

# An appreciation of Andrew Kirkland

January 13, 1935 – April 10, 1997

Whenever Andy Kirkland spoke of his youth, it was always to recount sunny days, fun, some adventure and a measure of mischief. In his adulthood those characteristics remained with him, infectious enthusiasm, a tendency to push the boundaries and a constant sparkle of humour all regularly evident as he proceeded through an often challenging and ceaselessly demanding career.

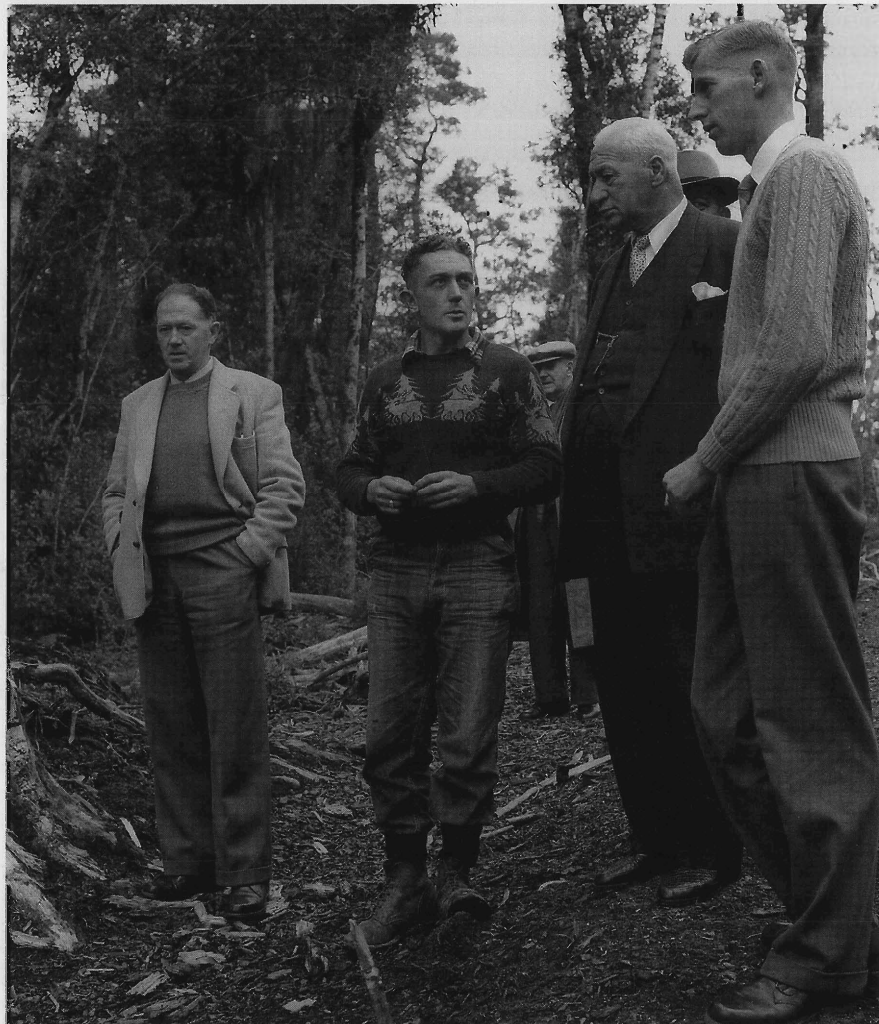
Andy was raised in Wellington, the eldest of six children. His family life was happy and undoubtedly contributed to his own love of, and loyalty to his family throughout the rest of his life.

He left Wellington College in 1952 intent on university study – a move strongly supported by his parents who shared the then ordinary people's strong regard for education. The move into forestry was somewhat by chance. His school results qualified him for a Government traineeship in forestry and it appears he was steered that way following an interview with the State Services Commission. His first posting as a trainee was at Gwawas Forest where upon admitting his 'ability to boil water' he was appointed camp cook. For a year he rose at 4.30 am cooking for 40 men, and consequently earned a strong commendation for university training by his boss, the Ranger in Charge.

Part-time study at Victoria University followed, mixed in with duties as assistant to the assistant leave clerk at the Forest Service Head Office. Graduation with a B.Sc. in botany was followed by two years at the School of Forestry, ANU in Canberra, Australia where Andy distinguished himself scholastically, being awarded the Schlick Medal as top student in his year.

Upon his return to New Zealand he was appointed to Westland, Nelson and later Kaingaroa as his forestry career developed.

His time on the West Coast was particularly propitious. It was here he met, courted and married his wife Jocelyn Hill. Andy sometimes recounted their first meeting. The typists at Conservancy Office (where Jocelyn was head typist) were not permitted to leave the building during working hours, but used to slip out the window and down the fire escape to buy something to eat. When Geoff Chavasse brought Andy in to meet the typists for the first time, there was Jocelyn with one leg over the window sill. Obviously that sense of adventure appealed to Andy. At the same time



Andy Kirkland (on right) discussing management of West Coast beech forest with Assistant Director General Lindsay Poole, and the Minister of Forests, the Hon. Sir Eruera Tirikatene in August 1960. Photo: J.H. Johns

Andy's love of people, his perception and willingness to listen earned him a special respect on the Coast which has endured over the years since.

