

children were born to the happy couple (three in Hokitika) and later the family blossomed - to see Peter also survived by four grand-children in whom he took great delight.

Later in 1970 Peter was re-appointed to the West Coast, this time as Principal Forester/Assistant Conservator Planning – a position he was to hold until the demise of the Forest Service in 1987. It was an important but challenging time, the Forest service were reviewing the potential for a significant beech utilisation project and the establishment of extensive planted forests to provide a long term sustainable harvest.

The project soon attracted the attention of an emerging environmental movement and for most of the following two decades their enthusiasm for locking up (“protecting”) much of the West Coast native forest was a match for those who advocated sustainable management from relatively limited areas.

Like many other foresters of his time Peter was firmly convinced that a prudent level of beech forest management was possible on a sustainable basis and without detriment to natural values more widely. And he was particularly a strong advocate for forestry on the ‘Coast because of the greater prosperity and better lifestyles it promised people living in the region.

In both respects he worked hard to achieve these goals; leading a team of committed foresters who continually refined and improved the establishment, silvicultural, management and wood property knowledge of the beech species and at the same time he sought election to the Hokitika Borough Council where he served for 12 years including 6 years as deputy mayor. For 9 of those years he also represented the forestry sector on the West Coast Regional Development Council.

Peter recognised that forests could contribute in other ways, and he provided significant flexibility and even cover for members of his team to research and demonstrate the significance of these other values; thus for example at this time West Coast foresters were setting the standard for the rest of the Forest Service in terms of recreational planning and protection and restoration of important historic and natural sites. The templates they developed became the standard for the Forest Service and later the organisations that succeeded it. Bruce Watson recalls.....

“Peter’s good humour, mild and tolerant manner provided a great foil for his argumentative band of younger foresters – Curt Gleason, Sandy Rae, Alan Reid and myself, each of us focused on new and different ways of achieving multiple use goals.

One resulting development was the addition of family friendly recreational facilities to balance the ‘good keen man’ tracks of the rugged West Coast back country. Peter’s support of the team that planned these developments and researched and designed interpretation of their stories of nature, history and culture, provided a legacy for New Zealanders and overseas visitors to enjoy. Many of the old miners’ and settlers’ tracks that were renovated then are now national must-visits: Okarito Trig & Three Mile Beach, Monroe Beach, Hari Hari Coastal Walkway, Goldsbrough, Woods Creek, Nelson Creek, Croesus & Moonlight, Kirwans, Waiuta, and Big River”.

In many respects the dissolution of the Forest Service

in 1987 freed Peter to focus more closely on his particular interests; he became a Registered Forestry Consultant working more particularly in the field of indigenous forest management while continuing with his local body and church leadership roles and expanding an interest in the bi-cultural development of his community (Secretary of the Christchurch Diocesan bicultural education committee for the 10 years from 1995 and attended various courses on Te Reo Maori and Maori perspectives).

Peter’s NZIF activity was equally as committed – student member 1957, full member 1966, secretary or chairman of the Westland Section of NZIF continuously from 1970-94, heavy involvement in organising the 1972 conference and AGM in Hokitika, Registered Forestry Consultant from 1988 and elected to Council in 1996.

In 1998 I was elected President of the Institute and after a gap of some years away from Council I needed some assistance to get up to speed. Peter was leading Council’s indigenous forest management committee (and later had considerable influence in shaping the Institute’s Indigenous Forest Policy), however at that time it was his personal records that were particularly helpful and enabled us to bridge the gap between Councils. It wasn’t so surprising then that we were able to come to a mutually satisfactory arrangement for Peter to take on the role of Hon Secretary of the NZIF, which he held from 1999 to his death almost seven years later.

Like so many other things he had done he committed himself to the role totally. Records were researched meticulously and gaps filled, the constitution was reviewed, the organisation was renamed the New Zealand Institute of Forestry or *Te Putahi Ngaherehere o Aotearoa* to better reflect the important cultural streams in NZ forestry, and NZIF honours boards were established in the lobby area of the Canterbury School of Forestry identifying those who have served well. Just this year, and well aware of his failing health, he provided the President’s Burl – a highly polished, shaped and mounted yellow silver pine burl to become a tangible means of “passing the baton” from President to President. Unable to make the journey to Waitangi for its initial presentation earlier this year he sent a detailed message on both its purpose and care – along with instructions on the regular use of wood polish for the incumbent President!

Peter Allan will be remembered for his commitment, loyalty and the high level of public service he performed during an extremely busy lifetime. He sought no recognition but took huge pleasure from participating; he gave willingly, was thoughtful and sensitive of others and made a difference as a consequence.

But mostly of course he simply loved the West Coast, its forests and people and committed himself over quite a long period to doing all that he could to support and argue their future. It’s no surprise and indeed it is very fitting that he should be buried there in the heart of the land, forests and people he loved so much.

Haere ra, Haere ra, Haere ra.

Peter Berg