



Des Forrest - A CALM character
Photo by Tanyia Maxted

Des Forrest

ANYONE who has ever fuelled up or phoned Collie District in search of a piece of fire fighting gear is sure to remember the booming voice of Des Forrest, one of CALM's more colourful characters.

Desmond (Tutu) Forrest joined the Forests Department in February, 1961 after the coal mines were closed down in favour of oil as an energy source to generate the State's power.

Along with a score of other retrenched miners he was armed with hand augers, axes and dynamite.

His first job was to blow up and burn logs that lay in the way of the planting of what is now known as Bussell's Plantation.

"We didn't know what had hit us as the work was pretty different to mining," Des said.

"The bosses here then didn't know what they'd struck either!

"The miners then were a little more militant than the

by Alan Hordacre

regulars, but the bosses soon fixed that by sending us to Nannup to plant the Blackwood Valley pines.

"That sorted the sheep from the goats and you had to be a mountain goat to work in that country."

Today, Des is in charge of the fabrication, testing, audit and storage of all of CALM's fire equipment as well as being Jack of all trades as District storeman.

"Proper care and maintenance of the fire gear is most important as having the equipment in good working order at a moment's notice is vital," Des says.

"You have to be very thorough and can't have mugs doing it - people's lives depend on the equipment so we can't afford mistakes."

Des retires in two years, (earlier, if he wins lotto), so he is busy passing on his knowledge to Protection Branch staff and the new generation at Collie District.



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WHILE REFUELLING