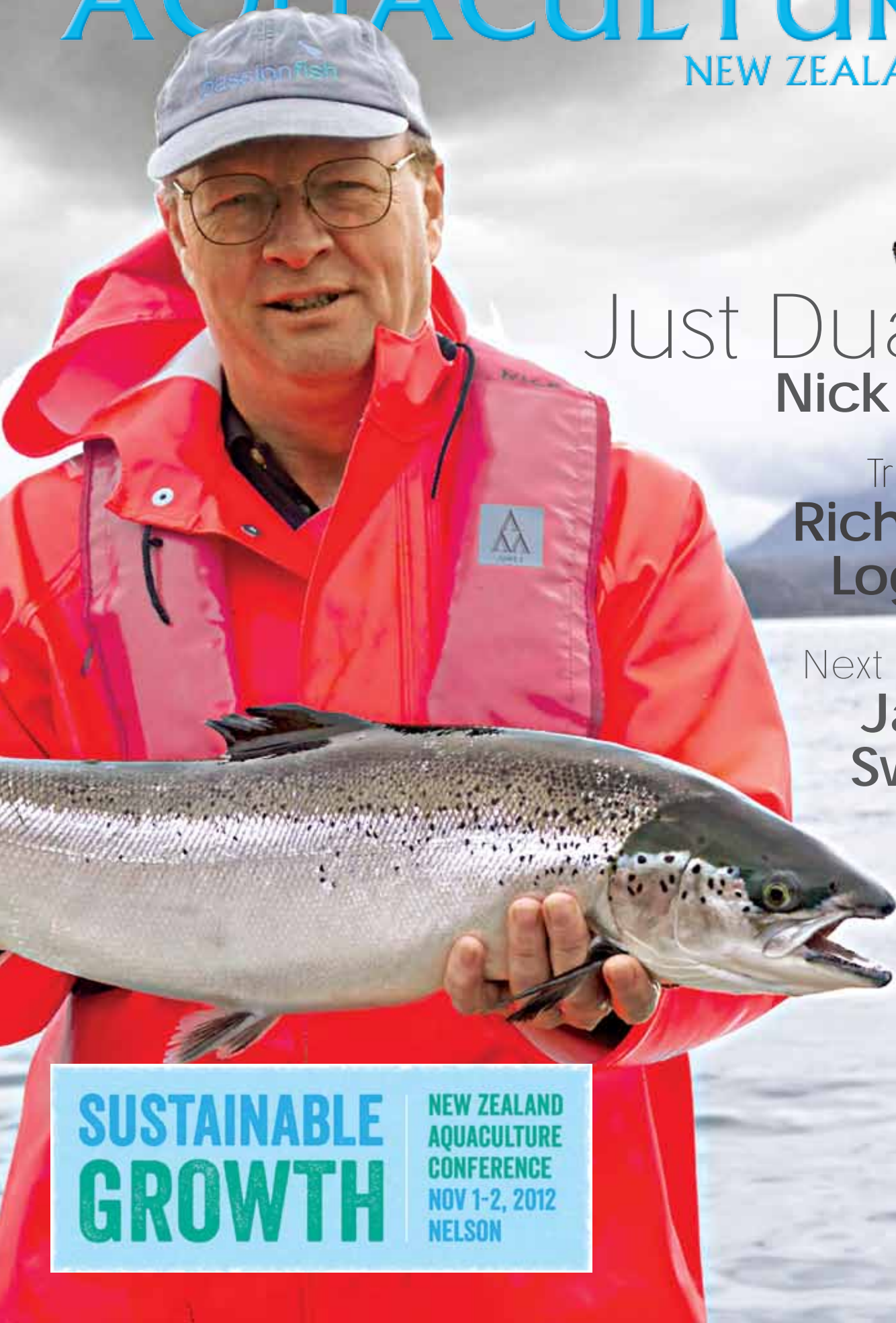


October 2012

AQUACULTURE

NEW ZEALAND



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Tribute to a happy salmon farmer



Richard (left) and his brother Ron, with the old army surplus Indian

He was a discontented civil servant who retired to become a happy salmon farmer.

