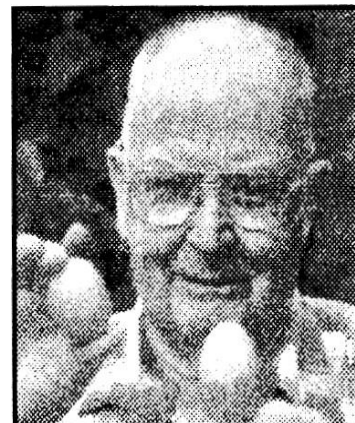


PROFILE OF A TURNER

Jeff Tills

I was born at Carnarvon in 1925. My father was a PMG line foreman resulting in transfers to various locations. Most of my school days were at Tambellup, a small farming town. I can remember the hardships of the depression when very few families had full employment. I am grateful that I have always been fully employed.

I left school at 14 and started work the next morning at 7.30 am as a butcher's delivery boy in Pinjarra. After a year I decided it was not the job for me, so I went into the building industry as an apprentice carpenter. The war had begun and there was a lot of construction building military bases. Life was hard for a young lad, living in a tent, hard bed, dirt floor, bag for a mat, packing case for a table, hurricane lamp, long work hours, little social life and wages of 15/- (\$1.50) per week.



At 18, I enlisted in the Air Force, attended technical schools in Perth and Melbourne and served at various stations in W A as aircraft ground crew. On discharge (next morning) I resumed my apprenticeship thus I was 24 before I became a tradesman. I continued technical training for the Master Builders Certificate and Technical Certificate of Concrete. I tried contract building for several years and it was a cutthroat business in the 50's. Work long hours six days a week, at the end of the job they can't pay! I decided to work on large projects, interesting work with good pay. In 1960 I went to Koolan Island, a very picturesque place, steep cliffs and mountains rising from the ocean. It was a major project, building all facilities, roads, town houses, wharf, mine workshops, crushing plant storage area, conveyer systems and air strip. Koolan Is. Golf Club had the longest hole in the world, 793 metres. I was given Honorary Life membership.....not for my golfing ability.

I married at 26 and have 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls. My family loved Koolan Is., but our marriage broke up and they left. I stayed until 1966, came south as I needed an operation. I then went to Dampier working for Utah Construction as foreman on processing plants, power station and railway bridges. The Company wanted to send me to Queensland, building coal mining facilities. I chose to come to Mandurah; my parents were retired here.

In 1970 I married Marjorie and began working at Alcoa, Pinjarra as Building Inspector. I worked on the mine sites, Wagerup, Kwinana Refineries and Hedges Gold mine. This was a rushed job, and I had a heart attack at 63. I retired and travelled around Australia for 18 months.

Until recently I was a keen fisherman and am a member of the Mandurah Offshore Fishing Club and spent many hours on busy bees doing maintenance work and bar duty at the club. I served on the General Committee and was Fishing Master for a 3-year term.

A fishing mate was a keen woodturner, so I bought a lathe, band saw and some cheap chisels. I did a course at Mandurah High School, 19 men and 5 lathes. I didn't do much turning but watching others I learnt what not to do!

Ray Quadrio was the instructor, he advised us about WAWA's forthcoming workshop at Mandurah. I joined the group in 1996 and was soon conned into becoming Secretary. In 1998 I was Convenor (no one else would take it on). I am currently Property Officer.

I enjoy woodturning, it keeps me active in mind and body. I haven't the gift of creativity but enjoy seeing what can be made from a piece of wood.

I have made many friends in the Woodturning Clubs, sharing the same interests and exchanging views.