Respected forest manager remembered for role in training
John David Malcolm
1934 - 2005

John Malcolm died in Tauranga on 16 June 2005 after a long period of ill health. John was well known and highly regarded within the wider forestry industry, particularly by those who went through the former NZFS training system.

John was born in Wanganui in 1934, where his formative years included education at Wanganui Collegiate School. He joined the New Zealand Forest Service as a forestry cadet in 1954, and spent his early years working his way around the Southland area. Through the 1960s John was variously the founding Officer in Charge of both Kaweka and Lismore forests, and later Ngaumu forest.

Those management roles were followed by an extended period overseeing training field staff for the Forest Service. That role saw John located at Head Office initially and later in Rotorua. It was during this period that he became well known to most Forest Service staff through his travel to forests around the country, and his enthusiasm for socialising with staff who travelled to Rotorua to attend training courses. In addition to his role in the wider training effort of the Forest Service, John was directly involved in the recruitment of staff to participate in the forester and ranger education and training programmes. He was largely responsible for the development of the NZCF programme that commenced in 1976.

John transferred from his training role in Rotorua to the position of District Ranger for the Taupo District in 1981. It was during this period, when responsible for managing Lake Taupo and Rotoaira forests, that his association with Ngati Tuwharetoa developed, and was maintained until his death. During his tenure in Taupo John oversaw the demise of the Forest Service in 1987, and was appointed District Manager of the Turangi District of NZ Timberlands Ltd.

The vacuum created by the proposed sale of the State forest assets in 1989 provided John with the opportunity to establish his own forest management business, New Zealand Forest Managers Ltd. This company has managed the Lake Taupo and Rotoaira Forest since its formation with John filling the position of Managing Director until his retirement in 2001.

John took great pride and interest in the success of the joint Crown/Tuwharetoa forestry ventures. A measure of the respect that he was held by Tuwharetoa was reflected in his appointment as Chairman of Lake Taupo Forest Management Ltd, the company that manages the Lake Taupo and Rotoaira Forest Trusts forestry activities.

While tributes to John acknowledged his successful forestry career, they largely concentrated on recollections of the interesting and complex person that he was. He was highly intelligent, applied that with a quiet confidence and resolve, and would never allow himself to be intellectually or professionally intimidated. John was widely read, and his knowledge of a huge range of subjects was remarkable. There weren’t too many subjects he couldn’t have a meaningful conversation on, and was always able to surprise you one more time.

His particular success in his training role was probably largely due to his ability to read and understand people’s differences. He demonstrated loyalty and confidence in his people, and gave them the opportunity to have a go. Numerous colleagues and staff credited him with contributing significantly to their own career development.

John’s quirky nature, and at times unconventional approach essentially defined him - he was very much his own man. He was great company socially, and a lot of fun.

His wife Shirley, daughters Andrea, Vivian and Gaye, and son Gary survive John.

Chas Hutton

John Malcolm with members of the Lake Taupo and Rotoaira Forest Trusts.