

Industry loses a captain of industry

Death of timber icon Warren Hyne

By JIM BOWDEN

"THE captain has left the bridge," lamented a forester and friend when Warren Hyne stepped down as managing director of Hyne & Son Pty Ltd in 1992.

Indeed few have invested a lifetime's devotion and faith in the timber industry on the scale of Warren Henry Hyne who died on Thursday (March 15) at the age of 77 after a long illness.

Mr Hyne was the eldest of three sons who grew up under the dynamic tutelage of 'the boss' J.R.L. (Lambert) Hyne, CMG, grandson of Richard Matthews Hyne ('RM'), an English carpenter who founded the Hyne dynasty on the banks of the Mary River in 1882.

The 'son' in Hyne & Son was Lambert's father Henry James Hyne, eldest son of 'RM', who died in 1936 and provided Warren with his middle name.

Warren Hyne succeeded his father (who died in October 1985) as managing director after a thorough grounding in all aspects of the business over a period of nearly 30 years. At the time of his father's retirement, Warren and his brother Richard had just taken a decision to tender for what at the time was the inconceivably huge annual volume of 225,000 cubic metres of slash pine final crop, a move that was a turning point in the history of Hyne.

In 1980, prior to the opening of its Tuan slash pine mill, Hyne & Son was a medium sized player in the industry. Today, Hyne Timber is one of the largest and most successful privately owned companies, employing more than 1000 people in operations that extend from Cairns, through New South Wales, to Melbourne, with a joint venture sawmill in Oregon, USA.

Warren Hyne started his working career at Hyne in 1947 as a junior clerk. In the 1950s he spent six months in South Australia with Woods and Forests and worked in sawmills at Nangwarry, Mount Gambier and at Bright in Victoria, gaining practical experience in the early days of pine thinning operations.

He was appointed managing director of Hyne in 1978 and chairman of directors in 1982.

Mr Hyne dedicated much of his life to forest industry organisations. He was chairman of the Australian Timber Research Institute, a member and chairman of the Gottstein Memorial Trust, a member of the Wood Science and Technology Advisory Group to CSIRO Forest Products, chairman of the Queensland Timber Board (now Timber Queensland), councillor of the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council, and a foundation member of the National Association of Forest Industries.

Mr Hyne was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to the forest and timber industries in 1997 and in 2001 was presented with the Centenary Medal. He retired as managing director of Hyne & Son in 1992 but remained as chairman of the board until 2001.

Warren Hyne had a long military career that started as a cadet lieutenant at Church of England Grammar School. He was head of the class at the Infantry Officer Training School, Bonegilla, Vic. On his return to Maryborough, Mr Hyne joined the 42nd Battalion as a private. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in 1950 and then an officer of the unit, subsequently the 47th Battalion. He became company commander of the Wide Bay Area of the 1st Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment, with the rank of major. He retired from the Army after nearly 25 years' service.

Warren lived a full active life as a leader in the Maryborough community for which he was a strong advocate and which he served with distinction on a broad range of community associations. His energy, vision and wise counsel will long be remembered throughout the Maryborough district.

He had a lifelong love of boats and the sea; from his younger days as an enthusiastic crew member in the Maryborough Sailing Club skiffs, through a succession of motor launches which gave him, his family and his many friends, great fellowship and great enjoyment. He was never without a boat in his life; his enduring love for the sea was very much part of him. It has passed on and lives in his children.

Warren Hyne lived at the family home in Lennox Street, Maryborough, which he shared with his wife Margaret, who died in August 2000. The stately residence was built in the 1880s for Andrew Wilson, one of the partners who began Wilson Hart sawmill. Warren and Margaret, over the years, undertook extensive renovations maintaining its original style and Ilfracombe now remains as one of Maryborough's grand heritage residences.

Warren Hyne had the greatest gift a man could have: respect – for himself, the industry he loved and the people in it. There is not a good friend or colleague whose life was not better for having known him. He had an incredible understanding of and patience with all people – from heads of government and industry to the lonely timber cutter out in the bush.

Warren Hyne is survived by two sons, Peter and James, a daughter Jane Sanders, two brothers, Richard and Christopher, two sisters living in England Sue Hyne and Prue Bertlesen and seven grandchildren – five boys and two girls.

Warren Hyne's funeral service will be held at St Pauls Anglican Church, Lennox Street, Maryborough, at 1pm on 20 March.