Fresh water aquaculture pioneer Richard Logan passed away at his Twizel-based High Country Salmon farm in July from a congenital heart condition, aged 76.

A loving husband, father and grandfather, Richard was a skilful angler, a free thinking innovator and a notable Rotarian.

He will be remembered by the Aquaculture industry as the forefather of the Mackenzie Country salmon industry who fought the early bureaucratic battles and had a hand in building all three farms in the hydro canals.

The fourth of six children, Richard was born in Timaru, attended West School and Timaru Boys High School and developed a love of the outdoors enhanced by his involvement in the Rovers Scouts. His grandfather taught him to fly fish and it became his boyhood passion with all his spare time spent at the local rivers and streams. He would wake up at 5am to stalk trout before school. A big influence on his and his brother Ron's fishing passion was their connection from the early 1950s with the South Canterbury Anglers Club which involved bus trips up the Waitaki and to Lake Alexandrina and learning skills by association. Over years of practice Richard developed a long cast that left fellow anglers in awe, and learned the delicate art of presenting a fly and reading running water.

"He just liked the excitement of pitting himself against a fish," remembered his wife Margaret.

"I remember someone saying, 'he thinks like a fish.'

"He'd look at a pool and say 'if there's a fish, it would be there.' And chances are there would be a fish there.

"He knew the eddies, or where the smooth deep patch would be or whether there was a salmon running up the river or resting in a pool.

"Once we were on holidays and he was fishing a pool in the Tongariro River and a guide came along with a couple of clients. He stopped and told them to watch Richard. He'd never seen anyone cast as skillfully."

That ability to think like a fish would eventually serve him well when it came to establishing the world's first canal-based salmon farming industry. But his first career was with the Social Security Department. His civil service lasted 35 years and took him to Wellington, Greymouth, Auckland Whangarei, Whakatane, and back to Timaru before he 'retired' at age 54.

"Being an ideas man and free thinker he found it frustrating not having the freedom to do things that he thought would be better," Margaret said.

"Some of his colleagues appreciated him and called him a man before his time.

"But he had to toe the line.

"He was ready to leave. Looking back he wished he did it years ago.

"He was a disgruntled ex-civil servant, and a happy salmon farmer."



Richard & Margaret on the High Country Salmon farmhouse.

It was while working at the Wellington Social Security Office that he met the then 16-year-old Margaret McKinney in 1960. They married three years later and set off for a six-month honeymoon in outback Australia. Just Richard and Margaret, and an army surplus Indian motorcycle he used to take fishing in South Canterbury. They added an old police side car and reaching a top speed of 30 miles/hour, began their life's journey together. The motorcycle broke down somewhere between Darwin and Alice Springs but their marriage lasted over 49 years. Together they raised three children, Peter, Caroline and Jeni who between them gave them 10 grandchildren.

Richard was also active in his community over the years, volunteering with citizen's advice, budget advice and marriage guidance services. He was a member of Rotary for nearly 40 years and was twice awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship in recognition of his work developing the Artarama school art competition and for his contribution to the local aquaculture industry.

In retirement, Richard planned to spend his time fishing and painting, but he soon realised it was not an active enough life.

The concept to farm salmon in the Mackenzie Basin was hatched by Richard and his old friend Woody Horsfield during a fishing trip. Soon after, the two of them began knocking on doors of the organisations they needed to get approval from.

"In 1991, the two of us went to see Patrick Robinson, the head of Electricorp in Dunedin, and presented our scheme to him. When they had finished laughing at our impudence - that we were thinking of using their canals for some other purpose - they came to realise ... that the joint use of water might even be

good for public relations," Richard is quoted in *Swimming Upstream*.

They commissioned engineering reports and approached various Canterbury Fish and Game societies, Ngai Tahu Trust Board, Department of Conservation and the Mackenzie District Council.

