

Phillip Foster Brown(1937 - 2018)



Phillip Foster Brown, born in 1937 in Denver, Colorado, loved working with wood since he was a boy. His undergraduate and master's degrees were in agricultural economy. He worked for the Department of Agriculture for 30 years, traveling to most states in the country to help farmers to set up cooperatives. He was in charge of creating a new field office in Hawaii and loved his many trips there. He served in the Army Reserves and then in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic in 1963-1964.

He married Christine Nimmo in 1965. They bought a house in Bowie, Maryland and had three daughters, Stephanie, Kate, and Alexandra in Bowie, Maryland. In 1975 he purchased a lathe and began to teach himself wood turning from a book and some symposia and soon became professional and renowned for his beautiful shapes, revealing of natural patterns in local woods, and fine finishes.

He was one of the pioneers in the resurgence of wood turning as a craft art. He was an early member of the national American Association of Woodturners and of the local chapters, Chesapeake Woodturners and Capitol Area Woodturners. He was the founder and first president of Montgomery County Woodturners. In November 2017 he was presented with the "Lifetime Impact Award" award at the Montgomery County Executive's Awards for Excellence in the Arts & Humanities. He was also active in and on the board of the James Renwick Alliance and The Center for Art in Wood (formerly The Woodturning Center), and participated in the Collectors of Wood Art. Nine of his bowls so far are in the permanent collections of museums and universities and many are in major private collections of turned wood.

He and Christine were divorced in 1980. He married Barbara Wolanin in 2001 after they found a house together house with room for his wood shop and his wood and their growing craft collection in Carderock Springs, Maryland. Phil was brave through treatments for advanced cancer and was grateful for his active life until he was 81.

He is survived by Barbara; his three daughters, Stephanie Warner, Kate Visciani, and Alexandra Bradley; two step sons; six grandchildren; and his sister Constance Bird.

There will be a memorial celebration at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church at 3:00 p.m. on September 29. There will also be exhibitions and tributes that weekend. He was pleased that the Phil F. Brown Fund has been established to support an effort he was leading in the future at The Center for Art in Wood in Philadelphia, so donations to that fund will be appreciated.

Phil said about his art: *"Wood and wood turning stimulate my imagination. Turning provides an opportunity to discover and experience form. It is exciting to expose a tree's figure and find a bowl inside. My vessels reveal the inner beauty of the once majestic living tree. The wood continues to live, providing enjoyment through sight, touch, and use."*

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