

Norwegian Woodturning Cruise

Part 1



by Joseph M. Herrmann

In August of 2011, I had the opportunity to cross the Norwegian Woodturning Cruise off my personal “bucket list.” And since my return, I have been trying to figure out how I could squeeze fifteen days of that cruise into six to eight pages of *Woodturning Design*—an almost impossible task!

It appears that the cruise is better known in Europe and other spots overseas than it is in the United States; perhaps, it just doesn't get the attention or hasn't had as much advertisement. I know for a fact that there are quite a few people from the United States who have taken the cruise and you'd think it would be better known; hopefully, it will be after this.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The cruise ship travels up and down the western coast of Norway, stopping at eleven different ports along the route. The ship is not an actual cruise ship in the strictest sense because it is normally used as a merchant marine training vessel during the school year (see **Fig. 1**). Every three years, Odd Erik Thjømøe rents the vessel to promote his Norwegian woodworking tool company that is based in Stavanger, Norway, which is also the embarkation point of the cruise.

Norway isn't “blessed” with the large number of retail woodworking stores as we are in the United States. It is such a large country with so much “nothing” in between major cities that woodworkers and woodturners are not able to visually inspect any merchandise before purchase; most rely on the Internet to secure these items. Therefore, the purpose of the trip is to bring the merchandise to the consumer at the various ports of call along the route.

I was vaguely familiar with the cruise, but really never took the time to fully explore the possibility of actually going until I had the opportunity to discuss the cruise with Jimmy Clewes when I took his class in Las Vegas. Jimmy has been on the cruise as a demonstrator at least five times and actually filmed one of his DVD sets while on a previous cruise. Jimmy regaled me with stories of his trips during the three days I was with him and really got me interested in going. He was kind enough to put me in touch with Odd Erik (his actual name), who provided me with some of the promotional materials.



Fig. 1

The MS Gann was the vessel that we traveled on during the cruise.



Fig. 2

Rolly Munro is making the “curls” fly with his line of signature tools.



Fig. 3

Jimmy Clewes was a popular demonstrator and is shown “holding court” with his many fans.



Fig. 4

Nick Agar is best known for his off-center wallhangings and his "industrial-looking" turnings (which I really like).



Fig. 5

Glenn Lucas is a production bowl turner from Ireland.



Fig. 6

Asmund Vignes is a master with the ring tool, and it caught my interest to the point that I have ordered one.



Fig. 7

I got to know Terry Scott much better on the cruise and even had the opportunity to get some personal instruction.



Fig. 8

Mark Baker is the editor of the British woodturning magazine, and I became better acquainted with both Mark and his lovely wife, Sarah, on the cruise.



Fig. 9

Richard Raffan needs no introduction!



Fig. 10

Bonnie Klein turned a large number of her signature spinning tops on the trip.



Fig. 11

Jim Stirling is a scroll saw artist who produced some gorgeous castle scenes (photo courtesy of Mike Hunter).



Fig. 12

Francis Tacq owns the company that manufactures the Wivamac lathe.



Fig. 13

Clive Brooks from Sorby had an individual booth and demo area on the cruise.



Fig. 14

Mike Hunter (left) and Mike Stafford were there representing the Hunter line of carbide tools. I really enjoyed hanging out with them!



Fig. 15

This is a view of one side of the large room that housed the demo area.



Fig. 16

Local folks enjoyed the demos too and were quite interested in turning.



Fig. 17

Another big room held some of the larger items offered for sale on the cruise.



Fig. 18

Individual instruction with some of the instructors provided by Odd Erik was also available through either David Muckle or Knut Andreas Lien, shown here.



Fig. 19

This is one of the individual demo stations before the crowd showed up. The demonstrators shared each station and the duty rotation during the day.



Fig. 20

This is the main sales area.



Fig. 21

Some of the major manufacturers had their own sales area.

