

Bryan, Walter (Bill) from the Forester Sep 2003

~~Obituary-Walter (Bill) Bryan, FFA~~

In mid 1970 a strange ritual occurred on the ground floor of the W D & H O Wills building in Ann St, then Head Office of the Queensland Department of Forestry (now part of the enlarged Anglican cathedral square). The 'aquarium', the spacious office of the Officer-in-Charge, Harvesting & Marketing (O/C H&M) and so named because of the then unusual feature of a full glass partition wall, was steadily filled over the space of a week to overflow with hundreds of TSMA (Timber Sales Memoranda) files. By the time the team of 'junior' and 'temporary' (some with 20+ years of continuous service!) clerks had finished their exertions not a glimpse of the new occupant could be observed. Ron Whale had arrived. He loved to be buried in files.

Walter (Bill) Bryan, the previous occupant and with six years less service, was promoted upstairs to Deputy Conservator of Forests. Bill did not collect files. Young foresters took note of these doings.

Bill was born 13 March 1921 and commenced his forestry studies at the University of Queensland in March 1939. He joined the RAAF but was invalided out and served in a camouflage unit in the Darwin area. He resumed studies at the Australian Forestry School in Canberra at war's end and graduated at the end of 1946. There he met his wife Megan. They had four children - Richard, Rosemary, Diana and Angela.

A stint as a research forester at Imbil was followed by a District Forester posting to Warwick and then to Brisbane as Senior Inspector. A final field posting on equal transfer as District Forester Atherton before he returned to Head Office for good as O/C H&M. Bill followed Cec Haley as Conservator of Forests in June 1975 and retired in March 1980.

Bill Bryan had the good fortune to be in senior management during the major plantation expansion phase funded through the Commonwealth Softwood Agreement Act. When he became Conservator the planting reached an annual peak of 5460ha. On his watch the infamous auction sales of native forest timbers were replaced by allocation quotas, the National Parks Branch was hived off after 67 years into a separate Service, major freeholding of timbered crown lands reduced to a trickle, mechanization of most aspects of forestry practice including pruning was completed, plantation removals exceeded that from native forests and grew exponentially, final crop sales from the plantations were initiated. Bill personally championed the introduction of Organisational Development programs into the Department with positive results.

Bill Bryan was recognised by his peers as a robust, logical defender of Forestry particularly within a sometimes antagonistic political culture, dominated by agricultural and land development interests.

When Stan Jennings took ill Bill stepped in as National President, Institute of Foresters of Australia, December 1959 - December 1961. He became a Fellow of the Institute on 23 September 1969.

Bill Bryan died on the 13 April 2003 aged 82 years and 1 month.

Gary Bacon and colleagues