His contribution to West Coast forestry was equally significant. Recognition of the opportunity to produce a sustainable harvest from the region's readily regenerated beech forests, and the encouragement of plantation forest on a significant scale on cutover land were aspects of his time there that continued to be given prominence for many years after.

The 1960s was an important period in New Zealand forestry. The successful development of the forest resource created in the 1920s and 1930s and the recognition of the important role forestry could play in the country's developing economy was stimulating a second planting boom.

Andy Kirkland had shifted to Kain-

garoa, the department's flagship forest, and he later acknowledged this period was to be one of the strongest influences on his subsequent forestry career.

*"It was at a time when the nearby Forestry Research Institute was systematically questioning the basis of commercially sound plantation forestry and virtually all practices from planting to log manufacture were up for re-evaluation. My immediate boss, Peter Olsen, was not afraid to try new approaches, so it was a stimulating environment for rapidly advancing the technical aspects of large-scale commercial forestry."*

The Kaingaroa team backed fresh projections of growth leading to a substantial

increase in the level of annual cut and to the establishment of the Carter Oji Pan Pacific pulpmill at Napier and the expansion of Tasman's Kawerau production.

The department had by now recognised this tall, lean and energetic young forester had much more to offer. His cogent and incisive reports, coupled with a remarkable degree of foresight for someone who had been in the department a relatively short period of time, helped to identify Andy as a manager with special ability. Thus in 1969 he was nominated for, and was recipient of a Harkness Fellowship, the very first from within the department and almost certainly the New Zealand forest industry. The scholarship was used to study economics and business management, a master's degree was quickly achieved but further endeavours were prematurely curtailed.

The department had requested his return to New Zealand to take control of a rapidly expanding new planting programme, and widening public interest in proposals for the management of certain indigenous production forests.

During the next few years as Director of Forest Management, Deputy to Director General Mick O'Neill (from 1978) and as Director General (1983) he debated, encouraged and where appropriate led the introduction of a new level of sophistry to forest management. In this respect he had the greatest admiration for FRI's programme of systematic research of radiata pine management pioneered and driven by Harry Bunn, and sought through the development of complementary projects such as the Mensuration Project Team, to take full advantage of this work.

Although challenged by the need to obtain the maximum benefit from the resources available within the prevailing public service culture and philosophy, Andy also took time to question some of the controls that applied (quite inappropriately in his view) to the department. In a 1982 address to the New Zealand Society of Accountants, and much to Treasury's ire, he noted:

*"The standardising of departmental estimates of expenditure so dissects and amalgamates the components of individual projects that their identity is largely lost ... What starts as a balanced operational plan at the forest and regional level ends up a submerged and thus anonymous portion of a generalised budget under standardised headings."*

While the State's role in New Zealand radiata plantation forestry was reaching a peak of technical achievement, in other



**Andrew Kirkland, as many will remember him.**

areas it was subject to mounting pressures. On July 14, 1984 a new Labour Government was elected, and within 18 months had embarked on a project of reform unprecedented in New Zealand. For various reasons, of which the most important was probably philosophical, the department was to be broken up into a commercial forestry corporation, a regulatory agency (the Ministry of Forestry) and a department of conservation. While neither inactive or impassive in the face of these proposals, once they were confirmed Andy quickly moved to ensure both the demise of the old and creation of the new was as effective as possible.

His major concern was for the people who made up the heart and soul of the old department, a large number of whom he knew personally. It is probably still not known widely how important proposals arising in his Forest Service disestablishment, and new agency establishment teams were in ensuring all employees (salaried and waged alike) were as far as possible provided for in the reorganisation. Andy Kirkland became the designated CEO of the Forestry Corporation in early 1986 and from that point proceeded to work with the Board to create an entity which was as appropriate and efficient as possible. On April 1, 1987 the Corporation formerly commenced with Andy in the position of Managing Director and Alan Gibbs as Chairman. It is a matter of record that for the next seven successive six-month periods, the Corporation improved its profitability, generating almost \$400 million operating surplus (after reinvestment) for its shareholder and doubling the net return per cubic metre harvested.

It was a matter of even greater pride to Andy that his team, drawn mostly from

the public service, had performed as well in both a business and professional sense as any comparable private-sector organisation.

The announcement in 1988 that Government was going to sell the Corporation in a break-up sale was therefore a body blow. The support and hard work of the people who had joined the Corporation, the outstanding results and the 'esprit de corps' all seemed to have been for nothing.

Andy's concern for his people quickly led to the conclusion that if a sale of the forests was to take place it was better to be as in control of the process as possible. He also recognised that for many the sale process created a 'second window of opportunity.' His success at having the Corporation appointed the principal sales agent meant that the capabilities of his team could be clearly evidenced, and for many the transition to new owners was least disruptive.

