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Craft, Technology,  
and Tradition.



The Monthly newsletter of the Chicago Woodturners November 2017

# Headline News



## Remembering Binh Pho

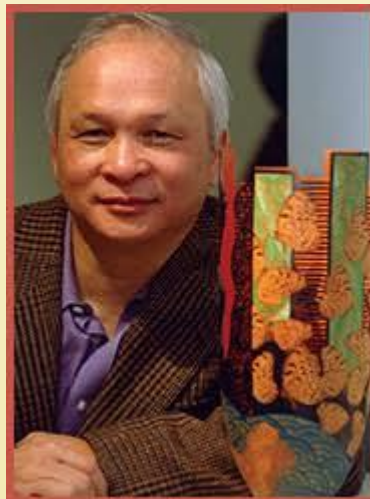
Binh Pho was memorialized at the October meeting. See page 6 for Paul Rosen's excellent article and pictures.

## Winter Holiday Party Set

Marie Anderson has been working to set the next holiday party. See page 5 for Marie Anderson's article.

## PAY YOUR DUES

See Julie Basrak's note on page 4 regarding membership and dues.





**President**

**Al Miotke**

Please make every effort to attend the October meeting and join us in remembering Binh Pho.

### Presidents Curls

I find it hard to believe that I am writing the November Curls already. Where did September and October go? If you are like me, you are probably switching from your normal shop agenda to making a variety of Christmas ornaments or other gifts. The last month has been very busy with club activities as well.

We finished the first of two classes for club members that are new to turning. Everybody worked on an angel ornament, tool handle, bowl and box while practicing the important fundamentals of woodturning. A lot was learned over the 16 hours we spent together. Best of all, I got to know a number of our newer club members.

The Platter that many of you signed was delivered by Darrell Rader and myself to Binh's wife Vi. She was very appreciative of the memory and wanted to make sure that everyone was thanked for the kind thoughts.

The most important activity of the month was delivering the Beads of Courage boxes that many of you helped make in the last few months. I was in the oncology department at Lurie Children's Hospital and handed one of our boxes to an 8 year old girl with no hair and an IV in her arm. All of the 26 boxes that we had were given to a child on that day.

SOFA (Sculptural Objects and Functional Art and Design show) is also over for another year. It was another very enjoyable event with many CWT members entertaining the crowd with their woodturning wizardry. With demonstrations going nonstop from 1pm to 7pm for 3 days, it was a busy weekend. This is probably the biggest community outreach project we do each year. It's not easy to transport a large lathe and a full set of audio and video equipment to Navy Pier and back, not to mention all the demonstrator and support help that is needed each day. It's a great opportunity for many of our members to see this fantastic show while exposing many of the shows 30,000 visitors to the craft of woodturning. Thanks to everyone that helped make this event happen and be successful.

We have 2 more events this year, Artapalooza At Palatine High School. If you are available on November 17 for a few hours I hope you will contact Roger Basrak and consider helping the students turn their first pen. Finally, Empty bowls will be held on December 2 from 10:30 until 2:00 at Oakton Community College. Come and have a bowl of soup or chili and pick up some nice presents and good prices.

November is our last meeting of the year at CLA. I hope to see each of you at the Christmas/Holiday Party in December. You will hear more about it at the November meeting.

*Alan J Miotke*

**Minutes of October 2017 Meeting****Marie Anderson**

Al Miotke opened the meeting promptly at 7pm. This evening's demonstration has been rescheduled to allow us to honor the life and art of long time member Binh Pho who passed away August 23rd. Darrell Rader and Al Miotke will share some memories of our friend. Vi Pho will not be joining us this evening, however the memorial platter will be presented to her later this month. Anyone who has not signed it, please do so this evening. After this presentation, Ken Staggs will review the work on the instant gallery

Rich Hall-Reppen gave a brief recap of the Boy Scouts STEMArma event on September 30th. Thank you to everyone who helped put this event together including, Al & Brenda Miotke, Don McCloskey, Frank Magnifico, Paul Shotola, Andrew Bulldeck, Don Gascoigne, Matt Schmidt, Tom Boerjan, Mary Olson, Mark McCleary and Marie Anderson. There was a fairly continuous line of Scouts wanting to turn. We had an extra lathe and extra people this year so the traffic was managed perfectly. The day was lovely and even though we had more blanks this year, we ran out of whistles about 2pm. Needless to say, the event was a success, everyone was pleased with our efforts and considerable notes have been made for the next event.

