

In 1973, feeling the wind of retirement, he started his own business making timber tags, after becoming one of the finalists in the BNZ/DFC "Start Your Own Business" competition. He developed it to success, but died before the full fruits were borne. The company continues under new ownership.

He was a man of much curiosity and energy, involved in public affairs and with his family. He was a life member of the South Auckland Timber Merchants Association, and active in the Tauranga Yacht and Power Boat Club and, as a radio ham, in the Tauranga Radio Club.

For his family, he built two yachts, one of radiata pine, and after his retirement he mastered a home computer, making up his own programmes, entering competitions and winning prizes.

As a final comment on a remarkably varied and full life, John and Madeline, both keen chess players, played against the Russian grand-master Yuri Averbark, when he came to New Zealand in 1967 to play 51 people simultaneously.

Our sympathy is extended to his wife Madeline and three sons.
J. L. H-S.

S. A. C. (Sam) Darby (1889-1985)

At the age of 96 Sam Darby was not known to younger generations in the Forest Service but to older members he was a colourful character and one of a band of Conservators of Forests who laid the foundation of the State Forest Service so well. When he was 92 he attended the Director-General's Christmas party for retired officers. By then he was almost blind and had to be brought from Palmerston North by Mrs Broughton, one of his eight children. Apart from his blindness Sam was in fine fettle and full of reminiscences and anecdotes, which came out in a constant stream, about early people in the Service. He produced vivid stories of MacIntosh Ellis, A. R. Entrican and Arnold Hanson all of whom he could mimic.

In 1919 Sam joined the Lands Department as a Forest Inspector in the Wellington region. In less than a year he was a Forest Ranger in the newly formed Forest Service. His forest ranger-ship, carried out mainly from Palmerston North, lasted until 1926 when he was appointed Conservator, Nelson, but moved almost immediately to Conservator, Invercargill, where he remained until 1930. From then until 1938 he filled the position

at Hokitika and was finally posted to Palmerston North where he remained as Conservator until his retirement in 1955. Thus Sam holds the record as the longest serving Conservator — 29 years.

To put into perspective Sam's considerable contributions to the Service — during his stewardship well over half the sawmills in the country were in the Wellington conservancy — one must go back to the conditions operating in the administration of native forests at the time the State Forest Service was set up in 1919. Disorderly clearance of forest was the order of the day, forced by insistent demands of would-be farmers. Milling followed in a chaotic fashion and under the conditions prevailing could pay little heed to orderliness or quality. Quantity of sawn timber produced the miller's profits and he paid the State for that on output.

An about-turn to a system of cruising forest, orderly logging, payment for log volume and the need to saw for quality was a revolution to the industry and a demanding task for the new Service to administer.

The outgoing, energetic, friendly but shrewd and alert Sam was one of a group of down-to-earth conservators and rangers who performed this unenviable task. He developed a special relationship with millers who came to trust him in spite of policies they did not like. His early personal papers contain congratulations from his overlords on the amount of stumpage he collected by selling standing timber and logs. Maori forest-owners were likely to benefit greatly by the increased revenue under the new system. Sam encouraged them to adopt it. He became deeply respected and trusted by Maoris.

Part of the new look was, of course, to know the resources lying ahead. To find this out foot slogging and slasher bashing were needed in those pre-aerial-survey days. The lively MacIntosh Ellis used Sam's extensive field knowledge for many of these surveys.

Sam was a natural athlete. He played golf on a low handicap until he was quite old. He was a devoted family man and took great pride in his eight children. The quality of their education was always a matter of concern to him.

A.L.P.