The Men’s Shed is an international phenomenon with thousands of clubs worldwide. We answer men’s innate need for activity. A Men’s Shed is a club mainly for older men with tools of all kinds, guys anxious to learn new stuff, members with skills to share, a pot of coffee and a friendly atmosphere. We join to make stuff and tinker. In the end, we make friends and discuss troubling health issues. The key to our popularity is best expressed in our motto: men don’t talk face to face, we talk

*shoulder to shoulder*
NORTH COUNTY MEN’S SHED
Steve Werner

We’re a different kind of Men’s Shed. We fulfill a need and are very pleased with our success! A year ago we numbered just 5. Today we have 15 members including two ladies. The North County Senior Center was looking for activities for senior men and the Shed needed a home. We solved both problems by teaming up. It’s been a perfect match and is exciting to see new friendships blossom.

We’ve had presentations on finances for seniors, computer scams, legal systems, a tapestry exhibition, and seen demonstrations of CPR, the AED and the Heimlich maneuver.

We went behind the scenes at the Palm Beach Zoo, attended balance and stretching classes and have a monthly breakfast out. We’re creating a photo essay of Palm Beach County to be published on the web using photo contributions from members. Oh, we also deliver Meals on Wheels each week. We now collect dues to fund coffee and snacks. Our near term goal is to increase our core group of members to 20.

ABOUT THE USMSA
Phil Johnson, USMSA

The US Men’s Shed Association (USMSA) is led by six volunteer national directors from across the country. Our board has great synergy and each member brings unique qualities and experience to the Board in business, education, non-profit corporations and entrepreneurship. The Association is a 501-(c)3 charitable organization incorporated in Minnesota.

Phil Johnson, a Managing Director of the USMSA, focuses on marketing and IT efforts for growing US Men’s Sheds across the country. Phil was formerly a Jet Pilot in the Marine Corps and holds a master’s degree in Software Engineering. He has worked extensively in aerospace technology and software development and is a certified Project Management Professional. Phil has 40 years of experience in forming and growing non-profit organizations in education, sports, human rights, youth programs and senior wellness. He was recently recognized by AARP with the “50 over 50” Award for his efforts in organizing the US Men’s Sheds Association.

Mark Winston, a Managing Director of the USMSA, has worked in the Men’s Shed movement for over four years and started the second Men’s Shed in Canada. He holds a university degree in education. Mark is an entrepreneur and a consultant in starting new businesses and raising venture capital. He is responsible for Men’s Shed’s outreach to senior’s wellness and mental health organizations. Mark’s motto is, Helping others is the best thing you can do for yourself. He attends many national and international conferences on how to break the cycle of social isolation and loneliness to promote the Men’s Shed movement.

Board members Glenn Sears, Steve Werner, Janice McDowell and Matt Stewart will be introduced elsewhere in the newsletter.
BELL TOWER MEN’S SHED
Jon Meininger

The Bell Tower Retirement Community in East Dubuque, IL has started a Men's Shed on their campus. Bell Tower, housed in an 1893 beautifully restored former K-12 school offers independent, assisted, and memory care living options. Male and female residents residing in all levels of care, as well as staff, volunteers, and curious neighbors are meeting regularly to construct Leopold benches for use on site and to gift to other senior care facilities. Shed supporters have donated tools, time and materials. An indoor workshop is planned so these fantastic folks can continue their good works year 'round. We decided that, if we couldn’t bring the men and women to the Shed, we would take the Shed to them. I'm glad we did! The response has been amazing!

PLATTEVILLE MEN’S SHED

When the Platteville Senior Center in rural Wisconsin relocated to a former elementary school, there was no shortage of tasks to be done in order to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for senior center participants. Platteville Men's Shedders stepped up to plate and lead projects ranging from removing dilapidated and dangerous playground equipment to planting a garden, creating a game room with donated pool tables, installing foosball tables, dartboards, and more. Shed members, many of them former farmers, brought trucks and trailers, sawzalls and skid loaders, and plenty of hands-on experience to the effort.

