

Member Profile

Tom Burt

Life Member 1977

TOM BURT'S HISTORY at PDSC

At age 14, in 1952, Don Devine, who was a neighbour in Mt Hawthorn, suggested I come down to the Dinghy Club for a sail on Christmas morning. We had to be home by lunchtime! The boat was a VJ and started my relationship with the Club.

The Perth Fourteen Foot Dinghy Club was positioned on Riverside Drive. As teenagers we rode our bikes to the club with the sails on the handlebars. That started wonderful friendships. The lads from Mt Hawthorn included Don & Bill Devine, Barry, Ray & Phil Hancock.

As Don was a cabinet Maker, it was natural that he lead a team of keen boat builders constructing VJs on his parents back verandah. This was the start of our year-round activities --- sailing all summer, boat building all winter.

Circa 1955

Cars became part of my life, as I was now working. Doing auto-body repair apprenticeship at my father's business. We made racks to carry our VJs & sails on our cars. During those years it was common to participate at other clubs as well. Before we had cars, Brian Burke's Dad, Bill, used to tow the VJs to & from Maylands Sailing Club with his power boat.

Brian was sailing 14 foot dinghies, together with other Floreat lads. This was the start of lifelong friendships, Burkes, Strangers, Slosses, Creeds, Wests, Hancocks, Devines & Burts.

Circa 1960

The new Narrows Bridge was being built, so our Club House needed to relocate. Through Bill Burke, the land in Crawley Bay was acquired. The site required the removal of huge Moreton Bay Fig trees. Manpower was provided by the "Juniors" (in their 20s). Trees were cut down, big piles of wood burnt & the roots were helped along by using old tyres. I remember regular trips to the club grounds to keep the fires going.

A tin shed was the temporary change room & club room. The boys enjoyed a beer or two after the racing. Eventually the Liquor Licensing Dept caught up with them...Bill Burke, a nondrinker, had to represent them in court!

1960 the new Perth Dinghy Club house was officially opened with the tremendous support from Bill Burke, Phil Nickels, Bruce Sloss, Clarrie Felton, Arthur Urquhart & their wives.

All this time, VJs were the yachts of choice for the young lads, but the "14 Footer" was beckoning. The Chinese design was the latest. Don offered to mastermind a mass production of new design 14 footers, mostly built after work hours at my Dad's workshop in Main Street Osborne Park. At that time 14 footers had a crew of three.

In 1962, Australian National Championships were held in Melbourne. Don, Billy, Bernie Quinlan & I drove across the Nullarbor. The yacht went by train. Don, Billy & Bernie won the title. This was the start of many more cross-Australia trips towing yachts & participating in National Titles over the years. My 14 footer was always called "Revel" with W8 on the mainsail. Over the years I financed my new boats by buying, repairing & selling cars.

There was a group of sailors at SPYC developing their own style of 14 footer circa 1963. Trevor Betts, Ron Ellard, Robbie Masel, the Burke Brothers, Peter & Barry Nevard, Ian Blankensee & Colin Cowden. This created great inter-club rivalry & the beginning of the 2 crew 14 footer.

In 1963 I met my Bev from Queensland. We married in 1964. As Bev's family was over east there was always an extra incentive to travel to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide for 14 foot Nationals, especially when the three children arrived.

During late 60's I took on position of Junior Rep on Management. It wasn't long before I was doing Officer duties & became Commodore. 1970-72. I was 32.

Mid 70's

Our Auto-repair business & family life were taking more of my time but I still enjoyed sailing 14's. It was a great joy encouraging our two sons, Stephen & Bradley with their Mudlarks, & later on our daughter, Carolyn. It wasn't long before a junior class was required for the abundance of youth in our club.

Jim Merton, a Javelin sailor, designed the Junior Dinghy. Six fathers shared their diverse knowledge & talents to produce 6 JDs in Tom Burt & Co. workshop. The start of another sailing class for PDSC.

In 1977 I was honoured with club Life Membership.

In 1988 WA 14 foot Dinghy Assn made me a Life Member.

The Javelin class continued to develop & so gained my interest. Jim Merton designed me a hull which won me National Title in 1993 in Ceduna SA. I enjoyed sailing Javs until early 2000s. The names of my Javelins were M'Lashot, & Fat Lady Sings...During that time the club was short of flag officers, so I took on officer duties & became Commodore again 1995-97. We travelled to Victoria many times & to Ceduna for National Championships over those years.

When I decided to retire from sailing, I accepted position of Juniors Coach. Each Saturday morning for over a decade with a team of regular helpers we saw a stream of children become competent sailors, many continuing on in senior classes.

I have always held an interest in maintaining the power boats of our club. These power boats, used as starting - boats and as safety - craft are an important component in sailing administration. There are always plenty of repairs & adjustments to be done, especially leading up to the start of each summer season.

In 2010 I was made a Life Member of WA Javelin Assoc.

Since 2010, I have taken the position of Club Starter.

PDSC is called our "Summer Residence" , as Bev & I enjoy spending each Saturday during the sailing season in the company of like-minded yachting families. Sharing many meals & drinks overlooking our beautiful Swan River. Our children have grown up at the club & also enjoy lifelong friendships with fellow members.

In 1981 we lost our dear son Brad. One Saturday in November each year is dedicated to the Brad Burt Memorial, where each class races for Brad's trophy. Our family is touched by witnessing many of his mates vying for that trophy. We are blessed by the support of OUR CLUB.

In 2015 I was really chuffed to be chosen by the Commodore as PDSC Club Person. "