

## PROFILE OF A TURNER

**Geoff Barkla** has certainly made his mark since he joined WAWA in 1985 - Past President, Newsletter Editor, Committee Member, organiser of the Yellow Pages and Life Member.

Geoff was born in Katanning - his grandfather was the first chemist in that town. His father worked for what was then the WA State Savings Bank and moved around in this job. After four years in Kalgoorlie the family moved to Nedlands where he attended Nedlands Primary School. It was in First Infants in Nedlands where he met Gay who, of course, subsequently became his wife.

His schooling was finished at Wickelup where his father left the bank and bought a general store. On first leaving school, Geoff went farming but decided to go to the Perth Technical School in order to study internal combustion engines. He made the trip to Perth by bicycle.

While studying, he worked for Cartwrights Ice and Cold Storage until he became a diesel engineer with an unrestricted licence. He then worked at Morgan's as a powerhouse engineer.

At the outbreak of the 1939-45 war, he qualified for aircrew training in the reserves. He joined the RAAF in 1941 and spent four years flying as a wireless air gunner - at first in Lockheed Lodestars and eventually in Catalinas doing convoy duty and mine laying.

Geoff was left with one outstanding war memory. A call came from an Australian Corvette, which was sailing towards Darwin, to pick up a sick sailor. In their Catalina, they made an early morning start on a dull day but successfully located the Corvette. The ship's officer told them it was a moderate sea, so they asked him to sail into the wind so that they could land in his wake. It may have been a moderate sea to the Navy, but a 12ft swell is not moderate to a Catalina. A wingtip float was pushed back, one blister torn off and about 3 tons of water was shipped.

The ship's captain decided that the sailor had no hope unless he was taken off the ship and probably it was a better risk to attempt to fly him out. After jettisoning fuel and pumping out the water, the plane was airborne at 65 knots after cresting the third wave. They made Darwin safely but had to beach the plane. Unfortunately, the sick sailor died the next day.

On discharge in 1945, he found that jobs were scarce in his old profession, so he went to Darwin to run a powerhouse. This lasted about six months and he then went out on his own and developed a pest control business which he ran for the next 13 years. During this time his three children were born.

1959 saw Geoff back in Perth in chemical manufacture of spray resins etc. He retired in 1980. Besides his interests in woodturning and WAWA, Geoff has been prominent in Rotary and was Rotary District Governor in 1982-83.

Geoff believes that the fellowship in WAWA, plus the ready sharing of skills and the sincerity of its members, make it an organisation of which he is proud to belong.



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## VALE

### Geoff Barkla

Our Association has benefited immensely as a result of the membership of Geoff Barkla, who passed away suddenly on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

Geoff joined our Association in May 1986 (Member Number 116) and immediately accepted a role on the Committee of Management and served as our second President during 1988 – 1990.

During that time Geoff also became the telephone contact for the Association through the Yellow Pages, a role he filled selflessly for the next 16 years.

Following serving as President, Geoff undertook the role of our Newsletter Editor and was ably assisted by his wife, Gay, who passed away 4 years ago.

Geoff was always willing to assist in the management and promotion of the Association and chaired the organising committee of the Exhibition of Excellence in 1992.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Association, Geoff was rewarded with the conferring of Life Membership in 1992.

Well done, Geoff.

Written by Milton Rundle