

PROFILE OF A TURNER

Brian Launer was born in 1933 at Clare in South Australia. His parents were at the time living in a town called Marildon. The nearest school was at Farrell Flats some fifteen miles away and the train was the only available transport. This train came through at 11am, arriving at the school at 11.30am and then going back at 2.30pm giving the children just one and a half hours of schooling a day for the first three years. In 1942 the family moved to Applia where school was only two and half miles from home. They sometimes walked or they went by horse and cart. Brian enjoyed the woodwork classes that the school provided. He shared the usual duties about the house with his brother and four sisters. He did balk at hand milking cows.

He continued to grade seven and left school and went to work alongside his father on a wheat and sheep property owned by Mr. Jim Heaslip, the then member of parliament. This lasted until his son finished university and Brian was then made redundant. His first car was a 1926 Dodge which was used for family outings etc. Brian then did some share farming but as there was not enough land available for that to be viable, he looked for other ways to make money. Reading through the Stock Journal he saw a position in Western Australia by Mr. Eric Smart who was opening up the sand plain country at Mingenew. From Brian's enquiry Mr. Smart sent a telegram to "Suggest you fly over for an interview".

Brian and three of his mates drove over. He got the position and went back home to sell his machinery that he did not need in WA. He did bring his Lanz Bulldog tractor with him and worked for Mr. Smart for two years. While working for Mr. Smart, Brian met Nancy Wells. Nancy's brother also worked for Mr. Smart and when he came home to his family for holidays at Rosa Brook, Brian was invited.

Brian and his brother bought a lease hold property at Coroow and together they farmed for a number of years with the usual good and bad seasons. In 1967 Brian sold his share of the Coroow farm to his brother and moved down to Rosa Brook.

Brian and Nancy married in 1968.

Brian worked on the same farm as Nancy who had managed a Dairy, Beef Cattle, Sheep and Racehorses property for many years. A couple of years later Brian and Nancy moved to Perth and Brian worked for Park Engineers on steel construction until he heard that a farm at Rosa Brook was coming on the market. He was very keen to follow that up and was soon the new owner. This was walk in walk out which was a sheep farm with one house cow. That was the first to go if he had to milk it. Even worse Nancy agisted racehorses for a couple of years.

Being quite a small farm, he had to diversify and decided to try his hand at market gardening as a sideline to the sheep. His first crop were tomatoes. The next thing was how to market them, so it was off to the Metro Markets where the tomatoes were very sought after. Then it was growing cauliflowers and other vegetables. Market gardening had not been done in the district before. This was a good move, but the workload was very heavy to produce the quality of vegetables demanded by the buying public. The good water and river flats were ideal for vegetable growing. He market gardened for six years. Brian designed and subcontracted the building of a brick house on the farm. Brick houses were a rarity in the district in those days.

Three years on Brian had his first heart problems which ended with major heart surgery which put an end to farming. He then moved to Busselton and started playing about with woodwork. From here he saw an advertisement in the local paper that John Shinnick was holding a woodturning weekend. He followed that up and became member number 81 of WAWA. Brian attended nearly all meetings, was a member of the Committee for a time, travelling to Perth or wherever meetings were held. He demonstrated at various shows etc. and encouraged

members of the public to join the Association which, during that time membership grew at a rapid rate. He assisted setting up of special workshops with the Eastern States and overseas renowned woodturners. This entailed supplying wood, lathes, transport and billeting. He videoed all the visiting demonstrators which are in the WAWA library. He has taken part in many exhibitions including the National Exhibitions in Victoria and been lucky enough to have won prizes in most of them.

He was an active member of the shopping centre exhibitions, making trestles, stands, clothes etc. and assisting in running them. As the shopping centre group grew Brian stepped aside and he held his own exhibitions in shopping centres and wood shows.

Brian is a member of the Busselton Group and was the convenor for a few years.

The Woodturners Association is a great place to meet, learn and share experiences in woodturning. Brian has had a few health problems in later years including another major heart operation which has curtailed some of his attendance at meetings.

He also caught a "bug". It is called travel.

Note: Brian and Nancy certainly seem to have caught this "travel bug" as they have just returned from a "short" trip of 20,000 km through Queensland. So glad they found their way home.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 128 dated February/March 2007

VALE

Brian Launer (1933 – 2006)

The woodturning community lost one of its great participants and supporters with the sudden death of Brian Launer.

Brian joined the Association in February 1986, member number 81 and during his 20 years of membership he made a significant contribution to woodturning in Western Australia. In addition, some of his work featured in competitions in the Eastern States.

Brian, with his natural skills and attention to detail was always willing to demonstrate at weekend workshops and assist others in their problem solving.

In 1977, Brian was one of the founders of the Busselton Group, and he organised weekend workshops for that centre.

Brian served on the Committee of Management for four years and he was instrumental in having Del Stubbs, our first international turner visit us in Western Australia.

Brian, who had been honoured with an award of Merit for his contribution to the Association will be missed by us all.

Our sympathy to Life member Nancy on her sad loss.