

Percival Frederick Parker (Percy)

19 March 1926 – 4 April 2016

Prepared by Otago–Southland NZIF Committee

Percy was born in Blenheim in 1926 and grew up on the family farm 'Cricklewood' at Clarence River on the Kaikoura coast. He was educated at Nelson Boys' High School where he was a boarder.

In 1943, he started work as a clerical cadet at the Nelson Office of the NZ Forest Service. In his 43 years of service Percy worked in many aspects of forestry. He later shifted from Nelson to head office in Wellington and then Rotorua where he worked for the service's training course for returned servicemen.

Percy recalled that in his earlier years one of his jobs in Wellington was to queue for hours to get rail travel passes for his director. In the mid-1940s a pass was necessary for all travel over 100 miles and of course Palmerston North was deemed to be 102 miles from Wellington, which meant a permit was required to get there. This was a frustrating time, because after standing for hours in the queue he would sometimes get back to the office and find the trip had been cancelled or changed, so he had to go back to the queue.

He was soon introduced to field work at Waipa for a six month period. In 1946, Percy worked for three weeks as a messenger while the large 'Taupo fires' burned in the Central North Island. This fire destroyed a very large area of forest and fire-fighting was more of a matter of containment as only certain types of equipment were available. As a result of that fire the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 was introduced.

Percy was also later involved in the national Forest Survey, the first in-depth survey of indigenous forest in the country, which took 10 years to complete. Initially, the whole of New Zealand was photographed from the air, then the staff went out into the field to discover the make-up of the forest and vegetative cover.

From 1949 to 1951, Percy was a timber cruiser on the West Coast of the South Island. His work involved measuring the amount of timber suitable for milling in each miller's allocated area. At Kaingaroa he became a survey trainee and from 1953 to 1959 he surveyed the Tapanui, Berwick and Herbert Forests. At Rankleburn



he was the first person in the forest, surveying it in preparation for tree planting.

Following this work he later spent two years as an instructor at the ranger school in Rotorua and then shifted south to become the officer in charge of Dusky Forest in West Otago, a stay of some six years. He started the woodsmen school at the forest, which shifted to Berwick Forest on the west side of Lake Waiholo. The school has now closed.

From West Otago he shifted to the Dunedin office, which was a branch of the Invercargill forest district where he was mainly involved in administrative work, although he still enjoyed getting out into the field. He retired in March 1986 as second in charge of the Dunedin district, a position he held for 17 years.

During his retired years Percy was an extremely active member on the local Otago–Southland NZIF committee, holding most positions over many years. He was joint secretary with Jim Smith from 1994 to 2000 and joint chairperson with Chris Perley from 2004 till 2007. While secretary, he used to regularly send out newsletters to local members, keeping them informed of upcoming events and activities. His knowledge of the local industry (and its history) was an invaluable resource for the committee and the projects that it undertook. He really enjoyed the social side of the Otago–Southland NZIF and missed very few meetings.

When Percy retired he remained active in the community and in particular he was a founding member of the Dunedin Central Probus Club. He remained a member for over 30 years, including time on their management committee and a term as club president. He was very active in the church and served as a deacon at both Pine Hill and Roslyn Presbyterian churches. He moved to Anderson's Bay on his retirement and became a member of the local Presbyterian church, serving on its management committee. When the parish closed down in 2015, at the age of 89 years Percy shifted across to the centre of town and joined the First Church in Moray Place.