

Wonthaggi Woodcrafters Inc

The Wonthaggi Woodcrafters remembers a valued and respected member, **Alan McNaught**

Club member N^o 38 , Member from 2003 to 2019

ALAN McNAUGHT (1925-2019)

This eulogy was written by Alan Hurst and delivered at the Inverloch Uniting Church 25 October 2019

Thank you to Alan's family for allowing me the opportunity to speak about Alan McNaught on behalf of the Wonthaggi Woodcrafters.

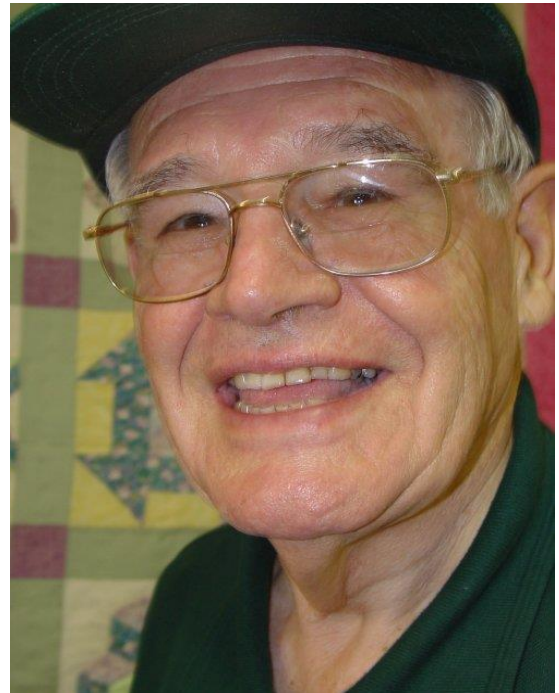
I first met Alan when I joined the Inverloch Probus Club after moving to Inverloch in 2005. Alan was a respected member of that Club and had instigated the tradition of gifting their guest speakers with a woodturned pen, which of course he personally made and donated. I am happy to say that this tradition continues today.

When I joined the Woodies a few years later, I came to know Alan better. He had to review his commitments as he dedicated himself to caring for Bonnie and unfortunately couldn't continue with Probus, but he loved the half day a week he could still come to the Woodies when a carer came in to assist at home.



During that time Alan was very keen to pass on his unique and considerable skills in the art of segmented woodturning and because he couldn't get to the Club, he invited interested Woodies members to his home over a period of time to teach them in his own workshop. Many benefited from this opportunity.

Following Bonnie's passing, Alan returned to the Woodies and introduced a Segmented Turning workshop session. He was also keen to learn more about furniture making and so began a friendship with Robert Millard. Robert says Alan was a very quick learner and so enthusiastic and creative that it wasn't long before he was creating exceptional pieces of small and larger furniture. Alan later also joined the Toymakers group and enjoyed the camaraderie. He was a passionate supporter of the toymakers and enjoyed being involved with the group, making wooden toys that would put a



smile on kids' faces. Alan was extremely proud of his own children and grandchildren, often talking about them as he worked and sometimes returning from visiting his son's farm with some pecan nuts to share with everyone.

Alan McNaught had a multitude of fine qualities which were evident in all the things he did at the Woodies. He was a natural leader, teacher and mentor; he was skilful, creative and quietly confident. He was generous of spirit, advice, time, support and encouragement and was always willing to share his broad knowledge of woodcrafting. He was wise and astute. The Woodies have benefited greatly by his generosity in gifting equipment for which he wanted no kudos or acknowledgement. The Club is deeply indebted to Alan for all of these things. Many members were also provided with very special, sometimes rare, pieces of timber when they were needed for projects.

Unquestionably regarded as the elder statesman at the Woodies - even newer members who'd never met Alan, knew of him and admired his work in our display cabinet.

