

Member Profiles Carmen De La Paz Member # 38959



Carmen with her new logo wear!

Carmen De La Paz combines energy and enthusiasm with an abundance of talent to take woodturning to Puerto Rico through AAW's Turners Without Borders program. Carmen has been a TWB instructor for three years and this year, she will take this woodturning project to South Africa. Learn more about Carmen, then learn more about the [AAW Turners Without Borders](#).

Name: Carmen De La Paz
Home Town: North Hollywood, CA
Chapter Affiliation: El Camino Woodturners
Number of Years Turning: 7

When you look at your turnings, what

Have you renewed your AAW membership?

Why? It's because at year end the AAW draws a member name to receive a **Powermatic 3520B** lathe. That winner names a local chapter to receive either a **JET 1642** or **five JET mini-lathes**, donated by Powermatic/JET. AAW members will be entered for a chance to win, but to qualify for the drawing your dues must be current. **Anyone whose membership is expired or lapsed will miss this special opportunity.**



AAW's Newest Member Benefits

do you see? When I look at my woodturning work (all my work, really) I see the need for improvement, or rather, I am never satisfied. This line, that curve, I always see how I can improve it. However, that is why I love woodturning and why I am so hooked-the pursuit of the challenge and the fact that I know I will never stop growing. LOVE that!

Who, or what, was your greatest teacher/influence? Dixie Biggs has been a HUGE influence in my work. When I first became aware of the world of woodturning, I was immediately drawn to Dixie's work. Then, I met her at a symposium and loved the person! I took a class with Dixie and at the end of that week, she asked me to be her assistant instructor. I was over the moon! And today, I am thrilled to call her friend and mentor.

What was your happiest turning moment?

My happiest turning moment was actually a turning day in Puerto Rico during one of my trips to teach woodturning as part of my work on the committee, Turners Without Borders. We had six lathes and no one knew how to sharpen a chisel, much less how to turn wood. I was expecting twelve students. So many showed up, I stopped counting. I promised not to leave until everyone got a turn. At the end of the day, it was actually night, the director of the Artisan Center came up to me and showed me the list of names of all I had introduced the lathe to "hands-on" and with only four different chisels. I could barely walk, was exhausted, lost my voice. I looked at the paper and the 65 names. I literally sat there and cried. Maybe I was tired, however I knew I gave my best gift to 65 people in Puerto Rico-woodturning. That number has now grown to over 225, who I have personally taught, and hundreds more with the lathes donated by the AAW and Turners Without Borders.

What is your favorite wood/tool and why?

My favorite wood depends on what I am going to do.

For hollow forms and clean simple lines, I love black acacia and carob wood. They both are very distinct in color contrast

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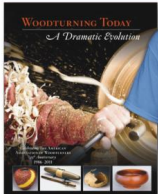
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between sap wood and heart wood. When you get into the wood, there is always a deeper mystery, usually resulting in drama and beauty only Mother Nature can make.

For carving or embellishments, my favorite is a very even and tight-grained cherry or maple. For pieces I plan to color and/or embellish with pyrography, I prefer cherry, maple, or ash. At the end of the day, I let the wood lead. It tells me what I should be doing based on a process of elimination; this one works for this, and that one works for something else.

Where do you see the field of woodturning going? The whole reason I have been so dedicated to the Turners Without Borders efforts is the fact that I am very afraid the world of woodturning will be a very lonely place in 25-30 years, and I plan to still be turning then. I do a lot of creative things; woodturning is my deepest love. So, as my greatest creative passion, I feel a responsibility to teach and educate as many as I can about woodturning. My whole mission in Puerto Rico these past three years and going forward in South Africa, is to not let woodturning die out!

I finally got to turn wood on one of my TV shows. I have tried to get it into other shows, but so many networks and production companies didn't want to go down that road. Thanks to the Oprah Winfrey Network, I incorporated woodturning in a makeover design and taped the segment in both Spanish and English. It was the highlight in my last season of production and one I hope to repeat in this next season. The more people see woodturning, the more they will be intrigued.

In addition to woodturning, what other crafts/hobbies have you enjoyed?

Creating with my hands is both my profession and my hobby. I am a designer of interiors and exteriors. As a carpenter, I do flat work and finish carpentry (furniture and home construction). I am a decorative painter, a welder and I have worked extensively with glass and tile. I literally turned my hobbies into my fulltime job and incorporate my work into my designs. Never EVER did I think I'd be doing this on TV. That is a bonus. When the cameras go

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away, I will still be designing and making- and very happily!

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

I can honestly say, via my work, heading up the Puerto Rico Woodturning Project on the committee of Turners Without Borders, the AAW has opened the door to some of the most satisfying and rewarding moments in my life. I have been championing this effort for four years now. Most have no idea the amount of work done to pull it all off. YES, I would do it all again in a heartbeat, knowing it has allowed me to share my deepest passion with the island and the people I come from. Yes, they know me from TV; woodturning in Puerto Rico opened the door to my living room and allowed me to share deeply with people who want knowledge, who are incredibly talented and who show gratitude with love and appreciation. Thank you, AAW, for bringing me closer to my culture.

What is your favorite project or piece?
You have to ask? Turners Without Borders in Puerto Rico!

How has your local chapter helped you?

I credit the El Camino Woodturners chapter for giving me solid technical skills and chisel control. The chapter is fortunate enough to be associated with El Camino College and partners with the wood and construction department to teach woodturning every Saturday to club members and to the students on campus. For two years, every Saturday the group tackles a new project, focusing on technique and tool control. That time spent was invaluable. It is one thing to be creative and make; it is a whole other game to be proficient and solid with your skills. It will only enhance your work. The more honed your technical skills, the further you can take your work. We are only as good as our current skill set but, that doesn't mean we can't get better-today, tomorrow and tomorrow.

Last quick comment: Thank you AAW, thank you Turners Without Borders, thank you to every woodturner out there who has

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shared a sliver of knowledge or a lifetime of experience. I am forever grateful. Woodturning will not die on my watch!



Carmen De La Paz demonstrating for the AAW Puerto Rico Chapter



We hope you have enjoyed the Anniversary Profile

stories we've shared with you this year. They were a great way to help us commemorate the AAW's 30th year. Inspired by positive feedback on this series, we've decided to continue sharing member stories, but with an expanded scope to include those who joined the AAW later and have had (or are having) a significant impact on our organization's success. We hope you enjoy these Member Profiles!

Click [here](#) to read this and other profiles online.

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