



Murray Speer—passed away 7th June 2009

It was a Saturday, I thought that it was just like most Saturdays and as I had been doing every couple of days for the last while I phoned Murray to see how he was faring. Sure I knew he was in the hospital. Sure I knew he was far from the best. Sure I knew in the same way that he did that things could not go on like this and that at some stage his body would give a big sigh and decide that it was all just too hard. Still each of us sort of struggles on with life and remains determined to make the most of it, to give it a good try. I figured that Murray was doing all of that plus some more. My phone call was answered by Murray's son. Told me his dad was no longer capable of coming to or speaking on the phone and it was not looking at all good.

I made a few calls and soon, Ian Fish, Trefor Roberts, Pierre Bonny and I were on our way to see Murray. He looked as most people look in that dire situation. Never opened his eyes but certainly knew we were there, smiled at the old jokes and reminiscences. Stories of wood gathering, chainsaw malfunction, risky situations, wonderful burls, the many, many toys he had made, happy times we had shared, him

on the roof of the Guildhall trying to work out a solution, the time his wife, Lorraine agreed that we could drop off a puriri log at their place – it was massive. Murray, when he saw it was

not at all taken aback. He agreed that the rest of the tree with all the top branches could be delivered to his address. Along with the members of the Guild and Dad's Army they steadily whittled that lump of wood into manageable bits. Quite a mission, quite a man. Murray was a practical man, a builder of bridges and houses, a miner of sapphires and opals, a wood turner and if you spent any time in his workshop you could not help but gather the impression that here was a man who solved problems. A man who worked with his hands. A man who you knew that given enough No. 8 fencing wire and enough time could solve nearly any problem.

Then it was time for us to go. Trefor produced a little bag of kauri wood shavings which he left on the bed and for a moment their smell seemed to overwhelm that of the hospital. We all patted his hand and said our goodbyes. He smiled – he knew. Murray passed away a few hours later. He will be sorely missed by his family, by all those who asked his advice and by the many, many he helped.

It was too soon. He deserved a longer stay and more No.8 wire.

