

FORESTRY IDENTITY

Bruce Hector Childs

Bruce Childs could be described as the doyen of those who came through the Ranger Training scheme of the Forest Service, whose energy, ability and pragmatism led him to the highest managerial levels of that organisation.

His initial interest in forestry was, in contrast, romantic. By the age of 15 he was hooked on tramping in the Tararuas, and bush tramping and hunting has been a life-long pleasure. He is still active; recently he shot a deer during an Easter tramp in the Tararuas.

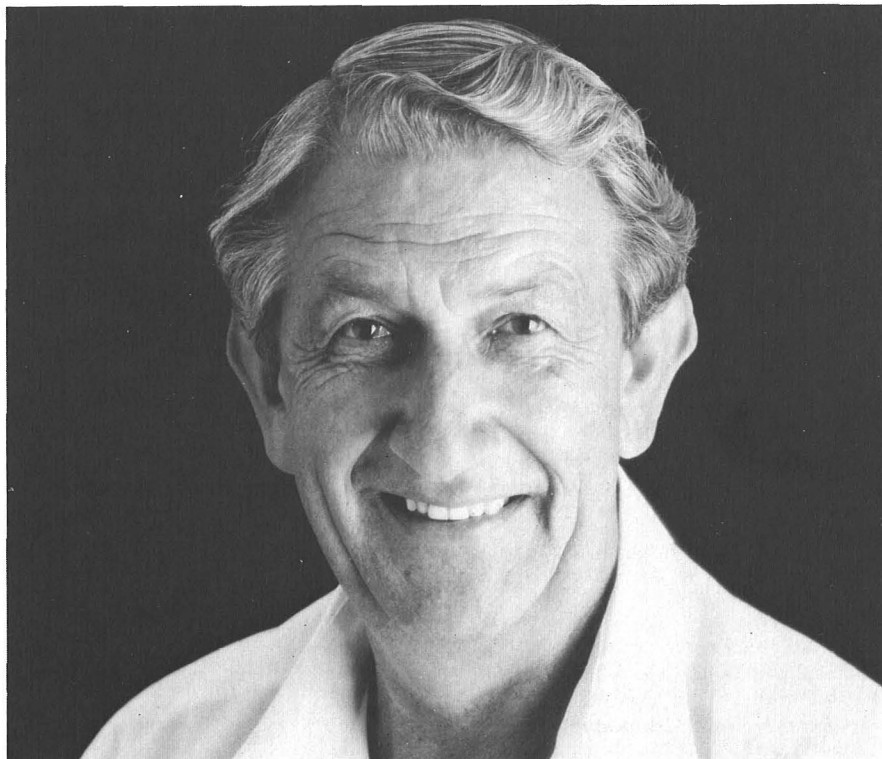
Although Bruce had, early in his career, resolved never to work in the NZFS Head Office, the Tararuas called him. It was their proximity to Wellington that overcame his resolve.

It was his pragmatism which led him to another resolve: to avoid formal university education. He had the opportunities but firmly resisted them.

It was his strong liking for the bush which guided Bruce to apply in 1945 to join the Forest Service, where he was accepted as a technical trainee. His early progress was not spectacular; for the first four years he enjoyed a varied field experience, but then he spent two years at Waipa Sawmill learning the technicalities of sawmilling and timber treatment. In 1951 he was officer in charge of a subdivision of Kaingaroa Forest and then, from 1957 to 1960, he was responsible for all field operations in that forest. He then became Principal of the Forestry Training Centre for three years before moving to Westland as Principal Ranger in 1962.

Then came a big break. Bruce was put in charge of clearing up after the catastrophic gales in Canterbury in 1964. This involved setting up a completely new organisation, dealing with technical, administrative and financial problems, including operational planning, logging, transport and marketing. It is widely acknowledged that Bruce did an outstanding job. His expertise gained in 1964 was again needed for the Wahine storm windthrow in Nelson and the lower North Island in 1968, and for salvage of storm-damaged crops in Southland and Canterbury in 1975. In 1968 he had to negotiate waterfront employment and organisation for log export, and in 1975 he worked for a diverse range of forest owners.

In 1965 Bruce was appointed Assistant Conservator, Christchurch. The next



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year he moved to Head Office as Assistant Director of the NZFS Commercial Division. Five years later he became the Director of Marketing, and in 1984 Director of Commercial Operations of the Forest Service, from where he retired in 1987.

During his tenure of these high-level management positions Bruce became a major operator in the business of wood exports. In 1969 and 1975 he negotiated the original export of logs from New Zealand to Korea and China. Over the period 1969 to 1988 (by which time he was a private consultant) he was responsible for marketing logs to those countries and to Japan. From 1971 to 1987 he was also closely involved in all aspects of marketing logs and chips within New Zealand. Then, from 1984, he became more deeply involved in international marketing of wood-based products fully manufactured in New Zealand. It was very much "hands-on" management, and Bruce is well acquainted, as a result, with the bulk of the Pacific rim countries, many Pacific island states, and also Sweden, Finland and Britain. In the course of these exertions he found time to learn conversa-

tional Japanese and also to study Japan's culture.

Bruce has a long list of valuable papers to his name, the last being the report of the Forest Research Institute Conversion Planning Project, of which he was Team Director. This involved the development of a model, over a period of three years, to evaluate processing options for maximising marketing opportunities.

Bruce gave unstinted service to our Institute. He set up the Westland local section in 1962, was Councillor, then President (1977-78) and served a further two years as Past President. He is now a Fellow – a well-earned distinction.

His busy life has been shared by Betty, whom he married in 1949. They have three children and four grandchildren.

Bruce describes himself as "semi-retired", but he is still active as a consultant recognised by the Institute, with a particular interest in Fiji, where he has for several years been a Director of the Fiji Pine Commission and, more recently (1991) a Director of Fiji Pine Limited.

C.G.R. Chavasse