On December 1, 1990 the Corporation in its original form ceased to exist, and the Kirklands embarked on a quiet holiday totally free of the intense pressures of the last few years.

However, Andy Kirkland (QSO in appreciation of services to forestry) was now widely recognised as an outstanding leader and organiser whose foresight and perceptiveness could be usefully applied elsewhere. Government's largest department, Social Welfare required such a person and in 1991 Andy was appointed its Director-General. He immediately threw himself into the job, first reviewing programmes, talking to his new team as widely as possible and then developing proposals for some significant restructuring. Almost as the fruits of these endeavours were about to unfold Andy suffered a severe stroke and was unable to continue in his new role.

Although he was now quite seriously physically impaired, his sense of humour and bright-eyed enthusiasm were as strong as ever and Andy quickly progressed towards regaining his talking, walking and writing skills.

In 1996 he set out on a new project, one that was both dear to him and in his view particularly timely. He was aware that it was now 100 years since the State had appointed its first forester, Henry Matthews, in 1896, and in 1997 it would be 100 years since the State first commenced a formal tree-planting programme. More importantly he was aware that ten years previously, when the break up of the Forest Service had commenced, it had been difficult for many people to be objective about the process.

Perhaps now, with ten years' healing, the story of State forestry's rise and fall



over 100 years could be told in a way that paid proper tribute to the people involved. In his own words:

*"The tangible assets ... (of the Forest Service) ... roads, trees, buildings, sawmills – were obvious enough. Less obvious were the endeavours of dedicated public sector forestry people for almost exactly 100 years. Without the living chain of creative enterprise ... there would have been no forestry assets. To these people this record of successful State enterprise is dedicated."*

The title of the book reflected a little more Kirkland humour – "A Century of State Honed Enterprise".

The book, written with the much appreciated assistance of some old friends, was launched in the sunshine in front of the old stable building that headquartered the original Whakarewarewa Forest Nursery during Easter weekend 1997, and in his presentation of the book Andy again spoke of the important contribution that forestry people had made.

The book is a small but fitting memorial of the man who little more than a week later died of a heart attack in Wellington Hospital.

This brief recounting of Andy's

forestry career does not do full justice to Andy Kirkland, the uncomplicated friend and family man that many of us knew.

He was a people person, respecting the values of others and enjoying the little things that make people different. He had an enthusiasm and zest that shone in his eyes. He would talk rugby as readily as radiata pine. He loved the people he worked with and particularly enjoyed the many forestry characters he had met. Most of all he loved his family. One of his last wishes was that his wife Jocelyn should know how grateful he was for her close care and attention in his final years.

Bless you Andrew Kirkland.

**Peter J. Berg**



## EDUCATION NEWS



# School of Forestry News

### Connections with Japan

Professor Roger Sands recently returned from Japan, where he negotiated collaborative research agreements with Universities in Tokyo and Kyoto. These agreements should see the exchange of postgraduates and staff involved in research, including optimising the use of New Zealand pine in Japan.

### And with Korea

Ron O'Reilly also took the opportunity to visit Asia recently, and visited Kookmin University in Seoul, Korea, where he discussed curricula and joint research with the staff, and also presented a seminar to a final-year class. The School's connection with Korea is strong at the moment. Professor Jae Kyung Cha, an Associate Professor in the Department of Forest Products, College of Forestry at Kookmin University, is carrying out research in the wood technology lab and Professor Young Gwan Chung, from the Faculty of Forest Science, College of Agriculture, Gyeongsang National University, Chinju, Korea, is studying site productivity and forest management.

As well, two Korean students are engaged in postgraduate studies at the School: Dr Chang Duck (Mathias) Koo, who completed a Diploma in Forestry last year and is now doing Masters' papers, is from the Korean Forest Research Institute, and Sang Hyun (William) Lee, from the Department of Forest Resources, College of Agriculture, Chonbuk National University, is working on a Ph.D. thesis (Modelling of Growth Using Different Interval Lengths) with Dr Euan Mason.



### International research project

Dr Nora Devoe's research support to the Division of Forestry, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, continues to advance. Nora spent part of January and February on the tiny tropical island. Masters' student Hope Allum has completed her thesis, which involved comparing patterns of regeneration in abandoned shifting cultivation plots with that of intact upland rainforest. Two other students, Lisa Winthrop and Richard Gardner, spent four months extending that research by investigating the aerial seed input and the soil seed bank.

The final piece of this first phase of a long-term research programme is an examination of advance growth dynamics under intact forest canopy, in natural

treefall gaps, and in abandoned cultivation sites. This work is being done by Ph.D. candidate Kate Hewson, who will spend five months on Pohnpei this year.

The overall goal of the research is to design management interventions to accelerate forest succession and canopy reconstitution in critical upland watersheds now being damaged by cultivation.

### Building expansion on schedule

The photo (above), taken from the north-west end of the building, shows that the new administration wing of the School of Forestry is proceeding apace. With the noise of drills and power hammers echoing through the halls, the staff have taken to wearing earmuffs around the building. The dedication of the construction work-