Al reported that we will have about 25 boxes to deliver on October 24th to Lurie Children's Hospital for their Beads of Courage event. He thanked everyone who turned boxes.

Anyone who volunteered to assist at SOFA this year should have received an email from Al outlining the schedule. This year the artists participation is limited so our CWT members with the help just a couple of artists will be doing the demonstrations. If you have not received the email, contact Al directly for more information.

Al announced that the leadership team for Turn On! Chicago 2018 met last month and the planning is well underway for next August. Scott Barrett has been working to update the Turn On! Chicago website and it is now live. There will be more updates coming so be sure to visit the site often. There are plenty of opportunities to assist with this event and we will be asking for your help soon. Registration opens January 1st.

Bull Valley Hardwoods will host an event on November 11th that may be of interest to our members. Mike Roper and others will be demonstrating. If you have not visited Bull Valley yet, this is a good excuse to visit them. They are located in Woodstock on Route 47 just behind the Harley Davidson Dealership.

Don McCloskey reminded us that we are still collecting bowls (or other turned items) for Empty Bowls. The Empty Bowls event takes place at Oakton Community College on December 2nd. It runs from 10am to about 2:30. Don noted that this is a fun event, (food, music, woodturners and bowls) and it benefits the Northern Illinois food pantry so the items you turn will help someone local. Please consider attending, buying a bowl or two (they make great Christmas presents) and help out people who are less fortunate. Donations always accepted at the meetings or contact Don McCloskey or Marie Anderson.

Don also requested assistance in turning Pens for the Pens for Troops effort. Don has pen kits available and sent a special thanks to Carole Floate for the large donation of kits. Please contact Don directly to assist with this program.

Al briefly mentioned the Woodturning 101 class which started this past Saturday and will finish up Saturday October 14th. Several students commented that they are enjoying and learning a lot. The second class will take place November 11th & 18th.

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# CWT News

## Raffle

Sol Alfonso

October raffle results:

Book	Wayne Bernahl
Bottle stoppers blanks	Lynn Valentine
Tool	Clint Stevens
Walnut wood	Francisco Bauer
Box elder wood	Paul Pyrlík

We had \$117.00 in Raffle Proceeds.

## Membership report

Julie and Roger Basrak

We had 70 members and 5 guests at the Oct. meeting. Guests were Ricky Stryker from Mt. Prospect and Zach Stryker from Rolling Meadows (guests of Scott Barrett), Heiko Dorenwendt from Wilmette, Jim Jackson from Chicago, and Jaime Rivas from Elgin. (He said someone demonstrating at Rockler told him about CWT.)

It's that time of year again! Dues for 2018 will remain \$30 for a single membership or \$40 for a family membership. All you need to do is write a check to Chicago Woodturners (or you can pay with cash). Don't forget: All CWT dues cover the calendar year, January through December.

We hope you have had an opportunity to arrive early (between 6:00 and 6:50) for a meeting. If you do, you are likely to see a group of members and guests surrounding a lathe at the front of the room. You're always welcome to join the group, which is the monthly mentoring group. We hope to see you there this month.

Checks may be sent to:

Julie Basrak  
563 W. Ruhl Rd.  
Palatine, IL 60074

Thank you for your cooperation



**November Demonstration Showcase Finishing**

**Darrell Rader**

Roy Lindley will explain how to improve the appearance of a flawed film finish with some hand work. Untouched film finishes, such as lacquers and varnishes, inherently reveal the method of application including spraying. Some application techniques and additives can minimize these signs but working in the finish with fine abrasives can in most situations improve surface quality and overall appearance. Roy will illustrate the steps, identify appropriate products, and provide some guidelines and suggestions to follow toward a successful outcome. The most basic objective is to remove surface irregularities and eliminate any imbedded foreign particles. Of course, best results go hand in hand with careful and thorough preparation for the finish film as surface refinement does not hide anything.

