

DAVE AND KAREN LONG

2021 AAW Honorary Lifetime Members

Kurt Hertzog *Photos by Andi Wolfe, except where noted.*

The AAW Board of Directors, at its discretion, confers honorary lifetime membership to persons who, in its judgement, have made extraordinary contributions to the American Association of Woodturners and the advancement of woodturning. This year, the honor goes to Dave and Karen Long, in recognition of their ongoing commitment and exceptional service to the AAW, and for their support of the wood art field by way of involvement in related professional organizations.



Dave and Karen Long with their favorite piece—*Put Me in Coach*, a spin top by Jacques Vesery and Bonnie Klein.

Dave and Karen Long are unique among those who have received the AAW's Honorary Lifetime Member award. For the most part, past recipients are fairly well recognized as woodturners or artists. Neither Karen nor Dave is a woodturner, but their supportive involvement over the past twenty years at AAW Symposia, with the Professional Outreach Program (POP), and with outside collector groups is unmistakable.

The Longs have been married forty-nine years and have spent their lives together in Ohio. When Karen retired in 2009, after forty-two years of service at Wright-Patterson AFB, she received the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, the highest award the Air Force grants to civilian employees. Dave served in the Air Force for six years, with two tours in Vietnam, before pursuing a career as a sportswriter, mostly for the *Dayton Daily News*.

From sports to craft

In addition to sports writing, Dave began a freelance writing business in the early 1970s. He found he could make extra money by writing for the magazine section of the Sunday paper. During that time, the American craft movement was evolving toward more decorative items from its utilitarian origins. Ohio was the birthplace of the studio glass movement and had a great history in ceramics with the Rookwood and Weller pottery lines. So there were plenty of artists in glass and pottery for Dave to write about. Yellow Springs, a small village outside of Dayton, was a haven for artists of all sorts, including weavers/fabric artists, jewelers, metal smiths, and furniture makers. All were great subjects for features in the Sunday paper. Dave also began writing for regional monthly lifestyle magazines, niche publications, and national craft-related publications such as *American Style*

and *American Craft*. Dave estimates that over his forty-plus years of craft writing, he's had more than 200 stories in fifty different publications covering the decorative arts.

Enter woodturning

Dave was introduced to the Shopsmith line of multi-use woodworking machines in the mid-1980s. The Shopsmith line had been revived in the 1970s by a Dayton businessman, and, after sixty-five years, is still active and located in Dayton. Dave's friend, a retired coach/industrial arts teacher who became a Shopsmith salesman, invited him to the Shopsmith facility to try out their machines. Dave opted for the machine's lathe setup and created a platter and, not surprisingly for a sportswriter, a baseball bat. He will tell you the platter was just "adequate" and that he discovered he was mechanically challenged. Karen, knowing this, made short order of his discussion about



(Top left) Over the span of fifteen years, the Longs' 24' x 12' (7.3m x 3.7m) living room/formal dining room was gradually converted into gallery space. They acquired display cabinets from a furniture store and Hallmark Card shop that were going out of business.

(Lower left) Seeking decorative art for an atrium in their Southwestern-style home in Beavercreek, Ohio, started Dave and Karen Long on a continuing adventure to find wood art—and led to significant involvement with the AAW. Their collection currently comprises 350 pieces by 161 artists from nine countries.

(Lower right) An interesting aspect of the Longs' collection is theme-based groupings, such as these Asian-inspired pieces. Works here include works by Glenn Kreug, Keith Holt, Betty Scarpino, and Stephen Hatcher.



buying a Shopsmith. Per Karen, “We weren’t giving up garage or basement space for a machine Dave would hardly use and couldn’t fix if it broke down.” That was the end of Dave’s woodturning career, although he did like the satisfaction of turning something from a piece of firewood.

Even with Dave working seven days a week as a sportswriter, he and Karen managed to attend regional craft fairs in the '70s and '80s. Initially, it was to find subjects to write about, but then they began purchasing items with which to decorate their home. While other crafts offered a good deal of artistic expression

in addition to a functional purpose, wood items found at craft fairs back then were mostly utilitarian. Interesting decorative bowls made occasional appearances, but there was little else.

