

Potential program and Biographical information- Phil Holtan

Presenting Woodturner: Phil Holtan

Chasing the Ultimate Cut- Achieving a Better Bowl Surface with Less Sanding

“My goal is always to turn a better bowl with less sanding. In my demonstration, I will turn a natural edge bowl, outside and then in, and seek club member’s wisdom on how to get the best cut possible. We will look at sharpening, shearing cuts with gouges and scrapers, adjusting speed, tool angles in 3 dimensions, body position and tool choice for bowl gouges, scrapers and some attention to best cuts with carbide scrapers. My most basic rule is to move on each bowl surface from big chips, to small, to microscopic. Hopefully, lots of material for both beginners and advanced turners. ---I’m willing to add a few minutes to how to market your turnings.”

Bio for Phil Holtan

- Phil is proudest of the fact that he’s helped introduce thousands of people to the joy of woodturning.
- His signature turnings are natural-edged, thin-walled burl bowls in local woods, and spindle-turned ringed items with Scandinavian connections. The quirkiest the wood the better- with burl, spalting, bird-peck, wormy, and after-turning twists. His customers love the chaos.
- His specialties include natural edge burl bowls, always using the McNaughton system to free stacks of bowls from burls. His last two burls each yielded 80 bowls each.
- He has also invented and turned thousands of what he calls “Kransekake,” an evergreen-tree shape of multiple loose rings based on the Norwegian wedding cake of that name. He’s diversified that into multiple sizes, a crooked tree and a variety of smaller ornament trees.
- He grew up in the oak and walnut forests along the Winnebago River near Forest City, IA, one of 8 children of Stan and Ruth Holtan -- farmers, weavers and carvers.
- By necessity, they learned to make and fix anything.
- He worked with his hands and became a craftsman and woodworker.
- During a rich and rewarding career as a Lutheran pastor, he always stole time to work with his hands to create and tell stories with wood. He sometimes hides behind the title of Reverend Doctor, with 3 advanced academic degrees.
- He’s married to Merrie Sue, college professor and writer, with 3 children, all productive young adults.
- He’s been turning for the 44 years and teaching turners in his shop, folk schools, club meetings and other venues for 38 years.
- He’s demonstrated at clubs and conferences in the Midwest and in Scotland.
- Outlets for his work are Ingebretsen’s in Minneapolis, the Krom Gallery in Rochester and several other stores and 8-10 juried art shows each year. At shows, he loves to meet new people, tell stories about wood and woodturning and invite them to learn more.
- He’s helped start 3 woodturning clubs, and treasures his membership in the AAW and Minnesota Woodturners

Artistic statement- *“Though I respect turners who use wood simply as a vehicle for their own artistic vision, I seek to partner with the wood to show off its beauty and tell its story.”* – Phil Holtan