

Noel Archdall

A member of Woodworkers of Southern Peninsula for the last six years – this is his second year on the Committee. Initially, he started on Toys then added woodturning as part of a ‘restoration project’. In toys, Noel has been pro-active with new ideas. He moved with Pam to Capel Sound eight years ago. However, his first exposure to a woodworker type organization was to a Men’s Shed in Broome. That’s Broome in Western Australia – way up North West. For several years, he and Pam took 4-5 months or so in a caravan meandering their way across Australia and ending there to visit a daughter. Being in Broome for several months, they joined in local community life – tennis, etc. – including, for Noel, the Men’s Shed. This included helping with their move to a larger shed (sound familiar?). The guy in charge of the Men’s Shed was quite a character – worth a chat with Noel sometime. Their daughter has now moved to Newell Beach (near Mossman) in Far North Queensland.

A visit to their place in Capel Sound is an experience. Noel did warn me to avoid the pine tree in the middle of the road – good advice. What a delightful little area with a dirt road leading to two cul-de-sacs. The local bird life certainly appreciates Noel and Pam’s presence – magpies, kookaburra, black birds, wattle birds and more. The children’s toy library down the street was Noel’s handiwork.

Noel was born in Coburg - a post war baby – shortly after his father returned from WW11. Then Natimuk, Cranbourne (where his parents hailed from), Bayles, Fish Creek, Port Fairy and Timboon. While in Timboon, Noel completed Year 12 at Warrnambool High School driving the 60 odd km to and from – too young for a driver’s license for a start. The Austin A40 ute was fine transportation for a young guy but the backfire had to be tamed – particularly when passing the Timboon Police station.

Finally moving to the big smoke for work at 18 years old. His father was a baker who owned and ran small ‘Mum-and-Dad’ bakeries. His way to get a break (holiday) was to sell up and move. Neither, Noel or his brother were interested in baking after all these moves so it was the end of the baking dynasty.

Noel started work in the Department of Crown Lands and Survey as a Survey Draftsman studying cartography part time at RMIT while working on surveying and mapping. For a while, Noel was seconded to the Housing Commission working on plans of sub-divisions, set out plans for high-rise towers, engineering feature plans and other projects.

Noel played in the VFA under 19’s for Northcote. A game against Prahran ended in an all-in brawl with the umpires calling the match off. One of the more exciting games Noel played – it caused the end of his football career.

After some 5 years, Noel moved to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in Orrong Road, Toorak working in the Survey Branch. His main tasks were on irrigation projects – Northern Victoria, and Central Gippsland but included water reticulation to the Mornington Peninsula. During his time at State Rivers, they sent a team of his staff to Ethiopia to do similar work over there – on a United Nations sponsored mission.

Finally, after 3-4 years at State Rivers, Noel moved to RMIT – in the Department of Survey and Civil Technology teaching surveying, drafting, survey calculations and photogrammetry – for the next 25 years. Initially, the Department was located adjacent to the Old Melbourne Jail in the Swanson Street campus before moving to a new building on the corner of Queensbury and Lygon Streets,

Carlton. Noel worked his way up to Head of the Department and survived two rounds of Departmental mergers. However, the third such round of mergers lead to redundancy.

Noel's time at RMIT included a planned twelve-month stint as lecturer in Penang, Malaysia. This was a course at a privately-owned college which provided Malaysian students with credits towards courses at RMIT – and provided the RMIT with a steady supply of students. The campus was brand new and included accommodation buildings for the lecturers. However, Dr Mahathir, the then Prime Minister, had other ideas and terminated a bunch of Visas – including Noel's after only six months.

After RMIT, Noel was employed by National Foods in their new cream plant in Chelsea Heights. Initially, this included documentation of procedures as well as working in the plant. When the documentation was complete, Noel moved to three days a week in the plant with golf on Tuesdays and tennis on Thursday. This proved to be a nice way to ease into retirement. His golfing interest extended to an old men's competition at Chelsea plus some mid-week pennant. Tennis was a bit more serious becoming Dandenong and District Tennis Association President for several years.

Noel's eldest son is living in Taiwan for the last ten years teaching English and is married with three children. His second son lives in North Melbourne and has two children. Pam has four children, nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Noel and Pam have much evidence around the back yard of their beachcombing times at Broome – buoys, hawsers and coconuts from FNQ. And Noel has decorated home with his woodturnings (including several very large Banksia (*Banksia Grandis*) nuts), boxes, etc. And Noel has the common 'man cave' problem – needs to be larger (good luck with that problem Noel) PS: Pam advises "It's not happening!!!