The wisdom of age was displayed when Shedders partnered with the local chapter of the FarmHouse Fraternity, college age men from agricultural backgrounds, to help with the heavy lifting. Word of the Shedders good work quickly spread, with requests from various local community organizations for assistance with everything from maintaining a walking trail to helping refurbish a collection of large wooden cows used as part of the town's annual Dairy Days celebration.
The Bellingham Washington Men’s Shed has joined forces with their local Makerspace (Fab-Lab) in building and erecting a public “Growroom” to highlight the need for the local urban production of food…

“Local food represents a serious alternative to the global food model. It reduces food miles, our pressure on the environment, and educates our children of where food actually comes from. ... The challenge is that traditional farming takes up a lot of space and space is a scarce resource in our urban environments.

"The Growroom ...is designed to support our everyday sense of well being in the cities by creating a small oasis or ‘pause’ architecture in our high paced societal scenery, and enables people to connect with nature as we smell and taste the abundance of herbs and plants. The pavilion, built as a sphere, can stand freely in any context and points in a direction of expanding contemporary and shared architecture.” For more on this, see:  

https://medium.com/space10/space10-open-sources-the-growroom-aa7ca6621715
THE FIRST US MEN’S SHED - NOW THREE YEARS OLD
Honolulu Men’s Shed

Michael Trojan

The Honolulu Mens Shed held its annual full membership meeting on July 27, 2019. The highlight of the event was the election of the new slate of officers, shown at left. Our coming year will present several Board challenges. First is solidifying the location of the Shed. The State of Hawaii has graciously lent our Shed vacant warehouse space. With the help of shedders and state legislators, we’ll find a permanent home. Members showed off their collector cars at our monthly sizzle. The parking lot displayed a 427 Cobra, a 2007 Mustang GT and a 2005 Z5 Corvette.

MEET MEL WHITE

Mel White is our connection to the Australian Men’s Shed Association (AMSA). Mel was the first person I spoke to when I contacted AMSA about finding a Shed in the US. Her first response was, “There aren’t any. We wondered when the US would contact us.”

I kind of fell into Men’s Sheds. I was working for Catholic Care in youth services, David Helmers was working in the same office and working with the Windale Mens Shed before AMSA existed. David asked if I would mind calling a few ‘Shedders’ with a couple of questions. I literally fell in love with the men and the Men’s Shed. I suppose I’ve been a friendly ear to the men, guidance when they have had a problem and a friend when they’ve needed that, but the personal relationships I’ve built with the members are more valuable than the insurance, management and other administrative support I provide. A thought about women in the Men’s Sheds: I suggest that they only get involved if asked. Women have valuable ideas, but we can’t tell the men how to do things. Encouraging men to attend a Shed is hugely beneficial.

Mel White, AMSA
SHARING TIME AND SKILL
Hopkins Men’s Shed

Taking a page from the Australian Men’s Shed “playbook,” we’ve been donating time and skill to a local adult day care center for Alzheimer’s victims. We’ve been supporting the Open Circle Day Care Center, solving simple maintenance needs and building raised planters for the Center. Leading us is Jim Sarver, who initiated the program. Jim suggested that memory-challenged clients build simple things like wooden kits for birdhouses and pencil and note pad holders.

Home Depot provided free kits like those used for children’s carpentry on Saturdays.

No one seems to know why, but as Men’s Sheds formed around the English speaking world, they completely missed the United States…but NO MORE! The first Men’s Shed in the US opened its doors three years ago, then a second was formed, then a third. In 2017 the US Men’s Shed Association (USMSA) was born. Now Sheds are opening across the country.

There are fourteen active Sheds in eight states, another eleven Sheds in the formative stages and 42 exploring possibilities. Given that no one in the US had heard of a Shed until 2016, this is quite remarkable. Name recognition has been a major problem. Coverage by the NBC Today Show and an article in the Washington Post gave us a big boost and provided 100+ inquiries. What’s next? Sixty Minutes?

Inertia plays a large part in spreading the word. The Hawaii Men’s Shed took a year to gain its first twenty members. Eighty members joined the second year. Now four or five new members join each month. We anticipate the same inertia with the USMSA.

To put things in perspective, there are 1,200 Sheds in Australia, 500 Sheds in the UK, 106 in New Zealand and many more in Ireland. We’re working to catch up!