Richard's understanding of the bureaucratic process was a great asset in the early days and he developed a reputation as a fiercely persistent letter writer with the ability to sway anyone to his way of thinking.

"Dick was never one to sit back and maintain the status quo," said fellow pioneer Rick Ramsay who worked around Richard for 20 years.

"He wrote many a letter in flowing hand... forceful with his logic and never one to give up. There could be many to agencies on the same subject if they dared to disagree with his view!"

“Don't be sad, I've had a wonderful life – no regrets.”

"He skilfully used all of the "bureaucracy" if he thought he could win some over to his side... I guess he knew the ropes from his former life! He wore them down relentlessly"

Richard and Woody went on to form Southern Sockeye Salmon (now Mt Cook Alpine Salmon) and by 1992 had consent to build their first farming raft on the Ohau Canal.

"Those early farming years were difficult - there was no easy ride and Dick would always say 'We are all still learning,' Rick said.

"That first raft was definitely a prototype

and Dick immediately had his ideas on what the Mk. II raft should be.... and one day a couple of pieces of purlin bolted together were sitting in a prominent spot at the back door of the Ohau shed.

"His stroke of brilliance was the use of steel purlin to make a cost effective and strong raft chassis... those rafts built in 92-93, are still in existence, and form the basis for what we do now.

"Dick's legacy is innovation in canal based systems - but not every invention worked. He was a man with an eye for opportunity."

By 1995, Richard had eyed a new opportunity and left to join the consortium that started Benmore Salmon on the Ohau B/C canal. But from the beginning of this venture, he was looking further upstream and by 2000, Richard and Margaret began developing High Country Salmon in the Wairepo Arm.

"An entrepreneur would be another way of describing Dick, and he hit the "jackpot" at Wairepo Arm, so ably supported by Margaret (as always)," said Rick.

"Wairepo gave another opportunity to try another design... and one could not question the success of that.

"This site probably encompassed all his ideas." The site was beside State Highway 8 and gave them the perfect platform to reach independent travellers. But it was a small family business that Richard and Margaret built up by hand.

"He was in his late 60s when we started. We wanted a family-sized farm we could operate ourselves," Margaret said.

"We lived on site in a campervan for four years. The campervan was also the tearoom for our staff. We built the pens ourselves. Richard sewed all the nets by hand to custom fit the pens he designed. Eventually we built a house on the site that overlooks the farm."

High Country Salmon has developed into a farm experience that allows visitors to feed the fish as well as buy product on site.

"Richard particularly liked hosting school parties. He would give them a talk, catch a fish from the pen, dissect the fish and give them a lesson on biology," Margaret said.

"He was 76 when he died, working right up till then.

"People used to ask him when was he going to retire. But retirement was a dirty word.

"He believed we all need to have something to do, and the idea was always to work on the farm until the end.

"He loved the farm. He was in charge. He was working with a product he respected, and he could put his own ideas into action and see the results of all his effort. "

As High Country Salmon was the culmination of his life's work, it was fitting that Richard farewelled his friends and family in his own home, overlooking the pens.

"Don't be sad, I've had a wonderful life - no regrets," he said. ■

Richard George Logan
24.01.1936 - 27.07.2012

After moving his young family from South Africa to challenge himself in the burgeoning canal-based salmon farming industry in Twizel, Jaco Swart is...

Living on the edge

Q You have a Masters degree in aquaculture from the prestigious Stellenbosch University in South Africa – how did that prepare you for actually working in the industry?

During the time I spent doing my Masters, I had the opportunity to manage the trout research unit of the university. I also did some teaching at the university and made regular visits to farmers in the industry. This all gave me a wide background to what aquaculture is all about. I firmly believe that both practical skills and a strong scientific background is what we need to grow the industry.

Q Why did you uproot your family and your life in South Africa to come and farm salmon in Twizel?

