

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 87 dated April/May 2000

Observations Bunbury WEWS 2000

Mike Kenny's decorative "butterfly bowls" require intense concentration and a high skill level while shaping the propeller - like structure.

And yet he was able to describe his cutting methods and how to avoid potential dangers as he was working. Mike held his audience by having bowls at various stages of completion so that there was no repetitious time - consuming turning. His relaxed presentation was made possible by his high degree of craftsmanship combined with good communication techniques.

Extract from Newsletter issue 110 dated February/March 2004

PROFILE OF A TURNER

MICHAEL KENNY number 41

Mike was born in Bunbury in March 1943. He spent a lot of his growing years in Balingup with his Grandparents as his father was away in the Army. He went to school in Bunbury, St. Mary's, South Bunbury State School and Marist Bros. He left school at 14 to work in a market garden in Gelorup near Bunbury for the princely sum of \$4.00 a week. At 15 he worked at the Forrest theatre and was paid \$5.00 a week. His next job was milking cows for Brian Clifton in Brunswick where he lived in a shed on the farm and was paid \$6.00 (plutocrat now) a week. At 16 Mike (he had no licence) rode a motor bike from Bunbury to Brunswick to milk cows for Frank Devlin.

Jobs were hard to find in those days, so he went lawn mowing with a mate to make ends meet. Next job was with Ross Payne's Abattoirs in Boyanup where he was paid \$32.00 a week. He spent some time with Westralian Oil, a sand mining company in Capel before going back to Payne's Abattoirs again and it was while working here that he met Sandra Purdy and married her. They have two children, Robyn and Graeme and three grandchildren. Mike then joined Peters Creameries in Brunswick driving trucks and tankers collecting milk and cream around the southwest. He left Peters to drive bulldozers for Catalano's in Brunswick. He worked all over the southwest and ended up north on the gas pipeline. He stayed up there for a while and did the same (dozer) job for John Holland. When that finished, he came back to Brunswick and worked for Carbone Bros again as a dozer driver. He again joined Peters as a cheese packer and stayed with them until he retired due to ill health when he was diagnosed with MS. Mike was a volunteer ambulance driver in Brunswick for over 35 years and also a fire fighter for 16 years.

In 1983 a group of men interested in woodturning got together and met at Pat O'Connor's place in a tent on his back lawn which was the formation of the Bunbury Group. They then moved into Westwood Timbers and had three lathes operated by John Shinnick, Mike and Pat O'Connor.

In 1985 John Shinnick, Mike and several other Bunbury members went up to Eneabba to Keith McQueen's place with the idea to start a state organisation. Keith McQueen wanted an 'elite' group of turners, but this was objected to by the Bunbury members and thus WAWA was born.

Mike has been a committee member of the Bunbury Group since it was founded which is a feat in itself. Mike travels to most of the WAWA workshops with the help of his mates Roy Harris and Max Rutherford as he can no longer drive. He also goes to the Collie meetings each month as well.

He still spends as much time as possible on his trusty Tough turning out butterfly bowls which are his specialty. He is still keen enough to teach his lady therapists after they have given him his massage and therapy. His grandchildren come into his workshop to watch him turning and place their orders for things to be turned. Mike has always been there for his family, and now they are there for him along with the friends he has made over the years at WAWA.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter 117 dated April/May 2005

During the Bunbury Weekend Workshop in February 2005 **Mike Kenny** was presented with a Merit Award.

Mike has been a member of the Bunbury Committee from the very beginning.

Mike's wafer-thin butterfly bowls with their cunning exploitation of natural grain made them things of beauty, whilst his unerring skill with the sharpening stone made him a valuable asset to our club.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 194 dated January/February 2018

We heard recently from **Michael Kenny**, a Life Member of WAWA and the proud holder of membership number 41.

Michael has been living in retirement in Brunswick Junction with his wife Sandra for a number of years. He was the WAWA safety officer for 13 years, and joined WAWA at its second meeting, which was held at the late John Shinnick's house at 22 Shines Crescent, Brunswick Junction.

Michael tells us that he and his mate John Shinnick used to drive to Eneabba in his ten-year old Valiant ute for the weekend workshops held there in WAWA's early days. The workshops were run by Keith McQueen who specialised in turning goblets and greatly inspired him.

Later, at the Yarloop workshops, he passed on the skills that he had acquired and taught fellow woodturners how to sharpen their (mainly carbon steel) tools without getting them too

hot. This was a technique that he had learned from his father. He also shared his experiences at the Manjimup and Bunbury sheds where he, too, specialised in turning goblets, many of which were given away as gifts after a public demonstration.

Michael's interest in turning was not confined to goblets, of course, and he sent through a number of pictures of work that he had done over the years, but one item that gave him great pleasure was the round jarrah dining table which still occupies pride of place in his home. He worked on this, on and off, for nearly two years, but going through the grits got to be more than he wished for. After eight long hours with a hired industrial floor sander, and thoughts that he was never going to complete it, he decided to take the whole lot to the Boranup Gallery. The people there finished the sanding, polished the table, and made matching jarrah and leather dining chairs with jarrah burl armrests.

The item which gave him the greatest pleasure, and which he still has, was a freestanding floor lamp that he designed. The design took three weeks. The turning took another 30 hours. After all these years, he is still extremely proud of the outcome.

Michael was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2001. He is now unable to walk and has limited mobility in his left arm and hand which restricts his use of a number of woodturning tools. But he still attends the Harvey Men's Shed weekly for social interaction and continues to enjoy the opportunity to share his knowledge and do the occasional small project. 2018