Glenn Sears, a USMSA Board member and retired civil engineer graduated from the University of Hawaii and Stanford University. He’s an avid tinkerer. He has worked on construction projects large and small around the world. He and his wife Mary hand built a 4,000sf home in the mountains of Colorado. Now living in Honolulu, he first heard about Men’s Sheds in The Rotarian article. He immediately spearheaded the Honolulu Men’s Shed (now eighty strong) and then the Hawaii Men’s Shed Association. Phil Johnson
COLORADO MEN’S SHED
Tim Schneider

We’re new! Our first meeting was in July of this year. Seven showed up for our first Men's Shed meeting. We discussed membership and possible projects. At our second meeting we talked about life experiences and our particular interests. Next we plan to discover vision goggles. This Men’s Shed is a great idea!

TIM SCHNEIDER PROMOTES HIS SHED

A MEN’S SHED’S GUIDE TO THE FACEBOOK
Janice McDowell
janice@usmenssheds.org

Janice McDowell, a USMSA Board member, separated from the Air Force as a Major. She caught our attention by writing her master's thesis on organizing the USMSA as a non-profit corporation. Janice’s role on the board is to create and manage USMSA's social media presence. She and her husband often discuss ways to help local communities fight the loneliness epidemic. They live in northwest Florida. Phil Johnson

Social media, though sometimes overwhelming, offers opportunities to see what Sheds are doing worldwide. You can connect and discuss ideas. Here are some useful Facebook links.

US Men’s Sheds Association: https://www.facebook.com/usmenssheds/
Armagh Men’s Shed in Northern Ireland: https://www.facebook.com/armaghmensshed/
Ruston Community Men’s Shed in Louisiana: https://www.facebook.com/Ruston-Community-Mens-Shed-213628115903277/
Scottish Men’s Sheds Association: https://www.facebook.com/ScottishMensShedsAssociation/
UK Men’s Sheds Association: https://www.facebook.com/UKMensSheds/
Australian Men’s Shed Association: https://www.facebook.com/australianmensshedassociation/
Irish Men’s Sheds Association: https://www.facebook.com/irishmensshedsassociation/
Grand Traverse Men’s Shed in Michigan: https://www.facebook.com/gtmensshed/
Honolulu Men’s Shed in Hawaii: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1816786885238067/

Also, many Sheds ask what to do if women want to join a Men’s Shed. It’s up to Shed members. Ruston Community Men’s Shed was organized by a woman. Click the link below to see what England is doing in the way of Women’s Sheds. And if you want my assistance, please contact me.
ON SEEKING FUNDING

Steve Werner

Steve Werner, a USMSA Board member, has degrees in Chemistry and Civil Engineering. As an environmental professional, he worked in the US, Europe and South America reducing environmental risk, did environmental insurance underwriting and Superfund site management for the petrochemical industry. He’s taken the lead in the boy scouts, SCORE, amateur radio, his church and is a private pilot. He lives in Palm Beach County, Florida. Phil Johnson

For the past several years the US Men’s Shed Association (USMSA) has been promoting, starting and growing Sheds in the US. To date, we have helped start some 15 without the benefit of national funding. Directors have volunteered significant time and personal funds to gain tax exempt status and a professional data base needed for keeping track of our organizing efforts.

Some Sheds have the benefit of sponsorship from senior centers and other entities and have found cost-free meeting space. Other Sheds are independent organizations, arranging their own tax exempt status, obtaining meeting locations and needed tools.

One of the goals of USMSA is to embark on an ‘outreach program’ to make more people aware of the Shed movement and how it benefits men; benefits that are repeatedly demonstrated in the US, Australia, Ireland, England and elsewhere. As awareness is raised, we encourage future Shed leaders to step forward so we can provide the assistance necessary to start new and successful Sheds.

Our outreach has begun with the publication of this newsletter through the efforts of Glenn Sears, a Board member and founder of the Honolulu Men’s Shed. We are currently working to identify organizations and entities that will be attracted to our success and will have an interest in funding our efforts to reach a broader population. We also need to fund other initiatives including: trademark protection for our name and logo, stationary and brochure printing, part-time staffing to assist the Board. Our board meets by teleconference every week, but some of us have never met in person since we are spread across six time zones. We’re looking for funding to allow the board to have periodic face-to-face Directors meetings.