Jason will do a talk about oil and wax finishes and will discuss the steps involved in preparing the surfaces of the turned piece. The more flawless the surfaces can be before finish is applied, the better. Oil finishes tend to accentuate any cross grain sanding scratches and/or tool marks. Once the surface is sufficiently prepared, the oil can be applied and the finish can start taking shape. He will also discuss a buffing process, using the Beall 3-buff on lathe system and will conclude with the application of Renaissance Wax and explain its advantages over conventional waxes. If there is time left he can answer specific questions people might have.

**Winter Holiday Party, December 12**

**Marie Anderson**

It's that time of year again. The music is about to change, the leaves are mostly gone and soon we will be complaining about the four letter word that starts with "S". The good news is we can look forward to our annual woodturners holiday gathering! That's right, the December meeting we kick back and enjoy the company of our fellow woodturners without all the formality of a typical monthly meeting. It will be held at the Fox Run Golf Links (same as the last 2 years), 333 Plum Grove Road, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007.

We will have dinner (cash bar available) the menu has not been finalized as of this writing and will be included on the evite (to be sent shortly) for that information. As in previous years we will again have a gift exchange so get your thinking caps on and get to the lathe (we all like turned gifts right?) or think about what you would like to receive from any of your fellow club members (if you like it, someone else will). The value of your grab bag gift should be a minimum of \$20. Everyone is encouraged to participate. (If you bring a gift, you will receive a gift. Please wrap it and put your name inside the package so that whoever receives the gift knows who to thank. There will also be door prizes and maybe some surprises this year???)

Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

Marie



**Remembering Binh Pho****Paul Rosen**

In lieu of an October turning demonstration, Al Miotke and Darrell Rader collaborated to discuss the career and passing of long-time CWT member Binh Pho. Binh lost his courageous battle against stomach cancer on August 23, 2017. He was 62—an age when most of us are just beginning to plan our retirement. Binh was an extraordinary human being. Born in Vietnam, Binh was the first born son, followed by siblings Bang, Ban, Bach, Han, Huong, and Bic. His father, Mui Duc Pho, lost his mother to pneumonia in 1942 when he was only 11 years old—a fact that influenced him to become a doctor in 1965. Mui had joined the army of the Republic of Vietnam, graduating in 1952 in Class No. 3, as a Lieutenant. Much of his time in the military was spent away from his family and wife, Minh-Tam Thi Le. Fortunately, we have an extensive first-person account of Binh's life in a book co-written with Kevin Wallace in 2006. *River of Destiny—The Life and Work of Binh Pho*, is a fascinating biography richly illustrated with Binh's turnings. It is also a history lesson that delves into cultural influences in the Vietnamese people, as well as their turbulent political history. Occupation and rule by Japanese, French, communist Chinese, and U.S. military forces have punctuated the history of Vietnam since the close of WWII. But our primary focus is on Binh Pho the artist, the woodturner, and the creative collaborator whose works adorn the halls of art galleries and collector's homes around the world.

In 1971, Binh's parents took their children to Can Tho, leaving 17-year-old Binh in Saigon to manage their three-flat, two floors of which were rented out to Americans and Allies. It was on his way to and from school that Binh would pass the home of a local artist, Nguyen Van Dat. "Would you like to learn to draw?" asked the artist. Binh replied, "Yes, but I have no money." The artist proceeded to give Binh drawing lessons in pencil, charcoal, and eraser, gratis. For weeks, the student was denied access to colors until his mentor felt his skills had developed sufficiently to justify the next step. Unexpectedly, Van Dat disappeared one day, due to illness of a family member in another town. Binh's drawing classes came to an abrupt end, but the foundation had been laid.

With the fall of Saigon, Binh's parents and siblings were able to flee Vietnam by boat and stay for six months in Seoul, until they received sponsorship to enter the U.S. by St. Mary Church in St. Louis, MO. But Binh was left behind. He was one of those patiently waiting in line in 1973 as the helicopters made repeated trips from the roof of the American Embassy in Saigon. The pilot had assured everyone that they would be evacuated, but when one of the flights was shot down, the order came down to terminate the evacuation. Binh was eventually captured, beaten, and sent to a re-education center (read: political prison) three different times, but managed a successful third escape on a leaky boat, along with 38 other evacuees. That boat sailed upriver to avoid Communist patrol boats and eventually sailed across the South China Sea to an island in Malaysia. It was on that island that he met his future wife, Vi. She ended up in Hayward, CA, where she became a software engineer for Chevron Corp., but he was with his family in St. Louis. A cross-country romance eventually fizzled out, but a chance meeting between the two at a Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC, some five years later in 1985, re-united the couple who eventually married and settled in St. Louis, with Binh's immediate family.

