

educating the public about forestry and an historical perspective would be important for this.

An element of realism was introduced with the observation that it would be necessary to establish a forestry history publication fund. Many forestry history topics would tend inevitably to be narrowly focused, resulting in expensive short publication runs which would need some subsidy. Features like oral archives and historic films, both well suited to recording forestry history, would also be expensive. However, it should be possible to attract donations and bequests.

Several pointed out that forestry history is essentially an interdisciplinary field of study, and so it would be important to attract the interests of a wide field of workers, many of whom would be active outside forestry proper. One respondent thought that a newsletter would be important in this respect.

Many respondents thought that both the Institute of Forestry and the School of Forestry should be involved and there was a deal of support for the School of

Forestry undertaking a major coordinating role. The view was also expressed that the active involvement of the School would help ensure that the project enjoyed academic independence, and that this would be important if the revolutionary changes which have taken place in the forestry sector over the last decade or so are to be appraised with balance.

It was clear that most respondents had not had the time to mature their thoughts fully on a New Zealand Forestry History Society. It would seem to be prudent, therefore, to proceed slowly. However whether a fully-blown society eventuates or not, any progress made with forestry history studies will be assisted a great deal by collaboration between the Institute of Forestry and the School of Forestry. At this stage it would seem advisable not to be too precise about who does what but to let cooperative trends develop as enthusiasm mounts.

The Council of the Institute have offered their general support and have intimated that some financial assistance could be forthcoming. They suggest that

a working group of interested Institute members be formed to assist in the collection and collation of historical data. They pointed out too the role of New Zealand Forestry journal as a medium for news and views from any Institute groups.

Accordingly, a steering group (it was thought that "steering" was a more appropriate word) has been formed, comprising Ron O'Reilly (Chair), Peter Smail, Udo Benecke and Peter McKelvey. All live in Christchurch, which makes it easier to get together. When the group has met it will decide what should be done first. The University of Canterbury Librarian, Dick Hlavac, is prepared to establish a forestry archive; indeed he is enthusiastic about it. This would house a range of records and working material and would also contain a register of historical data held in other parts of the country. The group will keep members informed regularly about its activities, and any progress made, through New Zealand Forestry journal.

Peter McKelvey

Obituary

Neil Barr (1908-1996)

Neil Barr has been such a prominent figure in forestry and farm-forestry circles for so long that it is difficult to accept that he is no longer around to query our actions or prompt us to do better. Neil had been his usual self, busy to the very end, when he passed away peacefully on New Year's Day, 12 days short of his 88th birthday. One of his last actions had been the completion of the draft of his proposed book on growing eucalypts for timber on NZ farms, the topic that first launched him into farm forestry some 50 years ago.

To those who knew him well, Neil and his wife Rose will always be associated with the family farm, "Beresford", near Kaukapakapa on the shores of the Kaipara Harbour. Neil's father had settled there in 1916 when Neil was only eight years old. In those days it was backblocks farming, isolated and underdeveloped. After he had matriculated from Auckland Grammar, Neil and his brother John took over the management of the farm and for the next 20 years he was almost totally immersed in breaking it in, weathering the Great Depression of the 1930s, and improving their farming methods and breeds. It was his concern for the well-being of his stock that led him to planting shelterbelts, firstly with pine and then more successfully with eucalypts. Thus, his forestry education of the 1940s was essentially of the personal

experience and hard-knocks variety, combined with reading. He read everything he could lay his hands on but found most of what was available on forestry did not apply specifically to his farming situation. It was his realisation that other farmers must be faced with similar problems that led to his calling a meeting in June 1950 to form a local farm-forestry society.

This historic meeting, held at Frank Bartlett's farm at Silverdale, was the germinating seed that subsequently grew into the present NZ Farm Forestry Association with its 31 affiliated regional branches. Neil became its primary promoter through the regular column he wrote for the NZ Farmer and his travels throughout the country speaking to interested groups. In 1958, the National Association was formed, Neil becoming its first President, and subsequently its first honorary life member and patron. He is rightly recognised, therefore, as being the founder of the organised farm-forestry movement in New Zealand and its architect and leading advocate during its formative years. To the forestry fraternity as a whole he will be forever remembered and honoured as the man who put farm forestry well and truly on the map. The Association today is recognised as being the authoritative voice of the smaller grower, growing in stature year by year. Today, it is a com-

mon sight wherever you travel in New Zealand to see trees being planted on grassland. This acceptance by farmers, foresters and lending agencies alike of trees on pasture being a profitable and legitimate option was not easily won, there being resistance and prejudice at many levels to overcome. All credit, therefore, to those who succeeded in breaching such barriers. Neil Barr's name would figure prominently on that list.

