

## About the Stanewick Family

The Stanewick Family Scholarship Fund is named in honor of Joseph Stanewick, an exceptional and well-loved woodworking teacher who has been working at the Eliot School for 20 years. Joe made the innovative decision to design the Basic Woodworking: Box class, which has initiated hundreds of students into the Eliot School woodshop. His friends and family describe Joe as a very generous and loving person. “He’s just there for you, whether you’re his daughter, his partner, the woman at the supermarket checking out groceries, or the guy delivering a package to the front door. He’s just interested in caring and loving other people—that’s his hallmark” says Joe’s partner Jill Herold.

Though Joe has always enjoyed woodworking, he had an unconventional career path into teaching the craft. He earned a BS in Accounting from Boston College and an MBA from Babson College. For almost 40 years he worked for the phone company New England Telephone (which eventually became Verizon), and at the age of 38, he decided to take a formal course in cabinet making at Wentworth Institute for Technology. When he finished that program in May of 1984, he looked for other places to practice and learn more about woodworking. He discovered the Eliot School, located only three, four miles away from where he lived “by the way the crow flies”. In September of 1984, he visited the Eliot School where he met Director Charlie Sandler, and the rest is history.



Joseph was born to Joseph and Ethel Stanewick in 1945. Born and raised in Roslindale, Massachusetts, Joe has lived his entire life within a two-mile radius of the home where he grew up. At the age of 14, Joe was introduced to Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport, Maine by neighbors that used to make trips there in the summer. As a young adult, he heard stories about what it was like even farther up the coast of Maine, the Rocky Coast. He went exploring and fell in love with what he experienced. He was fascinated by all the artisans: woodworkers, metal workers, glass blowers, all kinds of culinary types from the lobstermen, to vegetable gardeners and chefs. Travelling up to New Harbor, ME, to rent a cottage for a couple of weeks became a Stanewick family tradition, every summer since 1984.

Joe met his wife Sandra E. (Dabrowski) Stanewick while she was earning a Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree in English from Simmons College. Sandy was a lover of children’s literature and taught for many years at the Hennigan School in Jamaica Plain. She was an artist who loved oil painting, drawing, knitting, and gardening. When it became clear early in their marriage that they would not be blessed with biological children, Joe and Sandy decided to adopt. The process led them to Peru. In 1980, they travelled to Lima and adopted their daughter Marisa on her first birthday. As Joe describes, “Marisa completely changed our lives,

as children do. She was a great kid with an innate sense of humor and, of course, we spoiled her rotten! She loved socializing with kids at school and in the neighborhood. Marisa has developed into a well-adjusted, productive adult, parent, and teacher who is loved by her students. A blessing, for sure.”

In the Stanewick family, the value of an education was always in the forefront. In the latter part of his career at the phone company, Joe was an instructor, teaching economics and utility accounting. He also received an MS in Training and Development from Lesley University. He brought his enthusiasm for teaching and his course development skills to the Eliot School. Joe and Sandy tried to impress upon their daughter the value of education. Marisa attended private school and then the Boston Latin School. She followed in her mother’s footsteps and now teaches preschool at a synagogue in Needham. Marisa and her partner Daryl F. Veale have a son named Daryl who also attended the Boston Latin School and is currently a junior at Providence College.



After working almost 40 years at the phone company, Joe retired in 2002, and Charlie invited him to teach at the Eliot School. He taught for a number of years, working with Frank Pettorossi, Charlie Tardanico, Jac Van Loon (Jac), and the whole woodshop crew. Joe helped to develop the curriculum and taught woodworking to hundreds of students. However, he scaled back his work when his wife Sandy was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease. After a courageous battle with the disease, she passed away on August 18, 2019. While Joe was caring for his wife at Rogerson House, he happened to meet his now current partner Jill Herold. She was caring for her husband who was also suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and passed away. Joe and Jill supported each other through difficult times, and their friendship blossomed into a romantic partnership.



Joe's approach to mastering the craft of woodworking was to enroll in different programs and gain experience in different aspects of the craft. After the program at Wentworth, he studied the Fundamentals of Machine Woodworking at North Bennet Street School. At the Eliot School, he took furniture refinishing with Mike Gleason and gilding with Nancy Dick Atkinson. Joe took a course in furniture finishing over at the Brookline Adults Education center. The woman who taught the class worked at a restoration studio in Newton called Trefler Restoration. She hired him to work there for about three years. From these experiences, Joe found himself traveling in a small network of woodworkers with small businesses in New England, folks like sign/furnituremaker Neal Widett, JJ Lomartire, Tom Johnson, and more.

During Joe's 20-year career at the Eliot School, he made an important innovation to the curriculum, the Basic Woodworking: Box class. Joe decided to adapt the Fundamentals of Machine Woodworking class that he took at NBSS. He abridged the class and turned it into a more affordable, introductory class designed to put people on a track to working independently in the Open Studio. Previously, anyone at any skill level would join the Open Shop, but he noticed the setting was unfair to folks with little or no training because instructors were more like facilitators as everyone was working on their own projects. This introductory course served as an on-ramp for many beginners into the Open Shop environment. To date, 1061 students have taken the Basic Box class.

What Joe loves the most about teaching is the immediate feedback of first seeing somebody uncertain of something, then being able to break it down into simplistic terms or motions, so they understand it. He tries to take the mystery out of craft and enjoys when students experience that "aha" moment. His best advice about studying woodworking—have patience. It's slow, time consuming, precise, and that takes planning. Sometimes you will need to do something over and over again. He tells students, "Don't look at the whole object. Look at one piece at a time. See how they fit. Make sure it's all going to fit together. Draw it out, and you'll

be fine.” Gone are the days of specialty shops. Now that most everything is automated, Joe still finds woodworking a rewarding craft. Seeing an object develop from inception to completion, becoming totally engulfed in the work to the point that you don’t know what is happening around you in the shop—Joe still finds these moments of immersion in creativity and craft gratifying.

It is this love for woodworking and the caring community at the Eliot School that inspired Joe to establish the scholarship fund. When he reflects upon the people he’s met, and the things he’s done, the teacher he has become—the Eliot School was always at the core. When he needed a primary care physician, a woodworking student in the medical field made a call and connected him with a doctor. When his wife got sick, another student who was a social worker gave him some contacts to speak with who steered him to the Alzheimer's Association and to the Rogerson House Memory Care Assisted Living in Jamaica Plain. Joe adds, “The people at the Eliot School are some great folks, and when my wife died, my God, the outpouring was amazing from all of the woodworking students and the staff. It was touching.”