 1987.

Over the years I have experimented with many different aspects of woodturning. My work is more refined now, and I try to pay more attention to details.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?



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 Bill Folger

A fourth-generation woodworker, Bill Folger was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a city with deep woodworking roots of its own. After graduating from college with a bachelor's in anthropology with a minor in art, Bill served as a medic in the Army.

In 1970, Bill moved to Crested Butte, Colorado, population 372. A former coal-mining town in the Rockies, Crested Butte was a small and funky community with an idiosyncratic and egalitarian spirit, and Bill was active in the community, helping to organize the first Crested Butte Arts Festival and taking part in the collaborative creation of the Town Park Totem Pole, events that hold an affectionate place of note in the development of the town's identity.

David Ellsworth, Dale Nish and Richard Raffan. Attending symposiums and watching demonstrations has been a great way to learn.

What was your funniest turning moment?

When a chef wanted me to turn some vegetables for a buffet arrangement. Carrots turn okay, but I don't recommend cucumbers!

What was your happiest turning moment?

When one of my turnings was selected as a gift for President Jimmy Carter.

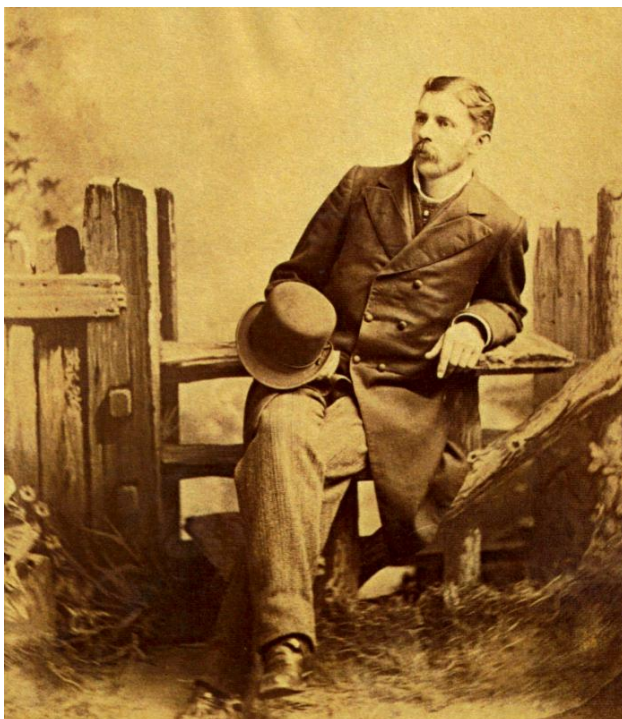
What is your favorite tool/wood and why?

I enjoy using tools that my great-grandfather made in the 1880's. Three sizes of bead forming tools, a 3/64 narrow parting tool, and different sizes and shapes of scrapers. After 130 years they still work fine for small detail work.

The most interesting, a wall thickness gauge very similar in design to ones sold today, I donated to the AAW, along with some other tools, so people could enjoy them.



Ginly & Folger was founded in 1879 in Grand Rapids, Michigan - a city whose name is almost synonymous with furniture-making. These are a few of the tools that are on display in the AAW office and the Gallery of Wood Art. Bill's great-grandfather, Gilbert H. Folger, is shown below



Bill adding the final touches to his buffalo head in 1973.

Read the full article [here](#).

As well as woodworking, Bill worked winters as a ski patrolman with Crested Butte Mountain Rescue. He also worked for the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, an ecosystems-focused center for scientific research and education.

Bill has specialized in turning since 1979, was a member of the Paragon Gallery in Crested Butte, and has demonstrated at the Woodworking West Woodturning Symposium at Brigham Young University and Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado.

In 1996, Bill and his wife Kerry moved to the North Fork Valley of the Gunnison River where they live on a small farm located on Powell Mesa near Hotchkiss, Colorado.



The town and mountain of [Crested Butte](#), where Bill was an active community member and a ski patroller with the Crested Butte Mountain Rescue

-Tib Shaw

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

Advances in technology, creativity in designs, more opportunities for beginning turners to learn, many more people interested in turning.



#1413, 2008. Pierced natural top spruce, 11" x 7"

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

A landscape artist using watercolors or acrylics.



Top: a sketch from the back of the Ginly & Folger card shown above: an ancestor's artistic eye

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

All the issues are on book shelves in our library.

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

Yes. The AAW has been and continues to be a great network to keep up with new ideas, techniques, see what other turners are working on, make new friends and learn about upcoming events and shows. For example, in 2010 my wife and I were on the island of Kaua'i, Hawai'i and I looked up [Les Ventura](#), a fellow member of AAW. He was a member of the Hawai'i Art Council and the [Kaua'i Woodturners](#).

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We spent most of a day at his home and workshop. He had a gallery in his home with over 2,000 turnings. He gave me some Norfolk island pine and when I returned home, I sent him some aspen and box elder burl.



#316, 2007. Translucent ponderosa pine, 11" x 8"

What's your favorite project/piece? Usually what I am turning at the present time. A fun project was working on a piece for the *Spirit of the Southwest* show. I made four prototypes before I came up with the final design.

WILLIAM FOLGER
HOTCHKISS, COLORADO



Puebloan people have been making pottery in the Southwest for over 1,600 years. Tularosa pottery dates back to 1100. Similar designs are found on pottery made at Acoma. This piece was also influenced by Zuni designs of the early 1800s.

**TULAROSA BLACK
ON BROWN**
Wild cherry, turned and carved,
with pyrographic and rotary tool texturing
4" x 6.75"

13



Tularosa Black on Brown, 2008. Bill created this piece for the AAW juried exhibition [Spirit of the Southwest](#)



(left) #1391: 2010. Aspen, 14" x 6.5". Vase with design adaptation from the Middle Woodland period (200 BCE to 500 CE) (right) #1367, 2012. Tinted boxelder burl, 12" x 6"

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