Sterling Qualities

How come "a cocky from Kaukapakapa" with no academic training in forestry became such a respected forestry advocate and an honorary member of our Institute? Obviously, Neil had to have some sterling qualities to do so. First and foremost was his long-sighted vision of integrating forestry with farming, utilising the strategic, economic and environmental benefits of both components. It was a goal which might require different approaches from the then orthodox practice. His key attribute was that he could define his goals and keep them in sharp focus. Best practice then in his book became the simplest, most direct, and efficient means of attaining those goals. In forestry, his emphasis was always on the target wood qualities to aim for.

Neil was very much a "quality first" advocate because he saw it as being the safest option for the small grower. Thus, his end product was high-value clearwood, be it pine, cypress, or eucalypt. Because he defined his end point, he asked the right questions and pursued the matter tenaciously. If he was not satisfied with the answer he would make a plea for more research or investigation. His enquiring mind, common-sense approach, and innovative ideas led to his becoming an inaugural member of the Production Forestry Research Advisory Committee and a regular participant at FRI's research symposia and seminars. Over the years, he strongly supported agroforestry research in all its guises, vegetative propagation techniques for the mass propagation of superior genotypes or strains, and the more thorough evaluation of specialty timber species – all research projects that are still very topical. Neil was equally welcome and at home in Australian forestry circles where he contributed to many conferences, meetings and field days. His many friends and acquaintances there were astonished at his knowledge of the eucalypts, even on their own home patch.

Another of his sterling attributes was that he was a good communicator. He was very aware that good ideas, observations or results do not flourish if they are not promulgated widely and often. He was also conscious of the fact that visual demonstration of a new concept or practice was vital to its acceptance by farmers. During the 1980s, for example, with me as his partner and foil, he travelled the country demonstrating some of the newer concepts and practices of agroforestry. For 25 years, he wrote a regular column in the NZ Farmer dealing with matters of current concern. During tours and field days he never took notes, relying on his powers of observation and retentive memory for his subsequent articles or reports. His ability to put a message across in simple and often amusing terms, weaving in personalities and events of the day, ensured his articles were entertaining and easy reading. They became affectionately known in farm-forestry circles as "the word". He readily grasped opportunities to speak anywhere, anytime – at conferences, meetings, field days, on radio, or whatever. When writing became a bother to him with increasing age, he resorted to using audio tapes so that "the voice" was still heard. All this communication effort was not motivated by monetary reward or personal approbation; it was all voluntary, done in the interests of getting the message across.

Neil was effective because essentially he was a "people" person with the common touch. His remarkable memory for



Neil Barr's last field day, at Craig Wightman's farm near Waimaku in Northland in November 1995. Neil is pictured instructing Tony McLeod on remedial treatment required for a misshapen edge tree.

names stemmed, I'm sure, from his genuine interest in those he met. At meetings and field days, he would seek out the newcomers or the uncertain hovering around the edge, putting them at their ease, listening to their problems or views, and giving them the benefit of his experience. These attributes, combined with his ready wit and anecdotes, undoubtedly induced many into farm forestry. Not surprisingly, Neil was a staunch family man, with his wife Rose, a real partner, and proud of their children and their achievements. His forestry enterprises were strongly motivated by his desire to provide a nest egg for their future, an intention that became reality.

Neil did receive some official recognition for his services to forestry. In 1970 he received the MBE, and he is one of a select few who have been elected an Honorary Member of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry. Many have felt that Neil's tireless, selfless and sustained ser-

vice to farm forestry over such a prolonged period merited higher recognition. Neil though, being a dinkum Kiwi, was not concerned about honours. I'm sure he would consider his greatest reward as being the high esteem in which he was held throughout the farming and forestry sectors. Through his efforts to convince people that trees should be an integral part of farming, the success of which can now be seen on many hundreds of farms, he has been instrumental in changing the landscape of New Zealand – a change which is gathering increasing momentum. More trees on farms, appropriate silviculture, better land use – these were Neil's dream many years back and he lived long enough to see them coming to fruition. Very few of our professional Institute could claim to have made a greater national contribution.

Harry Bunn

Election of Council – 1996 AGM

The 1996 NZIF AGM saw a change in personnel, as previous members of the NZIF Council retired.

Peter Olsen retired as President and was replaced by John Galbraith. John will be profiled in the next issue of NZ Forestry. Peter remains on the NZIF Council as Immediate Past-President.

The new Councillors are Peter Allan, Helen Chapman, Don Hammond and Paul Smale. They replace retiring councillors Joise Boland, Ket Bradshaw and Harold

Corbett.

The full council is:

John Galbraith, President; Peter Olsen, Immediate Past President; Helen Chapman, Secretary; Steve Croskery, Treasurer; Peter Allan; Don Hammond; Bruce Manley; Colin O'Loughlin; Mike Orchard; Paul Smale; Tim Thorpe.

The editor is a member of Council ex officio.