Timeless Turnings

TMBaker. Woodturner

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Welcome to the first newsletter in my next phase of life!

My intention for the newsletter is to provide some entertainment, education, and — most of all — a glimpse into the whys and wherefores of my creative woodturning journey. Join me…

Inside…

Turning Back in Time

I began as a child… [too far back?] But seriously, I was born in Detroit, the third of three boys. I followed my brothers around like a little puppy dog, which is probably why they were so prone to treating me with derision and disdain — in the most loving way possible, of course. It never deterred me from wanting to do the things they did. They became altar boys as soon as they could, which was the fourth grade; I was so determined to be an altar boy, too that I somehow memorized all the Latin and became the youngest altar boy in our parish when I was in the second grade. They started playing on the school's tackle football team as soon as they could in the fifth grade. I was such a persistent presence (and likely a nuisance), that the coach put me into a uniform and let me play in a game in the third grade. My brothers could hardly get a break away from me, until they went to high school.

My brothers were both creative, artful guys. My oldest brother had a flair for drawing, which he continued to develop throughout his life. My middle brother was a natural for the dramatic arts, and a fine actor he was, whether on stage or on the air. My big thing was football, but my creative drive was influenced by my brothers in those early days.

An Open Invitation…

Should you, or someone you know, wish to contribute to the Timeless Turnings newsletter, I encourage you to submit your article and/or captioned photos to me via email at: timeless.tom68@gmail.com. Articles should be rather brief — 200-250 words — and preferably connected in some manner to woodturning, artistic pursuits, or creatively inspiring adventures in nature. I would love to share your experiences with my like-minded readers!

Spalted White Birch Vessel In Steel Spiral Stand

Foraging Adventures

If there is one thing that my wife, Kathy, and I love to do, it's to be in the woods! In our younger years, it meant following deer and other animal trails through often dense forest, seeking out wildflowers, especially those we had not previously seen, lichen and mosses, fungi of all manner, and remnants of trees waiting to enjoy a second life. Now we mostly drive through the woods on two-track roads seeking the same, but without the often-spectacular results of our younger days.

Still, we love to forage! We collect just about anything you can think of in the woods; in meadows or prairies; on beaches and along rivers; and in quarries, roadcuts, and other geological features. Yes, we LOVE to forage!

We lived along Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (no, it's not Canada!), for about 40 years. We spent a great deal of our time among the dense Boreal forests, the magnificently diverse Beech-Maple forests, and towering virgin Hemlock stands, which are definitely my spiritual 'cathedral.' There were many old logging roads to explore, with a new road to discover around every curve.

Foraging almost always results in collecting "runga," which is a colloquial Finnish term for a 'chunk of wood,' and a nickname bestowed upon me by a Finnish friend because I *always* had blocks of wood in my truck, destined for my lathe! Of course, those blocks were always collected in the woods, from either windfalls that I cut up (chainsaw always at the ready!), or leftovers from logging operations. By the way, I never cut a standing tree, alive or dead — even dead standing trees have an important role in the forest ecosystem, from providing shelter to animals to feeding the forest floor for the next generation of forest succession. By foraging, I am providing a second life to timber (and other materials) that can be functional as well as aesthetic, bringing rustic elegance to our lives, whether at home or in the office.

Wood Words

I've always liked the word, "timber." Although it can also have the same connotation as "Fore!" does on a golf course — that is, when yelled in the woods, it means something may hit you in the head — it also conjures a feeling of strength and importance when used as a synonym for "wood." In relation to lathe work, it is often used as a rather reverent term for the wood we use to produce hand-turned wood art. Much like the elevation of common wood products to an artform, elevating wood to TIMBER creates a distinct aesthetic.

"Man Bites Bowl!" Yes, that's my actual bite mark on a Blue Pine Natural Edge Vessel.

Thanks for joining me — see you next month!