It was a combination of things. As a young boy I can remember tuning in to the radio, listening to the Springboks play the All

Blacks. Brian Williams was my childhood rugby hero, names like Billy Bush and Sid Going still bring back memories of hard, tough rugby players – that's where my connection with New Zealand started. Someone once said that: LIFE STARTS AT THE EDGE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. So what better way to test that than to move to a new country with 3 and 6-year-old boys? It was a combination of doing something new, something exciting and obviously for a better opportunity for us as a family. And yes I do support the All Blacks and there is no greater hero than Richie McCaw.

Q What were your first impressions of New Zealand's fresh water salmon farming industry when you arrived in 2002?

I was expecting the industry to be further advanced. They were still using pelletized diets and there were big gaps in the harvesting cycle. I could see that there was an opportunity to help grow the industry.

Q You spent 8.5 years with Benmore Salmon, 6 as farm manager, how did the farm change over that time?

We started doing trials on extruded diets and soon proved that you can grow fish more efficiently and faster. We talked to NIWA about selecting our own brood stock and were able to close the gaps we had in our harvesting cycle. With all these changes we ordered less smolt but grew them bigger and over time increased production from 180 tonne per year to 350 tonne without adding any extra infrastructure to the farm.

Q From one of the smallest producers, you moved to one of the largest, Sanford, to manage their salmon farm in Big Glory Bay. Why did you make the move from fresh water farming to marine farming?

Tommy Foggo approached me when Michael, the previous manager, left for

Tasmania. It was a big step up for me and a steep learning curve - edge of your comfort zone stuff. It's been the best 18 months of a 22 year career in aquaculture. We have a small dedicated crew down here and are privileged to work in one of the most pristine environments in the world producing the best salmon.

Q What is the biggest difference between the two operations?

The scale of production is just so different from the smaller farms – it's big boats, big pens, big nets and with it, big responsibilities. To me it is aquaculture in action, it is what it's all about. Having state of the art feeding equipment and camera systems with which you can feed optimally and get the best feed conversions and growth rates. Being able to harvest 30 tonnes of salmon in the morning and

have the fish back in Bluff by 3 o'clock that afternoon, you just don't see that in the smaller operations.

Q Which is the superior fish – fresh water or salt water salmon?

For me personally seawater salmon have a firm flesh and a stronger taste, whereas freshwater salmon have a sweeter taste. I do enjoy a slice of perfectly cold smoke salmon and then the production method does not really come into play.

Q Why after 18 months with Sanford are you moving back to fresh water to manage High Country Salmon?

The owner of High Country, Richard Logan, passed away recently and I was offered the position to manage the farm. When Richard was still alive, we started on a

“As aquaculturalists it is our mission to educate the general public to what it is all about...the general public don't know about the science behind aquaculture and all the effort that goes into producing a world class product.”

project that I am very keen to see through. This will give me the opportunity to put in a big effort to see both Richard's and my dream come true. There is also something about the High Country, once it's in your blood, it never lets go.

Q High Country Salmon is set up as a 'farm experience' for visitors to get involved in the farming process – how will your Sanford experience fit with that model?

Salmon farmers tend to be a bit on the shy side, that's why we all find these jobs in the most remote of places. For me it will be a new experience dealing with the public, but it is our means of an income so their experience on the farm is important to us.

Q High Country has been operated for the past 10 years as a family business – how will your past experience fit with this model?

Ultimately salmon farming is about staying in business and improving from year to year. It is important that we expand on the "salmon experience" for our customers and I see the opportunity to educate visitors about salmon farming and its benefits.

Q What do you see for the future of salmon farming in New Zealand?

I think it lies in education. As aquaculturalists it is our mission to educate the general public to what it is all about. We know that we are sustainable, we keep to our codes of conduct and do everything in our power to have a minimal impact. The general public don't know about the science behind aquaculture and all the effort that goes into producing a world class product. I am tired of bad, sensational arguments over ruling good science, and good practice. For the industry to expand we need to get people informed about the processes we have in place. Hearing about the health benefits of Omega-3's is fine, but it is more than that. As farmers we need to choose our sites carefully and be open and transparent in what we are doing. If we have a well informed general public, we will have an industry that will grow and that we all can all be proud of. ■



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