Buying a copy of *Fine Woodworking* in hopes of finding freelance writing opportunities, Dave discovered a story about Dale Nish. Nish was writing about artistic work from the lathe—and not just the industrial kind of work the Longs knew of. Dave started to write stories about wood, mostly furniture makers and carvers, for the *Dayton Daily News* Sunday magazine in the early '80s, just about the time the Dayton Carvers Guild began its

annual *Artistry in Wood Show*. One year, Dave wrote a story about a Kentucky woodturner named Rude Osolnik, who was demonstrating wood bowls ranging from utilitarian to artistic. Rude was the first real woodturner Dave ever met.

Collecting

In 1986, during a visit to Prescott, Arizona, the Longs went to see Red Rocks in Sedona. In a gallery there, they saw wood bowls like the ones Rude Osolnik had made, but also some that were quite different. Some were big and shiny, made by Ed and Philip Moulthrop; others had Southwestern patterns, made by ▶

Ray Allen. Living in Ohio but owning a Southwestern-style home, the Longs recognized that typical Midwest decor didn't fit too well, but Ray Allen's work certainly would. They bought two of Ray Allen's pieces, and this purchase started a collection of wood art that has grown to about 350 pieces today, displayed all over the Longs' house.

Dave and Karen sought to acquire pieces that were more artistic than the common "round and brown" lathe-turned items of the time. They inquired with local glass artists and ceramists to find art made in wood. Through those inquiries, the Longs learned of the American Craft Council (ACC) show in Baltimore, the Martha Connell Gallery in Atlanta, del Mano in Los Angeles, Stones Gallery in San Francisco, and others. Dave wrote to the galleries, asking for images of work from different artists and began acquiring pieces.

The first major piece the Longs acquired was a large, segmented work by



Symposium fun. Karen (center) clowning around with the other Instant Gallery volunteers. Her and Dave's service and commitment spanning many years are deeply appreciated.



Over the years, Dave and Karen have served as exhibition judges. At the American Craft Expo, from left: Al Miotke, Karen Long, Mike Shuler, and Dave Long (wearing an "I just collect stuff" shirt and Chris Ramsey hat of madrone).

Contributed photo

Malcolm Tibbetts. With sufficient time off from work to attend the ACC show in Baltimore, the Longs soon added pieces by John Jordan, James Barnes, and Giles Gilson. Over the next dozen years, they bought thirty-five more pieces, including work by Ron Kent and Mike Shuler.

John Jordan once asked the Longs what kind of work they collected. Unsure what to say, they aptly replied, "Different." They now own work from 161 artists from eleven countries. There are no more than five pieces from any single artist. According to Dave, "Our idea of building a collection is to show what can be done with wood. A lot of pieces in our collection have little or no turning. There are very few pieces which are purely a platter or bowl form." In their ample home, the Longs also have plenty of room to display the glass, ceramics, and fiber art they have acquired over the years.

The AAW

The Longs became aware of the AAW while attending shows during the 1990s. Dave's first AAW Symposium was in Akron, Ohio, in 1998, where he acquired pieces by Clay Foster and Al Stirt.

In 2003, Dave's job at the paper evolved from sportswriter to assistant sports editor. Gone was the need to work most nights and weekends, and the change in lifestyle allowed for more time to get serious about collecting turned artwork. The first AAW Symposium Dave and Karen attended together was the Pasadena event in 2003. In 2004, Dave attended the AAW Symposium in Orlando and the Collectors of Wood Art (CWA) weekend in Santa Fe. That particular CWA event featured more than 100 wood artists represented by thirty galleries. It was arguably the best show ever held, and Dave bought pieces by Binh Pho, Steve Sinner, David Nittmann, Bud Latven, and Kerry Vesper.

In 2005, Dave became a member of the Cincinnati-based Ohio Valley



OUR IDEA OF BUILDING A COLLECTION IS TO SHOW WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH WOOD.

