

## Spotlight on a Cake Decorator - Iris Boxsell



### How long have you been decorating cakes?

Not very long .. about 56 years! My cousin gifted me a term of cake decorating at the Hornsby Evening College in 1960 and I haven't stopped since. Most recently, I participated in the parrot tulip workshop run by Jacky Davidson and it was great fun!

I started out making cakes for family members .. my Mum and my young nephew, who's now in his 50s! Jamie, my nephew would try to stump me every year with his request for a cake he thought I couldn't make – a jet, a cherry picker, an aeroplane, a warship – but I managed them all!

### How long have you been involved with the Guild?



Lyne, my daughter and I were invited to listen to a judge from the Royal Easter Show at the Burwood Gas Company auditorium in 1980. On the way there, Lyne said, "Mum, we're not joining *anything* today". I met the late Bernice Vercoe and Fay Gardner at this meeting. In the car, on the way home, Lyne said to me, "Guess what? We've joined the Guild!".

In the 37 years since I have served as Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, committee member, co-opted committee member and newsletter and *Sweet Perfection* 'stuffer'. I helped with the Juniors, conducted demonstrations and organised cakes for the Hornsby Meals of Wheels for about 30 years. In 2011, I was presented the Fay Gardner Award for branch participation and in 2013, made Life Member of Sydney Branch.



### What do you enjoy about the Guild meetings?

It's always enjoyable catching up with my cake decorating friends and seeing what people are doing with sugar and how trends are changing over time.

### Has cake decorating changed much in the time you've been doing it?

Quite a bit! Cutters are commonplace now but we used to make our own from plastic or cardboard. Lacework was also very popular when I first started out. I remember the 'Gold Badge' brand of liquid colours we used to use. These days, there's so much available .. ready made pastes and all manner of cutters and moulds.



### What was your most memorable creation?

That cherry picker truck cake I made for my nephew, Jamie. It was a challenge but I got it done!

### One cake decorating tool you could not live without?

Just one .. a toothpick!

### The most rewarding part of cake decorating is ...

... seeing how happy people are when they receive my cakes. It's a very special feeling! Teaching was also very rewarding being able to see my students blossom as their skills and confidence improved. Most importantly, I've made friendships with so many wonderful people along the way.



### Your biggest challenge as a cake decorator?

My teacher at Hornsby Evening College, Joan Tucker, ran a home-based cake decorating business. When she had a serious accident in about 1964, her daughter and I had to complete a large number of cakes she had on order. We worked out of Joan's home in Hornsby, making wedding and birthday cakes. It was hard work! We were making plastic icing in 10lb lots and were exhausted!



### If you had one piece of advice for a new decorator, what would it be?

Practice .. a lot! Start by doing the basic (perhaps cakes for family members or friends) and move on to more difficult cakes as you learn more skills.