

# Forestry loses advocate in business world

**Leon Richard Spicer 1939 - 2003**

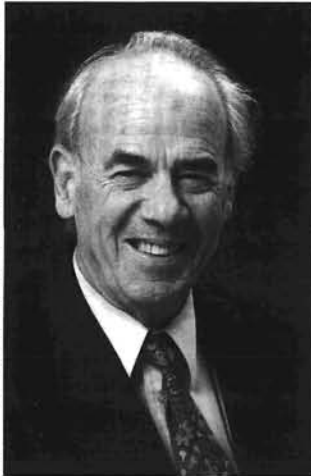
Leon joined the Forest Service as a technical trainee in 1958 and did his year in the field in a central North Island forest. During the vacations he did stints at FRI and Waipa Mill which gave him a strong interest in forest utilisation. Always having an enquiring mind he studied science at Auckland University where he gained an M.Sc and later went on to Edinburgh University to study forestry. He was active in the Edinburgh University Forestry Society and won the coveted prize for best management plan at the end of his studies there.

Upon returning to New Zealand Leon spent his first five years with the N.Z. Forest Service in South Westland, living at Harihari and it was a posting that he greatly enjoyed. In particular, Leon enjoyed the challenge of designing and implementing several early field studies in terrace and hill country rimu forests aimed at establishing a rational basis for introducing sustained yield management of podocarp forests on a commercial scale. It was a technical contribution to indigenous forestry that he was both proud of and found very inspiring.

From 1970 Leon spent three years in the NZFS Head Office setting up a forest information system, the first centralised computer-based compartment record system covering all State forests in the country. Leon was well known to many field foresters at the time because he arranged and conducted workshops in many parts of the country to explain how this novel approach in forest resources data processing could be used and what the benefits would be for forest management. Leon went on to become Principal Forester (Resources) after the position was established by Ross Usmar to improve communication between the Management and Marketing Divisions of the Forest Service as major exotic timber sales started to increase.

Between 1977 and 1982 Leon was the Executive Director of the NZ Forestry Council and was closely associated with managing the last of the series of National Forestry Conferences in 1981. Not being content with the profession of growing forests Leon was also interested in using wood and spent time at home using timber, making furniture and improvements to the family home.

A change in outlook and in interests in his life saw Leon move away from Wellington in the mid-1980s and he also moved away from the forestry profession and towards agriculture. Leon went orcharding in Katikati for five years and also studied business management at Waikato University. Upon graduation he joined the Livestock Improvement Association at Hamilton, firstly as a manager of management accounting and later of business development, positions that he held for several years. He was particularly well respected in the



Livestock Improvement Association where he earned a reputation as a firm but fair manager, especially in cost control.

Leon's final venture and one that lasted only a short time was as the strategic development manager of a new organisation based in Wellington, Dairy Insight. Building on his knowledge and experience in agriculture Leon again contributed fully to this new challenge and, as he had always done, he gave it his very best.

Leon was always a strong advocate for the way forestry taught skills in the development of business strategy and how to plan for it; he thought every business CEO in New Zealand ought to be required to spend time in the practicalities of forestry. Sadly, Leon became ill in late 2002 and died from cancer a few days after his 64th birthday.

Leon is survived by his wife Anne, children Joanna, Richard, Kate and Doug and eight grandchildren.

**Ian Trotman, Ian Armitage & Peter Allan**

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