

Edmund "Ted" Dowling - Born in 1925, from his earliest days was fascinated by the lure of drama and performance. He did well in creative activities, learning stagecraft and becoming a chorister at Westminster Cathedral.

His family background encouraged his direction in life. His grandfather was a theatre impresario; his mother a dancer and cellist and his father a stage-door Johnny.

At 17, three years into WWII, he and his mates lied about their ages and were called up as army officer cadets, and in due course they became young officers having had contact with the "Desert Rats".

Ted's leaning towards the dramatic led him into commando and parachute units and when peace came he joined "Stars in Battledress" looking for a way to get into the theatre rat race in civvy street.

But, as he says, "wiser council" led him into a 25 year career as a professional army officer. He combined "Special Forces" and the King's African Rifle Brigade making further inroads into the theatre through the Joint Services Drama League.

A session in game park management intriguingly led to a 15th Century Chateau in France, where Ted became the guardian. This led to a glorious 6 years creating self-catering apartments in a 5 star ruin. A production "Castles and Cobwebs" performed at the Little Mermaid Theatre in Two Rocks told this history.

Ted is pictured below with another recipient Julie Otremba



His family established itself in Australia where Ted and his wife Betty became Australian citizens. Ted's gifts for music, theatre and the army disciplines of hard work and leadership were not to be wasted. In the following years he was involved in the planning of orchestral and choral concerts around Perth, in the "Australians at War Cavalcade" at the Entertainment Centre, the "Opera in the Park" and the "City of Perth International Tattoo"

Then at last he brought his many skills to "Two Rocks" where he undertook the "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony and developed the Marine History Exhibition, revealing the historical past of the West Australian coastline. For many years this was displayed in the "Little Mermaid Theatre" in the Two Rocks town centre. Sadly because of a lack of space this fantastic collection is now housed at Shark Bay.

The Little Mermaid theatre is Ted's "baby" and his energy and skills have been concentrated on its development, often under great difficulty of finding a suitable venue.

The 2013 production of "The Hobbits", with a cast of primary school students showed clearly the Ted's theatrical life is still active. It cleverly combines stage and screen techniques with the latter scenes being filmed in the Yanchep National Park.

At 89 Ted seems indefatigable. He warmly acknowledges the support he received from his wife Betty over the years before her death some years ago.

His reward for this creativity in his own words is "Fostering young people's interest in the performing arts and the applause they deserve on their "First Night"

The children of Yanchep and Two Rocks are very fortunate to have someone so willing and eager to impart his expertise and joy in drama, music and dance. His enthusiasm is contagious and he has a way of getting volunteers. Before they know it they are offering their services. He is definitely an unsung hero.