

A great corporate forester

Jack E. Henry 1917-2003

Jack Henry died on 6 June 2003, after a short illness near Brisbane where he lived after going to Australia in 1989. They were strong family people and three of their four adult children had already moved to Australia. Helping each other was a driving family ethic whenever times were difficult.

I first met Jack in 1941 when we worked together at Te Whaiti. We came together again on the Institute's Council when Jack was President in 1960-62. He invited me to join NZ Forest Products Ltd in 1963 as part of his new Forestry Division where I continued as one of his main lieutenants until he retired in 1982. Today much is made of mentors and there are many in the forestry sector who can thank Jack for his guidance and encouragement over many years. The health and welfare of people who worked for him was evident when he was a party leader on National Forest Survey (1946-49) and throughout his time at Forest Products (1949-1982). He recruited staff from a wide experience base and those who performed well were given every opportunity to broaden their knowledge by overseas travel, technical and management courses, internal courses and changed responsibilities. It was a period of great staff development and challenge.

Jack joined the Company when its forest was under enormous pressure. Very large areas had been lost in the 1946 Taupo fires, up to half the trees in many stands had died from Sirex attack, the forest volume assessments and yield predictions had been grossly overstated and all this when the Kinleith gang mill was finished and the Kraft pulp mill was due to start in 1953. It was necessary to face these problems with a new forest management strategy. To consolidate his ideas, Jack was sent to America in 1957 to see what other companies were doing and to meet such people as George Nepting and Steven Spurr. As a result he prepared his first silvicultural programme for the second crop which included pruning and thinning. While it may have been ambitious, he was prepared to modify it with experience. Because of the threat of Sirex, he embarked on species trials which included eucalypts, acacias, poplars, other pines and pine hybrids. While the early re-establishment relied on natural regeneration and direct aerial seeding, Jack co-operated with the F.R.I tree breeding programme and established company seed orchards. The parent tree (No 55-90) still stands in the forest at Atiamuri.

As his responsibilities widened to take in roading, logging, trucking, the Kinleith garage and forest expansion, he approached them with the same analytical mind and drive. He used expert advice very well and gave trusted staff the opportunity to develop. To achieve these things, he needed the support of the other directors on the Board. This was achieved by good reporting and persuasive argument. To report the state of the forest he



Jack Henry

felt was as important as the annual accounts. Better equipment resulted, off highway roads were put in, export logging was started from late first crop thinnings (35-40 year old) and forest expansion into West Taupo, King Country, Mamaku and Northland.

Jack leant his energy and staff to major contributors for the forestry sector. These included fire protection, forest health (especially when *Dothistroma* became significant), F.R.I special projects, logging research, numerous Forestry Development Conferences, the Forestry Council and the NZ Forest Owners Association. When the new Forestry School was opened at the University of Canterbury in 1969/70, he persuaded the Company to endow the NZFP Chair of Wood Science, an enormous help to the school.

His contribution to New Zealand forestry was enormous. He was a great battler, often under much difficulty, from the day he left school at 14 years during the great depression. Our heartfelt sympathy and thanks go to Betty and their extended family.

Tony Grayburn

A leader remembered

During Jack's time in Tokoroa he developed NZFP's Forestry Department from a protection and maintenance role into a highly skilled and technical organization equal to any in New Zealand and overseas. His ecological experience and keen powers of perception enabled him to tackle the problems of radiata pine re-establishment on the central pumice lands. Under his leadership, a sound silviculture regime was established for second crop forests, and without doubt he led the private forestry sector in New Zealand in persuading boards of directors to spend money on silviculture. He always expressed his appreciation to the late Owen Jones for the advice and knowledge that he passed on to Jack.

Jack's drive and energy were prodigious and he kept his subordinates on their toes at all times, woe betide a member of staff who hadn't prepared himself for a meeting which Jack was chairing, one often hoped on those occasions that the ground would open up. His dedication to forestry within the Company as well as in New Zealand was in my opinion without parallel, particularly in the private sector.

Jack joined the Institute as an Associate Member in 1949 and advanced to a Full Member in 1954. He played a very active role in Institute affairs for the next ten years: Councillor (1956-58), Vice-President (1958-60), President (1960-62), Council (1962-64), but also continued his interest during his working life and after his retirement to Brisbane.

John Church