— DAVE LONG

Woodturners Guild (OVWG), an AAW chapter. Now with weekends open, Dave could attend the club's monthly Saturday meetings. He credits the club, along with its monthly guest demonstrators, with teaching him turning and how to distinguish good from poor work. Dave still attends eight or nine meetings each year and sometimes brings in pieces from his collection to share with club members.

Symposium stalwarts

Karen began getting enough time off work to attend AAW Symposia with Dave. At the 2006 Symposium in Louisville, their friend Malcolm Tibbetts was the AAW Board member in charge of the Instant Gallery. As always, events like these depend upon volunteers to succeed, so Karen and Dave stepped up. Karen helped organize the registration and work drop off for the Instant Gallery. Dave worked on the venue display arrangement for easy setup, viewing, and traffic flow for visitors, including those in wheelchairs. They also created a secure space where backpacks and bags could be stored. With viewers' belongings safely stowed and not carried about, Instant Gallery visitors wouldn't be nearly as likely to accidentally knock displayed pieces off tables. This practice has become a standard approach at all AAW Symposia. With Dave and Karen volunteering in the Instant Gallery for eleven of the next twelve years, not a single piece was broken or stolen.

Volunteering in the Instant Gallery was a significant way the Longs could

give back to the AAW. Over many years, they became recognized by a large segment of the AAW membership and even acted as unofficial customer service reps. They could field questions on almost any Symposium topic and/or point folks in the right direction. Karen in particular helped many spouses of turners, who may have felt out of place, feel comfortable and welcome. And, as wood art collectors, Dave and Karen found the Instant Gallery to be the perfect place to discover potential pieces to add to their collection.

Along with helping in the Instant Gallery, Dave and Karen would typically arrive at a Symposium a couple days early. They volunteered to help set up the special themed exhibitions and auctions, an activity that led them to meet many wood artists, as well as AAW staff and Board members.

Dave has participated in several panel discussions over the years, spanning various subjects. During the Phoenix Symposium (2014), he offered a demonstration on proper lighting for displaying work. In Pittsburg (2015), Dave set up a special interest event in conjunction with the Collectors of Wood Art and the Pittsburgh Contemporary Craft Society. There, he chaired a very well-attended panel along with Suzanne Perrault, who appears on the PBS television program *Antiques Roadshow*, and Cleveland gallery owner Tom Riley. In Atlanta (2016), Dave organized and emceed the Special Interest Night session with wood artists Philip and Matt Moulthrop. That session was so successful that its planned attendance of 125 grew to 300 before entry had to be restricted due to the building's fire safety regulations.

Other contributions

Dave's contributions to the wood art field also include supportive work with the AAW's Professional Outreach Program as well as significant contributions to *American Woodturner* and other AAW publications on a wide



One of the annual AAW fundraisers for the EOG fund is the auction held at each Symposium. The Longs are always active participants.



The Longs have been regular volunteers at the Symposium Instant Gallery. They helped to establish key processes, such as efficient check-in of artwork, professional display, logical traffic patterns, and safe storage of personal belongings.



The Longs decide together what they will add to their collection. Asked what type of work they collect, the Longs answer, "Different."

variety of subjects. As a Board member of the Collectors of Wood Art, Dave has written extensive content for the CWA website in support of the wood art field, including key profiles of artists. He was also instrumental in facilitating CWA displays at the prestigious SOFA (Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design) Chicago show.

Dave and Karen also have supported the field by serving as exhibition judges. Dave was the CWA judge at the American Craft Council shows in Baltimore and the Smithsonian Craft Show in Washington D.C. He was scheduled to judge the *Step Up to the Plate—Second Inning* exhibition at the

2020 AAW Symposium in Louisville, but that event was cancelled due to the pandemic. Additionally, Dave and Karen were CWA judges at two American Craft Expo shows in Chicago.

Please join me in congratulating Dave and Karen Long on receiving the AAW's Honorary Lifetime Member award, a richly deserved honor. ■

Kurt Hertzog is a past president of the AAW, past chairman of the Rochester Woodworkers Society, and a council member of the Pen Makers Guild. He has written about woodturning and woodworking extensively for various publications. For more, visit kurthertzog.com.