

Nutmeg Woodturners Marks 25th Anniversary

From a spirit of equality

In 1989, I was shy and reserved—definitely not naturally inclined to do something like start up and run a woodturning club. But I decided to do it anyway, and that choice, it turns out, had a profound impact on my life.

From a young age, I rejected the idea of a money-chasing career. My thinking was more closely aligned with the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s, which focused on personal fulfillment, creativity, and happiness. I felt strongly that all

important to create a group where all people who had an interest in woodturning could meet and share with other turners. And all members would be considered equally important—no VIPs or higher-ups. Our shared interest in turning would be the great leveling force, making everybody equal.

The birth of a chapter

The Brookfield Craft Center (BCC), of Brookfield, Connecticut, seemed a likely place to host club meetings, so I approached Dee Wagner, who

I didn't do this alone. Along with Dee, there were two others who helped start the Nutmeg group—Dennis and Iona Elliott, a couple I met at an exhibit opening. Dennis exemplified my beliefs about equality, no matter our position in life. He was an avid, passionate woodturner like me, who also happened to be the original drummer for the rock band, Foreigner. He played with the band from 1976 to 1993 and was famous and worldly in his own right. But he was also just a woodturner who wanted to learn and share.

Another person who was key to all of this was my wife, Patti, who understood what was important to me and was always supportive. She still comes to Nutmeg meetings with me.

Forming the Nutmeg chapter changed my life. I met many wonderful people whom I never would have met otherwise. I am proud and grateful the club is still going strong today, and it has been wonderful to see others step up and lead the group over the years. Of course, a healthy membership is always evolving, and I like to think that what we started twenty-five years ago is still benefitting people today. ■

—Andy Barnum

“ Our shared interest in turning would be the great leveling force, making everybody equal.”

people should treat each other with respect, regardless of anyone's position in life. I also liked the tenets of the AAW, which focused on the open and free sharing of information in a way that didn't put anyone “above” another. I was also naturally drawn to making things by hand and eventually found woodturning.

All of these factors came together when forming the Nutmeg Woodturners League. It seemed

was BCC's registrar at the time, with the idea. Dee represented everything good about BCC: she was caring, giving, and always positive. Her like-mindedness and approachable manner made it possible for me to pitch the idea. In fact, it would be hard for me to overemphasize just how much her presence at BCC contributed to the successful arrangement between BCC and what would become the Nutmeg Woodturners.



A partial showing of the Nutmeg Woodturners, 2014. From left: Jed Walker, Jim Degen, Jim McNamara, Jay Hockenberry, Steve Robertson, Tony Bedini, Ken Rist, John Caraszi, Martin Gerndt, David Heim, Don Metz, Sergio Villaschi, Allan Brown, Buster Shaw, and Allen Nemetz.

Photo: Michele Pangle



Members of the Nutmeg Woodturners League chat with Albert LeCoff during a 2001 fieldtrip to the Wood Turning Center (now called The Center for Art in Wood), Philadelphia. From left: Albert LeCoff, Jim Degen, Ernie Krubsack, John Levin, and Jay Hockenberry.

Photo courtesy of Jim Degen