

Death of Peter Wood of Woolyarns Ltd

Built Biggest Wool Spinner in Australasia

HASTINGS, HAWKE'S BAY, NEW ZEALAND, November 15, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Death of Peter Wood of Woolyarns Ltd

The death at 80 of Peter Wood brings the final curtain down on the era in the textile industry of the proprietor -operator able to do any job on the factory floor better than the member of their staff presently doing it. Still routinely to be found on the floor, in overalls until a few months prior to his death, Peter Wood left behind him the most extensive integrated wool spinner in either New Zealand or Australia.

The story of Peter Wood and Woolyarns and its associate company Inter-weave began in the heart of the West Yorkshire textile country where his father Colin lived and started his working life. His father arrived in New Zealand in 1931, finding work at the Oamaru Woollen Mills, then transferring to the Petone Woollen Mills before setting up on his own account in 1944.

It was here in 1956 and after an apprenticeship at heavy general engineer William Cable that Peter Wood joined his father in the textile business. It became Woolyarns and in this era it focused on custom-spinning.

The arrival in the business of his brother Jim, a natural marketeer, allowed Peter Wood to concentrate on the intricate technologies of wool spinning. He was at home with machinery of any application at all. Events were to test him.

There was the globalisation of New Zealand trade which swept away the protected status of textile companies, and which eventually swept away most of the companies too.

Woolyarns though had anticipated this sea change and developed export markets which absorbed much of the shock. Product lines and specifications were re-calibrated.

The sudden and unexpected death at 47 of Jim Wood was a shock that could not have been anticipated.

It was now that Peter Wood found himself focusing as much on the mercantilist side of the business as on the mechanical. Never a natural salesman, he nonetheless always possessed a youthful and attentive demeanour. Many were surprised in his later years to discover that they had been dealing with a man in his 60s or 70s. He was more of a listener than a talker.

The company added to its market diversification through branching into possum and angora threads among other natural fibres. It added interior fittings to its portfolio, notably carpets.

A characteristic of Peter Wood was his reluctance outside his business to discuss it, or his role in it.

He preferred instead to deflect any such inquiry onto his hobbies which included boat building, rebuilding old engines, and farm-forestry.

Peter Wood's determination to keep Woolyarns private meant that he positioned himself always to concentrate on his business rather than on the whims and short term interests of external investors. He was a consultative boss, constantly seeking guidance from his staff. He sought to promote from within the organisation, which, as it expanded, became a progressively simpler task. Regardless of their station, he always talked to people in the same mildly quizzical manner.

Had the title been levelled at him, Peter Wood would have brushed it off with a disbelieving grin.

Yet he was a tycoon, though one more at home in overalls than in a three piece suit. As such he had to make ultimately alone decisions involving immense investments, mainly in machinery, but also in acquiring other companies in order to broaden and secure the Woolyarns base.

He is survived by his wife and their two daughters.

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