

18 September 2009



OBITUARY – MURDOCH McLEAN

By Ron Eddy, Managing Director, TimTech Chemicals Limited

My first boss in New Zealand, Murdoch McLean, passed away at 5.30 this morning after a brave battle with cancer. His family were with him at the time.

I first met Murdoch in the early 1980's when he visited us at Hickson South Africa. He was always a little larger than life, had a fantastic sense of humour and a mighty laugh. On this visit he insisted that we take him to a rugby match at Loftus Versveld in Pretoria to watch the "Blue Bulls" take on Transvaal. I don't remember much about the game, but we all had a lot of laughs and one or two beers.

I met Murdoch again in 1984 when I first visited New Zealand on business. Murdoch arranged for us to be taken to each of the Hickson sites to see how Kiwis did it. I remember asking one of the site managers how many people he had working there. He answered, "about half".

In December 1985 Lyn and I decided it was time to leave South Africa. I asked my Hickson South African boss, Angus Currie, if he could have a word with his mate Murdoch. He did and I was invited to apply for a job in New Zealand. In March 1986 Murdoch flew me to Auckland for an interview with his board and a high powered recruitment consultant. During this visit, Murdoch and his charming late wife Judith looked after me, took me into their home and introduced me to their friends. After many dinners and after work Friday drinks he encouraged me to make the break and join Hickson New Zealand.

My wife, two young daughters and I arrived in July 1986. Again Murdoch had arranged everything from renting a nice house in Mission Bay to advising us on schools, real estate agents, introductions and anything else which could be done to help a young immigrant family with no friends or relations in a new country.

I was immediately put to work as the Marketing Director and began to experience another side of Murdoch. He was a very tough businessman and a hard but fair boss. If you told Murdoch you would do something by a certain date, God help you if you didn't! He once had my secretary in floods of tears because she had not sent a customer one of the famous little red Hickson diaries within hours of him asking her to.

Another time I was in early and he was having a very heated discussion with a long standing colleague (and one of his close friends). The mighty roar from down the passage made me realise that I never ever wanted to get on the wrong side of Murdoch.

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But, by lunch time we all at the League club having a few beers and lunch. Jokes all round and everything forgotten.

Murdoch instilled in us a strong sense of commitment to the customer and commitment to our team mates. A value we have never lost.

He retired about a year after I arrived and took up a role as the chairman of the newly formed Timber Preservation Council (TPC). His integrity, work ethic, sense of humour and overall “mana” made him even more respected by the industry he had loved for most of his life.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Murdoch as a friend, mentor and excellent boss. We have kept in touch and enjoyed several lunches and reminiscences together over the years.

I will always hold Murdoch in very high regard, remember him fondly and always thank him for his trust in me and for giving my family a new life as New Zealand citizens.

Rest in Peace.

