

Extract from Newsletter number 118 dated June/July 2005

PROFILE OF A TURNER

Neil Piper was born in Cambridge, England in 1927 and came to Australia in the same year moving onto the family farm at Bindi Bindi in February 1928.

His primary school years were done at the local school travelling by horse and cart with three other brothers. Secondary schooling was at Narrogin School of Agriculture for a period of two years, returning to the farm in 1942.

Owing to acreage restrictions, there was not enough work on the farm, so he and his twin brother spent three years with a shearing team working through the Kimberly, Pilbara and Murchison regions and finally at two stations not far from the family farm.

As the war had finished, he returned to work on the farm and formed a partnership with his father and twin brother in 1951.

Neil married June in March 1951 - a daughter was born in 1952 and a son in 1954.

In 1956, Neil and his twin brother bought their father's share of the farm and the senior Pipers retired to Bunbury. Neil and Ian also purchased the next-door property, which increased the farm to 4,500 acres.

Neil and June left the farm in 1975 owing to June's failing health and moved to a home in Willetton. Neil got a job with Wesfarmers at the Midland stock yards, working there for the next 15 years.

June passed away in 1991 after a very long and debilitating illness.

In 1992 Neil moved to Gosnells with his daughter and son-in-law, living there for the next 12 years. Then another move, on to Roleystone, this time on half an acre block.

Neil joined WAWA in March 1987 and still thinks it was the best move he has made.

Extract from Newsletter issue 146 dated February/March 2010

Observations Bunbury WEWS 2010

Neil Piper introduced his demonstration of how to make a ships wheel with a talk on the early sailing ships that visited Bunbury. The wheel was 300mm in diameter and could have a clock or other instrument in the centre. Neil explained the need for careful planning and absolute accuracy as a minute error would be magnified as the segments increased. The wheel was made with eight segments in two parts. The eight spokes were fitted to the centre boss, after leaving the initial glue up to 24 hours to set. Neil passed around a completed wheel, the craftsmanship was appreciated and admired by all who saw it. Neil then gave us some more history of the Bunbury port including the involvement of American whalers, he also told us that there were 19 identified shipwrecks in the harbour. Possibly some advanced turners may take up the challenge of this very demanding but rewarding project.

Extract from newsletter issue 150 dated June/July 2010

Observations Wandi WEWS July 2010

Neil Piper was demonstrating how to make a serviette holder using a jig with the wood bolted to it to cut two offset circular patterns and then turned over to cut a large circle. This was cut in halves and with a base was glued up in a jig. Unfortunately, I did not see much of this demonstration, and you would have to see the complete job to appreciate the complexity of the task.

Extract from newsletter issue 221 dated March/April 2022

Profile of a Turner – Neil Piper (285) was born in Cambridge, England on 4 February 1927 and was the youngest of four siblings with the eldest being some 8 years, the next some 6 years and the last only about ten minutes his senior. Yes, he is a twin but not to be confused with Danny De Vito and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

It wasn't long before his family saw the light and emigrated to Australia landing in Fremantle in September 1927 and after a short stint in the port city they then moved to a farm in Bindi Bindi in February 1928. His schooling was done at the local primary school and subsequently at the Narrogin Agricultural School which was later to be closed down for use by the military.

In later years, Neil worked on the family farm until, due to the war, the family was restricted in their capacity to farm by the redirection of shipping to the war effort and subsequent lack of superphosphate so during this period, he went to work with a shearing team along with his brother and did so until after the war when it again became possible to utilize the farm fully. This continued until 1975 when he took up a position working in the sheep yards in Midland, a position he occupied for about 15 years.

Neil then took an interest in the craft of wood turning and joined WAWA in 1987 and showed a lot of promise and skill in the use of the tools making a wide variety of items while taking a shine to the turning of salt & pepper grinders which became a bit of a passion. Having made well over a thousand of them, you could say he has developed quite a portfolio of knowledge and experience in their manufacture. Neil is the go-to man at our club for any aspiring younger turners wanting to emulate Neil's style and draw on his knowledge of how to go about it.

During his time in the woodturning fraternity, Neil has held a number of positions including several stints on the CoM and one as Vice President, has been responsible for the running of the WAWA library, has spent many years working with the shopping centre group and has actively been a tutor for over seven years passing on his knowledge and skill to new members of the Melville club.

While Neil has received many accolades over the years, it could be said that the jewel in the crown is his award of Life Membership of WAWA in 2002.

Neil was married to his late wife in 1951 and together they had two children, a daughter in 1952 and a son in 1954 and between them, they have blessed Neil with 5 grandchildren and currently 3 great grandchildren.

While Neil may not be quite as sprightly as he once was, he is still an active and much valued member of the Melville Woodturners and always willing to pass on the benefit of his many years of knowledge and experience. All you need do is ask