

A bridge to retirement



Michael Gill gets across his lifetime's work
and Christine Payne has been there all the way

In about 1985 the people who ran the woodworkers group of New South Wales, all bearded blokes, were just sitting around. It was a really weird scene. We were lamenting on how hard it was to be a woodworker and a furniture maker in 1980 because everything was being imported from overseas.

We weren't getting work. We had to pay rent, we had to buy fuel and food here, not in China or Taiwan or from wherever furniture was being imported. It was all whingeing. The whole evening was a lot of young bearded blokes going on about how horrible it is to try and make a living as a woodworker. When I got home and I said to Chris,

"this has got to stop. I'm sick of this." We had found a way to make a living by teaching. We used to teach woodcarving to adults in our workshop nearly every night, we had five classes a week.

Chris is a very good woodcarver as well. She worked as a botanical illustrator at the Royal Botanic Gardens all day, I made furniture all day and then at night we'd teach woodcarving. We were doing all right financially, but only just. If you're making beautiful things,

you want people to notice and pay for the bloody things, and take them home.

So after our bearded blokes night of whingeing I said to Chris, "I think we're doing things the wrong way."

