



Vale: Dr Jim Edgar

11 January 1940 – 4 January 2022

James Graham (Jim) Edgar died after a prolonged stroke at Geelong on 4th January 2022. With his passing we lost an accomplished and distinguished forest researcher who loved forestry in all its facets. A memorial service in Creswick was well-attended by family and surviving forestry personnel.

Jim grew up in Warrnambool (Victoria) as one of six children. His father was killed in a logging accident in 1947 and so his mother both worked and brought up the kids. It must have been tough going.

After matriculating, Jim attended the Victorian School of Forestry with a Forests Commission Victoria scholarship from 1957 to 1959. As was the system in those days he went on to complete his Bachelor of Science in Forestry at the University of Melbourne in 1962-63. His early forestry career saw postings to Casterton Forest District, the Phasmatid Survey program in north east Victoria, the Barmah Forest District and Orbost Forest District in 1964.

During this peripatetic time Jim met and married the love of his life – Margaret Solly (from Porepunkah in north-eastern Victoria). They went on to have four children – Stephen, Mathew (died in infancy), Elizabeth, and Paul. Sadly, Margaret died in 2016. Following an accident to the then VSF Principal, Bill Litster, in 1966, Jim was transferred from Orbost to Creswick as a VSF Lecturer and taught the subjects Silvics, Silviculture and Statistics over his term of 1966-68. We were students about this time and Jim was a breath of fresh air – one of a group of young lecturers, with field experience, who knew all about the Forests Commission and what the red lever on Land Rovers really did, ready to push us into the vibrant '60's.

During 1968 Jim transitioned from completing his lecturing commitments to establishing and managing the first Creswick Forest Research Station which focussed on native forest silviculture and growth modelling. Much of this research was focussed on tree deaths in native forest associated with *Armillaria* infections and could be viewed as “pioneering”. Jim’s transition into native forest research was put on hold when in the early 1970’s he was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship at the Institute for Environmental Quality and School of Natural Resources at cold, snowy University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, USA. He moved his young family across to the States and got his doctorate with a thesis entitled “A multiple objective approach to planning the use of public forest lands”.



On his return to Australia in 1975 Jim continued to expand field research at Creswick and across Victoria. The work was done in conjunction with a coterie of fine silvicultural researchers including Ross Squire, John Kellas, and Glen Kile. His talents were recognised by appointment to Principal at VSF in 1978. He remained in this role until 1981. It was a propitious period for the school, seeing the graduation of the first female VSF students and the last VSF Diploma graduates. He also managed the transition of the VSF Diploma course to joint FCV – University of Melbourne operations and the full University Bachelor of Forest Science degree course (which lasted until the University did away with discipline-based undergraduate degrees).

After managing this transition, Jim was headhunted to be the Deputy Director General of the then new Ministry of Employment and Training with responsibility for a range of employment programs, TAFE funding oversight and apprenticeship programs. From discussions with him, this particularly centred on high-level negotiations about the fate of training courses across a wide industrial spectrum. With subsequent State Government changes and re-organisations, Jim was appointed to senior executive positions in new “Business and Employment” and “Industry Services” Ministries. Such was his liking for Creswick that he did this job whilst maintaining residence in Creswick.

Coincident with this change (but not, I think because of it) the whole government forestry structure as we knew it disappeared. In 1984-5 the Forests Commission Victoria was amalgamated into what was intended to be a super-efficient, all-loving mega-department. Forestry Research as we knew it was out and we eventually had a new model of public-private research ventures – the Centre for Forest Tree Technology.

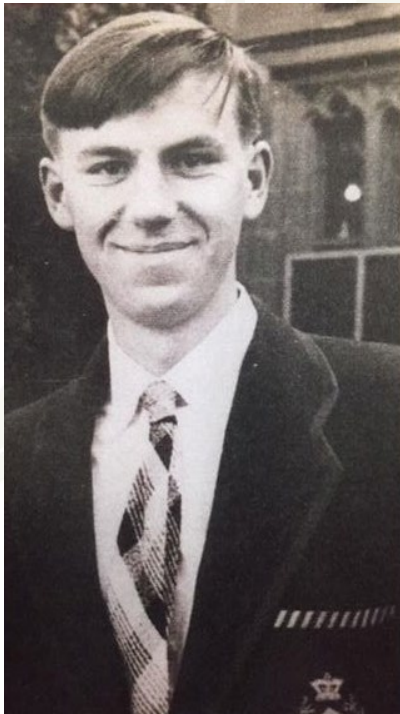
In 2001, Jim was enticed back briefly into forest research in a managerial role, and again found himself involved in the transition of the CFTT from Departmental management into a joint University of Melbourne/State Government venture. Jim then retired from the Public Service in 2005 and formed an agricultural – forestry consulting company.

Jim enjoyed the challenges of this role. It was a time of burgeoning blue-gum plantations and he was heavily involved in sorting out site selection, establishment, silviculture, and economics in south-western Victoria. He was also immersed in Creswick community activities via Apex and its successor body, Oasis. As well, he and Margaret took very active roles in the Creswick Community Festival, including organising and running (sorry about the pun) a major Community fun-run and a hilly (aka killing) half-marathon – the “Brackenbury Classic”.



After Margaret's death Jim lived on at Creswick but battled issues associated with failing health and many stays in hospitals. With his strong interest in native forest silviculture and growth modelling, and multi – resource forest development, Jim authored or co-authored papers, reports, and consultancies over his career and taught many younger foresters the rudiments of the craft. He is survived by his three children and three siblings. We will miss your quiet humour, deep forestry knowledge, and wise counsel, Jim.

by **Leon Bren, Ian Hastings, John Kellas, and Peter Fagg**



Jim about the time of his graduation from VSF in 1959



Jim as a bureaucrat with the Ministry of Employment and Training



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*Scientists, professionals and growers who
manage, study and care for our forests*



Jim with forestry students showing them the finer points of log-grading.

