

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 92 February/March 2001

PROFILE OF A TURNER

David Devereux

David's father, Edward Devereux migrated from England to Western Australia in 1911; his fiancé Mabel joined him two years later. They married in Harvey, and subsequently moved around the country areas doing building work wherever available, often living in bell tents. In the depression they found themselves working a fig orchard at Bullsbrook growing veggies and chickens for themselves. In 1931 David was welcomed into the family of five brothers and two sisters, what an asset all these children must have been during the process of drying figs for market! Each fig had to be dipped, then turned many times before packing and selling to small shops and the Boans and Foy's Department stores in Perth whenever this was possible.

David started school at Cottesloe State School and the story goes that he went home at lunch time because they didn't give him anything to do! Schools in Roleystone and Darwin followed. He and his family were evacuated from there on the State Ship Koolama just before the Japs bombed Darwin.

David with his family then settled in Perth at Victoria Park (David going to school there). At this school he and his fellow students collected rubber tyres and anything aluminium for the war effort, also gathering bottles which "The Bottlo" came with his horse and cart to pick them up.

At about twelve years of age David got a job (after school and on Saturday mornings) at the local grocery store delivering orders, first by bike and then with the horse and cart (stabled across the road) having a few close calls with the trams running down the centre of Albany Highway and buses on Canning Highway.

When war ended the class demolished the school air raid shelter, turning the materials into seats around the playground. David remembers this as being much better than schoolwork!

Crabbing and prawning was always fun at the causeway, then taking buckets of them to Perth to sell to the fish shops for threepence a pound. David got some funny looks from the tram conductor at times when he crept onto the back platform with his nets and smelly bait.

After moving to Kent Street High School, it wasn't long before the teacher sent a note home "put this boy to work as he is doing no good at school". Turning fourteen in September 1945, David started work with his father and brothers in building and renovation working in various trades (mainly carpentry). Since returning from Darwin David attended Perth Baptist Church and here met his future wife, Joy Crofts.

Joy was born and had grown up in India where her parents were missionaries for more than thirty years. David bought a block in Bayswater and built the back verandas of their present house. David and Joy lived there after their marriage in September 13th 1952. They gradually built the rest of the house, being twenty-five years before the final cupboards were complete due to the arrivals of five sons, caring for sick parents and working in the country at times. Building trades was always erratic at that time. He worked in a joinery shop as a wood machinist, until after taking a Trade Test he was allowed to join the Carpenters Union.

Later David started subcontracting with his brother Bob. They worked with various builders and, for long spells they were lucky to get three days' work per week. After a knee operation David took a foreman's job, driving two-hundred miles a day - Mandurah to North Beach and in the Metro area then on the phone organizing the tradesmen in the evening. The builder could not understand when he said it was not worth it as he was unable to spend time with his family. The builder thought the good money was all that mattered. In 1975 after a period roofing on his own David started at Fremantle Hospital in the Occupational Therapy Department where he made and fitted lamps and rails in the homes of people disabled through strokes exciter, enabling their return home. David worked at this job for sixteen years; liking the helping aspect very much; sadly, the job got busier and more stressful.

In the previous few years, he had been doing pottery for relaxation. He dug his own clays and blended them making pots and firing them in his home - made kerosene kiln. David had always had a love of wood with the variety of colour and grain so attractive that over time built-up a considerable collection.

One of his sons bought him an old lathe when he decided to try woodturning. On joining the Woodturners Association he went along with his brother Ted to the Melville Group at first, then moved to Midvale being much closer to home. David found it marvellous the way WAWA woodies shared their knowledge and were generous with advice and encouragement. He often had late meals because he got so engrossed in the turning, that time meant nothing (many readers will have no doubt experienced this too). David has found that inside-out turning has held a great fascination, so he has concentrated partiality on this aspect and has produced some spectacular turnings.

He is also interested in combining turning with carving. David has served on the Midvale Group committee for a number of years and had done an excellent job as monthly competition organiser. Despite some misgivings on his part, he did a good job, giving an illustrated presentation on his development of inside-out turning which was much appreciated by those present at Midvale that evening. David is a quiet achiever who is rather shy, in fact he confessed that he would rather have been turning than telling his life story. Thank you for sharing it with us.

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VALE

It is with a great deal of sorrow that we have been advised of the death of Mr David Devereux, a long-time member and supporter of the Swan Group. We mourn the loss of a very talented man. Rest in Peace David.