

## [Obituary]

### **Moray Guild Douglas**

**27 May 1930–3 August 2007.**

From Mallee Boy to Mountain Forester

Moray was born at Werrimull in the Mallee of Victoria, the second son of original settlers in the area. His early schooling was at Werrimull South Primary School while his secondary schooling was as a boarder, initially with relatives while attending Upwey High School and later at Geelong College.

Moray then spent three years from 1947 to 1949 at the Forests Commission's Victorian School of Forestry at Creswick covering a mix of academic studies and practical field work. For the next few years he followed a typical career in the Forests Commission of compulsory postings to various locations throughout Victoria. Initially in Forest Assessment at Bendoc, he measured Alpine Ash on the Gelantipy Plateau, before, during and after the 1952 bushfires that regenerated the area. In recognition of the time he spent in the area a small creek flowing from the plateau towards the Snowy River bears his name.

A series of postings to Forest Districts followed. At Orbost he met and married a school teacher, Rosemary Edwards and together they began a life long partnership. After Orbost, Moray became the first District Forester for the newly created Swifts Creek District. Postings then followed at Heyfield, Mansfield and Mildura before becoming Assistant Divisional Forester for the Eastern Division based in Bairnsdale. He remained in this position until the Forests Commission was consumed into the amalgamated Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands in 1985. He then demonstrated his versatility by working in the complex field of Crown Land Management until he retired in 1989.

Moray was always particularly interested in Silviculture. He was an early advocate and practitioner for the re-establishment of Alpine Ash forests using the technique based on the research of the late Dr Ron Grose of aerial sowing of collected seed onto well burnt seedbeds. While at Mildura he also successfully re-established Murray Pine in the Hattah-Kulkyne forest by recognising the need to eliminate rabbit browsing. Back in Gippsland he became a mentor to a new generation of foresters undertaking regeneration of harvested forest areas, especially the difficult High Elevation Mixed Species forests. While stationed at Bairnsdale he became a foundation member of the Bairnsdale Farm Trees Group, which aimed to re-establish native woodlands on the Gippsland Red Gum Plains. This organisation was a forerunner of the Landcare movement demonstrating Moray's vision of the wider community role for foresters.

It was also during this period that Moray gained a reputation as a highly skilled bushfire strategist. He was always the first person to supplement the local district crew on fire-fighting duties and invariably worked night shift planning the tactics for the coming day.

He was a member of the Institute of Foresters of Australia and a stalwart of the Gippsland Branch. It was for this service and his strength and passion for silviculture that he was rewarded with elevation to the status of Fellow of the Institute. He

continued his involvement after retirement, including participating in several overseas tours organised by the Institute.

In retirement Moray's interest in trees never waned. He was the driving force behind the establishment of the Bairnsdale Botanic Gardens. As an active member of the Australian Forest History Society one of his postretirement projects has been the compilation of the forest history of Gippsland.

He and Rosemary established a holiday retreat at Merrijig, complete with a pole frame cottage, expansive arboretum and commercial radiata pine plantation. It is only recently that the first rotation crop of pine was harvested and with typical forester foresight, Moray replanted the area to provide an income for his grandchildren (and possibly great grandchildren).

Away from forestry, Moray was a good football and tennis player in his younger days and in more recent years was a keen mature age table tennis player.

Moray's funeral was held in his beloved Bairnsdale Botanic Gardens with his casket constructed from regrowth Alpine Ash timber, probably some that he had played a significant role in regenerating during his working life. He is survived by his two brothers, wife Rosemary, children Mark, Gerald, Piers and Penelope and four grandchildren.

By Ian Sebire & Doug Stevenson  
Bairnsdale



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Comments:

Printed copies of this article show an incorrect date of Vol. 50 No. 3 September 2007. Pages of this journal issue after page 13 show this incorrect information.

Fellow of the IFA