Binh studied Electronics and Engineering in Kansas City while working as a busboy in a restaurant. He received a B.S. degree in 1982 (after three years of college). In 1987, his wife bought him a tablesaw for his birthday, which he used to make cabinets, furniture, and boxes.

Binh got interested in woodturning when he saw a slide presentation by John Jordan. Inspired, he purchased his first lathe and began turning. Later he took a 4-hour introductory class at the local

*(Continued on page 7)*

**Remembering Binh Pho****Paul Rosen**

Woodcraft store, given by Leonard “Fletcher” Hartline. Binh subsequently took one-on-one lessons with Hartline, and the two later traveled to turning symposia together. “Little did I know that I had come half way around the world to meet my best friend,” said Binh.

Binh must have had a mind like a sponge. Darrel put it well, “His mind wasn’t like a fountain—it was like a volcano!” He would pick up information on turning from multiple sources. For example, he learned hollow turning from Roger Jacobs in North Carolina. He studied airbrush technique with commercial illustrator, Michael Cacy. Other influences/favorites included Salvador Dali and the Russian artist, Mihail Chemiakin. Michael Hosaluk, Frank Sudol, and Michael Mode deserve special mention.

Hosaluk advocated the use of color with imaginative textures, along with cutting and re-assembly of turned parts. In Binh he had found a turner with a similar imagination and creative abilities. Canadian artist Frank Sudol taught a course at Arrowmont on piercing and airbrushing. “Binh saw me do a thin turning and some piercing at Arrowmont, and he became very animated. But once he saw me do a little elementary airbrushing, he began to stare off in the distance.” Thinking. Imagining. Creating. “A couple of hours later, he showed us something stunning, and at that moment, I began to appreciate what Mozart’s piano teacher felt like,” said Sudol.

Michael Mode offered constructive criticism. “You are very skilled, but you are working in too many different styles. You need to find your identity.” So he issued a challenge: “Pick one piece. Only one...your favorite. Create that piece six times in a row, without changing the piece at all, and send me photos of them when you’re finished.”

Binh complied, but the fifth vessel had some changes. Binh had gotten bored. He altered the design to improve it. And that, I suppose, is the value of repetition. Darrell has often remarked that to get really good at what you turn, do 20 of them.

In 1997, Binh and his family moved to the Chicago area, where he began the first of his Cityscape Series. In 1999, he did his Chicago Cityscape, followed by a San Francisco Cityscape, and eventually a New York Cityscape. By the year 2000, Binh began to place autobiographical elements in his work. His pieces would contain a river, the moon, dragonflies, butterflies, peacock feathers, and cranes. The moon is a symbol of hope and celebration. The peacock feathers represent a state of dreaming. And per ancient Chinese beliefs, the dragonfly brings dreams into reality and is the messenger of wisdom and enlightenment from other realms. In short, dragonflies represent good luck. Many of his pieces represent episodes from his childhood, his incarceration, his heart-break when separated from then favorite girlfriend Vi (whom he eventually did marry), and his escape from his childhood homeland to join his parents eventually in St. Louis.

David Marks met Binh Pho in 1999, at Binh’s studio when Steve Sinner invited him to a collaborative workshop that coincided with the SOFA meeting in Chicago. Marks was invited because he knew gold leafing, gilding, and using chemicals to create patinas on turned objects. He also had a technique where he could use moss (lichens) from California, soaked in acid, to carefully etch the surface of a turning. Marks had studied under a Japanese master of Urushi lacquer, Professor Nagatoshi Onishi. Binh ended up later making phone calls to Marks, to request more of the California lichens, which he too used to decorate his turnings.

Hugh McKay met Binh at a woodturning conference in San Antonio, TX. McKay had just introduced his hollowing system, and Binh was one of the first to use it. This allowed him to employ elaborate design elements at the top of his pieces.