MIDWEST MEN’S SHED

Nick Breach

We’re beginners in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. We’ve formed a board, are filing for 501(c)3 status and are reaching out to Rotary clubs to recruit volunteers for our committees. Nick Breach, a board member, is from Australia so is familiar with Men’s Sheds. He’s planning to take some members to Australia this fall to visit Men’s sheds and bring working knowledge back to the Midwest. “We already have many people approaching us asking if they can donate tools or volunteer their labor, so we know there is a need,” said Nick. “We plan to get our Shed up and running as fast as our full time jobs will allow so we can harness this interest and serve the community.”
ONE YEAR LATER
Jim Novak, Grand Traverse Men’s Shed

We’ve grown to 41 members. From humble beginnings in a member’s garage to another garage and then to our own home. This results from a local newspaper article, local internet news, the NBC Today Show, four showings of the local The Four television show, Facebook exposure plus fundraiser mailings.

Service projects were a tiny book library and Fidget Boards for dementia patients, then a pallet wood coffee bar for our Shed.

ROSEVILLE MEN’S SHED
Phil Johnson

The children’s playground at Fairview Community Center is coming to life thanks to the efforts of Men’s Shedders Herb Schrempfer, Jack Roach and Phil Johnson. They’re refurbishing the raised garden beds, weeding and filling it in with new soil.

Preschoolers will have a fine time planting vegetables, watching them grow and tasting them when the time is ripe.

RUSTON COMMUNITY MEN'S SHED
Beulah Laster

Research shows that loneliness is twice as unhealthy as obesity and is linked to high blood pressure, strokes and a weakened immune system. Seeing that many in our community were alone and lonely, we started a men’s shed and now have a wonderful work space and tools. While we work on individual projects, we also plan group projects to sell so we can maintain our shed. Next we’re planning to make Corn Board sets and hold classes on fall decorations. Below, see Rhea DeOliviera a master with the jig saw.

U.S. Men’s Shed
Association
SHOULDERS TO SHOULDER

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CHALLENGES
Starting a US Men’s Shed Movement
Mark Winston
mark@usmenssheds.org

As you see, US Men’s Sheds are really taking off. We’ll keep you up-to-date with periodic newsletters.
Send articles and photos for the next one to: gsears@stanfordalumni.org

REGARDING PHOTOS
"A picture is worth a thousand words" is true only if the picture tells a story.
Send action photos with eyes on the activity in progress rather than on the camera.
Photos of comradery and group effort are especially interesting!

We’ve had challenges and learned lessons while starting the US Men's Shed. I’ll focus on two, but I know that we’ll continue to face new challenges as we go along.

The three founding directors were fortunate right out of the gate. We each had unique experiences with starting Sheds. This, we later reflected, was a primary bonding factor. We believed in the purpose of the Men’s Shed and knew we would be successful, so we sailed ahead without hesitation.

Our first challenge: processing inquiries. The Washington Post wrote an article about Men’s Sheds, their beginnings in Australia and subsequent international growth, including finding their way to the US. In response to that article, we had so many people contact us looking for Sheds in their area that keeping track of inquiries and processing them became a monumental task.

Though we have grown to six directors and a handful of Sheds, we feel understaffed. It took us several months to respond to people who had reached out to us. Although most were just wanted to join a Shed, we weren’t organized to respond smoothly. This took several months and wasn’t handled efficiently. One of our directors, a systems guy, got to work on G Suites. We can now record vital information and respond efficiently. We’re also exploring the Kintone Data Base.

Our second challenge: time. Where do we find time? Subsequent newspaper articles and good television coverage resulted in greater demand for Sheds. Identifying Shed leaders and starting new Sheds without proper funding has been a full-time job. We are all volunteers with other life demands.

Each director has a speciality. Now we each to play to our strengths: systems analysis, business planning, negotiating, communications and outreach. We’re disciplined with multi-level business backgrounds. We’re learning to pursue our strengths, hone our skills and move forward.

Fortunately we are motivated self-starters, but there’s more work to be done. Some days we put in five hours and feel it should have been ten. Both sleep and covering responsibilities are necessary. We’re coming along, but we no there yet.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

See page 2 for Mark Winston’s bio.  Phil Johnson