Though I have a travel budget that allows me to attend various conferences around the country, it was not large enough to permit me to go on the cruise and still attend all the conferences that I had committed to this past year. Therefore, I talked it over with my wife, Andi, who pointed out that it was a "once in a lifetime" opportunity and encouraged me to go. I did some further research on the cruise, and discovered that I knew most of the major demonstrators and was acquainted with several of the potential passengers who would be on the cruise. I decided that my wife was right and booked passage.

DEMONSTRATOR LIST

The cruise was actually a star-studded lineup of international demonstrators who would have been welcome at any symposium. The demonstrators included Rolly Munro from New Zealand (see **Fig. 2**), Jimmy Clewes from the United States (see **Fig. 3**), Nick Agar from the United Kingdom (see **Fig. 4**), Glenn Lucas from Ireland (see **Fig. 5**), Asmund Vignes from Norway (see **Fig. 6**), Terry Scott from New Zealand (see **Fig. 7**), Mark Baker from the United Kingdom (see **Fig. 8**), Richard Raffan from Australia (see **Fig. 9**), and Bonnie Klein from the United States (see **Fig. 10**).

Though the cruise is generally billed as the "Woodturning Cruise," it is actually a woodworking cruise and demonstrators from other disciplines were also on board. These demonstrators included Wayne Barton (chip carving) from the United States, Bob Neill (pyrography) from the United Kingdom, Lars Stana and Tor Nyhus (wood shaping) from Norway, Jostein Tvedt (woodcarving) from Norway, and Jim Stirling (scroll sawing) from Australia/Norway (see **Fig. 11**).

In addition, there were several companies that sent representatives to demonstrate their products and talk to customers. These included Ullform (felting) from Norway, Francis Tacq (Wivamac lathes) from Belgium (see **Fig. 12**), Jerry Hammock (King Arthur's Tools) from the United States, Clive Brooks (Sorby) from the United Kingdom (see **Fig. 13**), Inge Hagensen and Lars Tveit (knifemaking) from Norway, Tony Chalk and Bjarne Isaksen (Trend) from the United Kingdom, Hakan Persson (Tormek) from Sweden, and Mike Hunter and Mike Stafford (Hunter Tools) from the United States (see **Fig. 14**).

DEMONSTRATION AREA

The ship docked at eleven ports during the cruise. The passengers got off and went on various arranged paid excursions, hiked around the cities that we stopped at along the way, or stayed on board to view the demonstrations. While the passengers were gone, the local townspeople were allowed to board the MS Gann to view the various sales displays, purchase products, and watch the demonstrations.

The vessel had several decks, and a large portion of "B-deck" was devoted to the sales area and demo rooms. The demonstration area for the turning part of the cruise was divided into two areas. The first was one huge room where all the major demonstrators were located, instead of being in individual rooms as you would expect (see **Figs. 15** and **16**). The second room housed some of the lathe manufacturers (see **Fig. 17**) and the area where individualized instruction could be found (see **Fig. 18**). An individual demo station is shown in **Fig. 19**. You could schedule time with the demonstrators as well, and I took the opportunity to get acquainted with the ring tool that Asmund Vignes was demonstrating and learned to make a wooden ladle with Terry Scott.

SALES FLOOR

A large array of woodworking products was offered for sale adjacent to the demo rooms. There was a big area devoted to general woodworking products, books, and tools (see **Fig. 20**) that Odd Erik had for sale, but each of the major manufacturers had ample room to display their products as well (see **Fig. 21**), as did some of the smaller manufacturers, such as Hunter tools.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The purpose of the cruise itself was to allow the local folks the opportunity to see and inspect the products that the retailers on the cruise had for sale and to purchase whatever they needed. So I featured that part of the cruise for the initial article, just so you would have an idea of what the cruise was about and to understand the turning part of the trip. The next article about the cruise will show some of the beautiful scenery that we encountered along the way and some of the inside workings of the vessel itself. I might even devote a third (or perhaps a fourth) article to some of the "highlights" of the cruise if I can't fit everything into the second segment.



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