**Remembering Binh Pho****Paul Rosen**

As his career blossomed, Binh began to make collaborative pieces with other established turners. These included Graeme Priddle, Bonnie Klein, Alain Mailland, Steve Sinner, Jacques Vesery, Ray Key, Cynthia Gibson, Curt Theobald, Derek Weidman, Hugh McKay, and Hans Weissflog. And it is probably not a coincidence that many of these turners ended up giving guest demonstrations at CWT meetings. Binh's powers of persuasion have long benefitted CWT members, as Rich Nye does for us today.

Binh was always working against the clock. He had a day job from 9 to 5, but he had frequent job-related weekend trips. He seemed always to be on the phone, but he had time to spend with his family in the morning and at dinner time. But once the two children went to bed, Binh would return to his studio and work until midnight, or sometimes 3:00AM. He seemed to be able to get by on 3 hours of sleep. Incredible. Darrell showed us a slide that had an image of a turning in a book. It looked like the signature Binh Pho turning—a multicolored vase-shape with piercings and the signature elaborate airbrushed decorations. In truth, Binh didn't have time to turn the piece, so instead he made a drawing on a flat piece of paper, which to any observer looked like the real thing. He was that good. Months later Binh was able to produce the actual turning, once his schedule permitted.

In later life, Binh met the captain of the helicopter who had promised that no one would be left behind at the American Embassy. The captain had been haunted for years with his broken promise to the 125 people he left behind on the roof of the embassy. In tears, he apologized profusely. Binh was magnanimous in his generosity. "Don't worry," he said. "It all turned out okay."

Binh's remarkable productivity would not have been possible without a small army of "studio assistants." These people learned to turn the basic hollow form that is Binh's signature shape. After appropriate sanding, the skeleton form would be presented to the master, who would refine the piece, perform piercing, and apply whatever creative colors or glass additions he deemed necessary to complete the project. Binh graciously acknowledged these assistants in a second book co-authored in 2015 with Kevin Wallace, *Shadow of the Turning*. By name, these assistants are Deryl Duer, Robert Honan, Darrell Rader, Dave Forney, Carole Floate, and Don Manz.

Binh Pho left us way too soon. The volume and quality of his art has influenced countless turners and filled both art galleries and individual collector's shelves as few artists can ever hope to. We are all diminished by his loss, but enriched by the gifts of his creativity, his vision, and his friendship. Rest in Peace, Binh Pho.

**Attribution**

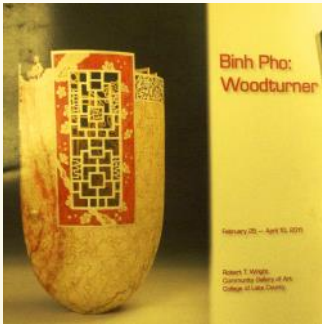
With one exception, all of the quotes in this article were taken from the book by Kevin Wallace: *River of Destiny—The Life and Work of Binh Pho*, 2006. ISBN-10: 0971277265





Remembering Binh Pho

Paul Rosen



**Minutes of October 2017 Meeting, Continued****Marie Anderson***(Continued from page 3)*

Roger Basrak gave an update on the Art-a-Palooza event at Palatine High School. We have been sponsoring this event for 3 or 4 years now. It started with just Roger doing some hands on outside the cafeteria the first year and quickly gathered interest with both the students and our members. This year, the shop education teacher is supposed to be purchasing the pen kits for us to use (Roger will confirm later this week if this has happened or not). The event will be help on Friday, November 17th with 4 lathes this year. Anyone interested in assisting contact Roger.

Marie Anderson will once again coordinate our annual holiday gathering which is held in place of our December monthly meeting. The room has been reserved at the same venue Fox Run Golf Links in Schaumburg. More information will be announced next month.

Marie also announced that there are several upcoming calendar events that may be interest to our members including the Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild Symposium (October 13-15); the International Association of Penturners (IAP) Chicagoland Chapter will meet at Rockler in Bolingbrook this Saturday, October 14th; the Windy City club will host a mentor day at Rockler in Bolingbrook on Sunday October 15th and Lincoln Land Woodturners is hosting a one day mini symposium "Turning Saturday" on October 21st. There are also several calls for entry into woodturning art shows listed on the AAW website which members may be interested in. Deadlines are varied, so check the website often if you are interested in taking your work to the next level.

