

SHADOWS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

by Cyril Heberle

Some three decades ago a few camera enthusiasts decided it would be an advantage to form a local camera club. Most wished to learn all they could about photography and felt it would give them a means of improving their skills through lectures and slide sets. Through competition with other club members they could improve and turn out better results. Like many other organizations it was a struggle to get started.

Fourteen intending members met for the inaugural meeting held at the Katanning Hotel's Commercial Room on 28 August 1958. Office-bearers elected were President, H. Jenkinson; Vice President, B. Mills; Secretary/Treasurer, N. Folley. (Three sent their apologies including B. Tassicker, the only foundation member still active in the Club today.) The name 'Katanning Camera Club' was adopted and a constitution was drawn up which, with minor amendments, is still in use today. Meetings were to be held on the first Thursday of each month at 8.00 p.m. Subs were set at £1 (\$9), Juniors 10s (\$4.50).

Competitions were soon arranged for black and white prints, colour slides and prints from slides, and a film evening was held for those interested.

The Agricultural Society was contacted with a view to starting a photographic section at the next Show. Over the years the Katanning Agricultural Society photography section was to become the best display of photography work at any Agricultural Show. It was like looking into a shop window of the Club's work for the year and was much appreciated by members after all the effort they put into it.

The Club had quite a few changes in meeting places until 1963 when a more permanent venue was found, rent-free, at Garretson's garage in Drove Street. Twenty members attended the first meeting there. This was a period when the keenness of Club members was very apparent, and fifty to sixty people joined in a very short time. With so much activity it was found necessary to hold meetings twice monthly and to have extra workshop nights. Many inter-club competitions with Gnowangerup, Mt Barker and Albany were held, and Katanning was in

demand to provide judges for other town competitions.

In 1965 the Club affiliated with the WA Photographic Society (later named WA Photographic Federation — WAPF).

The Katanning Show photography section was expanding all the time and the need for better presentation saw Ross Courtis build a rear projection screen which could be used in a confined space and was less affected by excess light. At about the same time Wally Longmire made up two double-sided island display stands to further utilize the small area allocated. In later years the Club was given extra space, and exhibition prints from Perth-based newspapers, overseas consulates and photographic firms brought more interest to the section.

Due to the Club's efforts in promoting photography, the Katanning Show entries increased to such a degree that they could no longer be judged on the morning of the first day. With the agreement of the Show Committee entries are now judged a week before the Show commences, and this system works well.

At one Show the Secretary of the Club at the time, W. (Bill) Robertson (later to become the Club's first life member), was asked, 'How does the Club put together such a good photographic show year after year?' He replied, 'It's gradually built up over the years from a small beginning to its present size, and it's a means of viewing members' achievements for the year. Having a Club member on the Show Committee, together with our enthusiastic and willing members, has made all the difference between our show and others.'

Overall the Camera Club has gone from strength to strength, although it has had its ups and downs, sometimes losing members, other times gaining a few; but a handful of stalwarts has kept going through thick and thin, especially when at times it looked like going into recess. Harry Jordan was one who held the Club together when he was President, sometimes acting as Secretary/Treasurer at the same time. This was when Cyril and Malcolm Heberle joined, largely due to Harry's influence. Christmas wind-ups were always something to look forward to. Mostly they took the form of a barbecue at which all the families were welcome.

In 1977 W. Robertson won \$700 (\$1,400) in the WAPF lottery and in a true act of good fellowship he donated \$200 (\$400) to the Federation to invest and gave the other \$500 (\$1,000) to the Katanning Camera Club to be invested for four years and the interest spent on prizes for competitions and to boost the Club account. Bill's comment was that the raffle was to raise money to assist photography so the best thing to do was put it where it could do most good. It is no wonder the Club calls him its benefactor. At this time the Treasurer's report showed a credit balance of \$64.20 (\$130). Ten years later it had grown to over \$1,000.

Nineteen eighty-four saw the Club again promoting the coming Katanning Show, having just moved into a new and much better stand. It was a very busy time for members setting it all up, but the end result

was very worthwhile. The Club had one of the best and best-lit venues possible, without spending a lot of money. At this time ten trophies and prize money could be competed for. When all entries were checked there were a record 704. The judge in his comments congratulated the Club on the very high standard, good venue and good lighting and concluded by saying 'Well done Katanning Camera Club'.

At the 1985 State Easter Convention the Camera Club made a tentative decision to hold the 1986 Convention in Katanning. The Club surprised itself and everyone else when it made the final decision to go ahead, with help from Mt Barker Club. At this time membership was low, but we had some very strong members and the die was cast — the Club had taken up the challenge. St Andrew's Hostel was checked out as the best venue, a programme was drawn up, sponsorships arranged, guest speakers invited and other details finalized, with everything going according to plan. Extra pressure was put on the Club members who also organized the Katanning Show photography section. Four hundred and twenty-six entries had to be checked before the Convention and judged on Easter Monday after the Convention.

The 1986 Convention was proclaimed by one and all the best venue to date with everything under one roof, the best value with lowest cost, and the most profit made for WAPF. The meals and accommodation were first class, the organization was excellent; even the weather was kind. At the presentation dinner our current President, Mrs Viv Holly, was surprised and delighted when she was presented with a life certificate from the Katanning Camera Club. After all pay-outs the Club balance stood at \$883.

At our 1987 AGM officers elected were President, Ivan McDougall; Vice President, Derek Stock; Treasurer, Heather McDougall; Secretary, Cyril Heberle. It was reported that WAPF were introducing Club member service awards. Nineteen eighty-seven saw the purchase of a Kindaman slide projector for \$350 and the reinvestment of \$500. Club trophies were presented at the Christmas wind-up dinner to I. McDougall for slides and C. Heberle for prints. A Christmas message was received from W. Robertson wishing the Club well for the future. Nineteen eighty-seven ended with the Club in a good financial position and looking forward to next year.

It just shows what can be done if the mind is put to it. Although no Camera Club itself can make a member 'Photographer of the Year', it can greatly assist them in increasing their skills and enjoyment. How far an individual can go depends mainly on patience and acquired skill and what a member makes of themselves. Some past members have made considerable progress, becoming professionals and making their mark on the wider photographic scene. Malcolm Heberle has been elected president for 1988 of the WA division of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography. Not everyone can be turned into a good photographer, but you can have a lot of fun trying.