I would like to read an email I received yesterday from a new member, Rowena Matcock, who only had a few sessions with Alan and couldn't make it here today -

Within her email she says - *I only knew Alan for a very short time but he was a 'gentleman' in all of the best aspects of the word. He was kind, gentle, very giving and generous with his time and knowledge. He also had that wicked glint in his eye and a great smile that made me believe that he was very good humoured. I would have loved to have worked with him further.*

But Alan was not perfect - then again, who is? Alan was a great proponent and highly supportive of all aspects of safety in workshops and especially at the Woodies, but unfortunately at times he didn't observe the standards himself. This resulted in a couple of nasty accidents that were wake up calls for Alan, but could have been much worse.

Although Alan was generally affable and happy and had that wonderful warm smile, you knew when he was unhappy about or strongly disagreed with something, as that smile quickly changed to a stern, piercing glare that let you know he didn't agree or had a very different point of view.



When Alan suggested something, it was never dismissed offhand and generally acted upon.

Alan was the Guru of [segmented turning](#) and renowned not just by everyone at the Woodies, but throughout the woodturning fraternity Australia-wide for his wonderful work and his desire for accuracy, perfect finish and presentation.

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To say Alan was passionate about accuracy in his woodcrafting would be an understatement ... The Woodies had just purchased a new table saw and Alan was setting it up for segmented cutting. He was unhappy with the accuracy which he said needed to be about 1/10 mm. I joked that I couldn't imagine 1/10 mm let alone see the need to set something up with that degree of accuracy. I immediately got that piercing look and stood transfixed as Alan explained in no uncertain terms why that minute tolerance was necessary.

The quality and uniqueness of Alan's work was reflected in the number of prizes he was awarded at the annual Australian Woodturning Exhibition over time, even as recently as just a few years ago. His work was also sold in galleries and it mind-boggled many people at our Club displays and sales events. His larger works (often with thousands of individual pieces) were always placed in prominent positions and were always the most pointed at, commented on and invariably the question was asked - how is it done?

Alan worked with John DiStefano to design software to support and simplify the creation of segmented works. Alan's knowledge of the processes and John's software development skills led to the creation of a unique program that John has generously offered for the free use of other woodturners Australia wide.

Alan's generosity was often demonstrated. As an example - at the Club's new workshop official opening just a few years ago, the Mayor at the time, Councillor Pamela Rothfield, was genuinely taken with one of Alan's pieces. It was a large piece he was very proud of and he'd put a high price on it because I think he was happy to keep it. However, the mayor's interest led to Alan donating that piece to the Bass Coast Shire Council to be added to their substantial Art collection and it will be in pride of place when the collection is displayed in a new home shortly.



Alan also made a Japanese style outdoor bench seat for the Wonthaggi Bowling Club and Ron Snooks tells me that it is well used and constantly admired, especially by visitors and new comers.

Alan was rightly proud of his work, but was also often self-critical as he was a perfectionist. Close enough was NEVER good enough for Alan McNaught. But it was always nice to see the smile on Alan's face as a piece of his work was displayed and discussed at Show and Tell during a monthly Woodies General Meeting - and to see an even bigger smile as the work of one of his students was displayed.

There are 10 or more Woodies members, both men and ladies, who are now highly proficient at segmented turning, so Alan's legacy will live on at the Club.

Alan McNaught will always be fondly remembered with reverence and respect at the Woodies - his legacy will not just be the skills he passed on to so many people, but his valued friendship, his positive attitude to life and his perfectionist approach to the work he created.

We'll all miss you greatly Alan - Rest in Peace.

ALAN McNAUGHT SUCCESSFUL AT AWTEX AGAIN:

Once again, Alan McNaught has had success at the Australian Woodturning Exhibition with his magnificent segmented turning creations.

Pictured here are the two items he was awarded 3rd Place for. The bowl on the right comprised over 1800 individually cut pieces. Alan continues to amaze with his incredible level of skill and accuracy. He says that the quality of entries at AWTEX was incredibly high this year. Alan is now creating a bowl of over 2000 pieces – his biggest yet and we hope to see a further prize for that at AWTEX 2017.

For those that may be unaware, your Committee has decided to nominate Alan McNaught for the Victorian Senior of the Year Awards. The

recipients of these Awards will be announced on 4th October. We believe Alan is very worthy of such an Award with his work over time at the Woodies and with various other community groups.