Bob Shuford announced that he has a One-Way Stonghold chuck available for sale tonight \$150.00. Contact him if interested.

Darrell Rader announced that this evening he brought along copies of Kevin Wallaces' book about Binh's life, "River of Destiny" that are also for sale.

Roger Basrak gave the membership update, 70 in attendance with 5 guests then announced the door prize winners and pulled the ticket for the safety book.

Tonight's raffle was conducted by Sol Anfusio. Congratulations to all tonight's winners!

Darrell & Al led a very interesting presentation celebrating Binh's life and Ken Staggs gave some very insightful tips during his gallery critique. Thank you all.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Anderson, Secretary



### 2017 Meeting Agenda

Month	Gallery Review	Demonstration
January	Jason Clark	Ken Staggs Tops
February	Darrell Rader	Jason Swanson Inlay
March	Richard Nye	Roberto Ferrer Lathe Carving
April	Marie Anderson	Andy Kuby Wood Threading
May	TBD	Clint Stevens Turned Wood Stool
June	TBD	Mark McCleary Discusses Woodturning Schools
July	Andy Kuby	Mark Dreyer Casting Pens
August	Frank Pagura	Al Miotke Sharpening
September	Roy Lindley	Jason Clark TBD
October	Ken Staggs	Darrell Rader Ornaments
November	Roy Lindley, Jason Clark	Finishing Demonstration

### Chicago Woodturners Board of Directors and Committee Chairs 2015

President	Alan Miotke	847-297-4877	abmiotke@comcast.net	920 Sumac Lane	Mount Prospect, IL 60066
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Raffle	Sol Anfuso	(847) 963-1994	solanfuso@comcast.net	1761 N. Lee Court	Palatine, IL 60074
Tools & Equipment	Don McCloskey	847-420-6978	mccloskey@ameritech.net	2028 Gilboa Ave.	Zion, IL 60099
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Audio & Video Co-Chair	Dawn Herndon-Charles	630-588-8431	dcharlesster@gmail.com	1545 Wiesbrook	Wheaton, IL 60189
Educational Committee	Darrell Rader	815-648-2197	d.rader@woodfineart.com	10703 Allendale Rd.,	Woodstock, IL 60098
Demonstrations	Rich Nye	630-406-1855	nyewoodturning@earthlink.net	40W257 Seavey	Batavia, IL 60510

Pictures of items reviewed at the October Instant Gallery are not available at this time



**For Sale, Trade, or Wanted**

**Shop Light, Just Like The Pro's Use**

Magnetic Lathe Lights. A limited number of Magnetic Lathe Lights, similar to the ones on all of the Chicago Woodturners demonstration lathes, will be available starting March 15, 2017. The lights are \$40 each. Please contact Andrew Kuby, [847-922-8201](tel:847-922-8201) or [riverwoodsturner@gmail.com](mailto:riverwoodsturner@gmail.com) to reserve one.

Items of interest to woodturners for sale,  
wanted, trade or free are welcome.  
Non-commercial ads only, please.

Events of interest to woodturners are also welcome.  
To place an ad, contact Terry McCammon  
[Terry.W.McCammon@gmail.com](mailto:Terry.W.McCammon@gmail.com)

## Events



Visit our website  
[chicagowoodturners.com](http://chicagowoodturners.com)

**Monthly Meetings  
are held on the 2nd  
Tuesday of each  
month at:**

**Christian Liberty  
Academy  
502 W Euclid Ave  
Arlington Heights,  
IL  
7:00-10:00 PM**

**Please join us  
All are welcome.**

**Membership in the  
Chicago Woodturners  
is available to anyone  
wishing to increase  
their turning skills  
through education,  
discussion and  
critique. Annual dues  
are \$30.00 for a single  
membership and  
\$40.00 for a family.  
Visit our website for  
an application or  
contact:**

**Julie Basrak**

**Membership  
Chairman**

The Chicago Woodturners is a chapter of the American Association of Woodturners (AAW). Visit their website for more information.