Tributes: they knew him well

Peter Kanowski, Queensland forester 1949-90:

I first met Warren Hyne in about 1954 when he was working at a sawmill in Nangwarry, SA. Lambert Hyne had sent him down to gain experience in the southern softwoods industry. I also had a very close association with him during my time as district forester, based at Maryborough, from 1975-81. He was a very gracious and kind man, a true gentleman. I always think of him as one of the true statesmen of industry. He was far-sighted and was one of the powerful forces behind the pioneering development of the plantation industry in Queensland, borne out by the establishment of the Tuan mill.

I was with him at many industry/government meetings of the years and his was the voice of reason at all of these.

Con Lembke, OAM, managing editor, Australian Forest Industries Journal 1945-1992:

During the 1980s and 90s I well recall a number of in-depth discussions with Warren Hyne on the importance to the future growth of the Australian forest industries of a viable group of family-based companies.

These businesses, founded by the forefathers of the present management, had faith in wood as a premium building and wood fibre material; were in the forefront of understanding forest management and conservation issues; had great faith in their workers; and were dogged in dealing with the political issues of the day.

It is obvious, looking at the success of the Hyne company today as one of the most diversified and efficiently managed forest industry operations in Australia, that Warren never wavered in terms of his family-based philosophies, but importantly he did realise that the family had to have around it the right management people who had the same feelings of loyalty that existed within the Hyne brothers, Warren, Richard and Chris, when they inherited the business from their dynamic father Lambert. I can remember Warren, Arthur Risby, Dennis Cullity and Bob Page sitting around and discussing this very fact. They really knew the wood industry and the people in it and the importance of the industry to communities, large and small, that relied on the sawmills for their subsistence.

Denis Cullity, chairman, Wesbeam Holdings Limited:

Warren and I got to know each other well when we worked together on the Gottstein Trust. His integrity shone through in everything he said and did. He was clear thinking, decisive and possessed of great entrepreneurial spirit. He gave his views courteously yet firmly and was a pleasure to work with. Walking through the Hyne sawmills one sensed a team spirit that reflected the Hyne family values, values that Warren protected, preserved and fostered to his company's benefit and to the benefit of his community, his industry, his state and his nation. He has passed on a legacy not just to Hyne & Son, but to us all.

Errol Wildman, chairman, Queensland Timber Board (1981-83):

I am indebted to the tremendous support Warren Hyne gave me during my term as chairman of QT.B. He gave strength, intelligence and dimension to the board. It was a time when the industry in the south was under attack from the preservation movement and together we met with newspaper editors to convey the truthful facts about the Queensland industry that was watching the damage from green sensationalism in southern states. And for 3-5 years we kept things stable.

Along with his business acumen, Warren had an excellent grip on the research and development needs of the industry and he helped focus and energise this research.

Warren never sought recognition for the things he brought to the table and that greatly benefited the industry at large.

As QTB chairman at the time, I was fortunate to enjoy Hyne's centenary year (1982) and celebrate the great effort and energy that the Hyne family had put into the industry.

Tom Ryan, Queensland Conservator of Forests, 1988-93:

Warren Hyne worked through a range of industry activities to develop and become an Australian industry leader of his time, held in the highest regard nationally and internationally.

He dealt with all levels of government, forest growers and product buyers at the highest levels and was always well prepared, persuasive in his argument, yet balanced and understanding of alternative positions.

As an industry leader he was progressive and enthusiastic, alert to developing opportunities and prepared to take a measured risk.

The many people at all levels whose path crossed with that of Warren Hyne admired him for his common touch. Warren was an attentive listener and a gentleman, yet straight from the shoulder. He wanted a fair go for all and engendered enthusiasm and loyalty from his staff.

Gary Bacon, executive director, DPI Forestry 1996-98:

Warren Hyne was what I would term one of the real 'captains' of industry. In fact, I considered there were two true 'captains' – Denis Cullity and Warren Hyne.

I first met Warren when I was a young man brought out of the bush to head Forestry's market development group. In those days, the Australian Timber Industry Stabilisation Conference (AusTIS) was very much alive and it was at these meetings, when Warren Hyne was chairman, that I became acquainted with the capacity of the man.

He was able to think beyond his own company and he saw the industry in its totality – from the grower, to the harvester and the processor through to the seller.

He never came across with a 'fire-and-brimstone approach'; he addressed you man to man and that's how negotiations started and finished.

He was one of the few visionaries who wanted to set up a single voice for industry, the total industry, and we came near to it in the early days of NAFI.

Thory Gunnensen, chief executive, Gunnensens Pty Ltd:

I met with Warren Hyne at many industry meetings over many years and I always recognised his intelligence and commitment to the industry in the old-fashioned way. He was a very worthy and hard-working representative of a great timber family. Hyne had huge environmental issues during his tenure and came out brilliantly well due in no small measure to Warren's foresight and strategic thinking.