

The Woodturners Association of Western Australia (Inc)

Life Membership

Alan France - 245

Alan France, the Woodturners Association of Western Australia honours you and confers upon you Life Membership in recognition of the outstanding contribution you have made to the Association.

There are so many characteristics which Alan displays in the promotion of our art and Association, and they are all outstanding.

As a craftsman, there is no finer example of a master woodturner than Alan, the standard of his work is exemplary, embracing excellence in design, precision turning, elegant complexity and finish.

Alan has been a great participant in our competitions and that quality of his work has been such that he has received many awards, setting standards and inspiration to us all.

More recently, Alan has organised our workshop competitions, selecting the items which will encourage members at all levels to participate and consequently improve their skills. Alan has also established a judging panel and provided guidance to its members, another skill development.

Members have been fortunate on many occasions, when Alan has demonstrated some of his skills, his practical applications and explanations of design and construction reflect upon his expertise as a pattern maker.

Alan is a very supportive member of the Melville Group of the Association, and for many years has been the sole instructor for woodturning for the disabled at the Como Branch of the Totally and Permanently Disabled Institute.

Another Alan innovation, designed to encourage new members to participate, is the "Retrospective Series". This involves a member showing and discussing some of his work as his skill developed over a period of time, and this series has been a useful and instructive feature at our week end workshops.

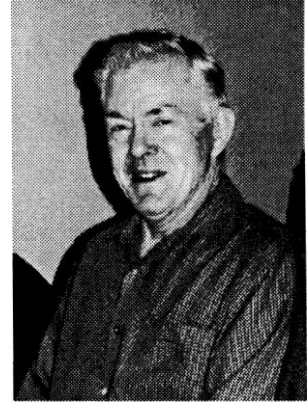
Alan France, we honour you as a Life Member of the Woodturners Association of Western Australia.

PROFILE OF A TURNER

(extract from newsletter number 69 June/July 1997)

Alan France, arguably one of WAWA's best turners is another of our genuine Sandgropers. He was born in Vincent St. North Perth, overlooking the football ground. Alan's father was a jeweller and watchmaker.

His father's business was in Katanning and Alan's primary schooling began there, but at age 9 the family moved to Subiaco where his primary schooling was completed. Alan's secondary schooling was undertaken at the Junior Technical School in Newcastle St., where, in addition to the normal academic subjects, instruction was given in technical drawing, metal work, wood work and blacksmithing. He successfully obtained his Junior Certificate at the school.



While still at school, Alan bred and competed with racing pigeons as a member of the junior section of the Subiaco Racing Pigeon Assn. A loft was built in the back yard of their home and Alan built his own time clock for the timing of the bird flights. He had about 40 birds and continued this hobby for about 4 years.

After completing his Junior Certificate, Alan obtained an apprenticeship with the WAGR at the Midland workshops as a Pattern Maker. This entailed making a huge variety of different patterns for mouldings of articles as diverse as handles and brake pads through wagon and engine wheels to a propeller for the state ship Kanimbla. The patterns were made in yellow pine as this gave minimum warping and the moulds would be made from these patterns.

For a change of scene, Alan then went with his brother crayfishing at the Abroholos Islands. In between pulling cray pots, Alan partook one of his favourite pastimes, which is wet line fishing. During one of these trips, he managed to put a hole in his boat which, unbeknown to him at the time, was very close to where the wreck of the Batavia was ultimately discovered. In between fishing seasons, Alan worked at Chamberlain Tractors as a pattern maker.

Alan says that in many ways the crayfishing and fishing were one of the highlights of his life, but having met and proposed to Maxine, with the long periods away and the uncertainties, he decided to leave cray fishing. As a point of interest, he was offered a fishing boat, together with licences, for \$500, a far cry from today's prices.

Having always had an ambition to be a teacher, Alan then enrolled at Teachers College and trained as a Manual Arts teacher. Over the years, he taught at Fremantle Boys, Geraldton, Cyril Jackson and Como Senior High School.

While woodturning was part of his trade as a pattern maker, it was mostly with scrapers and skew chisels and practically never with gouges. At the Midland Workshops there was a huge wood turning lathe which had a travelling post and they used a ring gouge for making patterns for cylinder rings for steam engines. They would turn slightly tapered cylinders and then cut them into rings from which the moulds were made.

In the schools only a limited amount of turning was done and he had never used high speed steel tools until he joined WAWA. Joe Saat introduced Alan to WAWA and most of what he has learnt has been learnt in the Association. He has obviously learnt well as he consistently wins the weekend competitions and the 'highest points for the year' competition. In particular, he is renowned for the accuracy of his joins in his segmented work and the innovative forms he has accomplished.

He is a popular and extremely competent demonstrator and his demonstrations are always eagerly attended. Alan is a great asset to our Association. 1997