

Charles Gordon Wilkinson Obituary

Charles Gordon Wilkinson was born on 13/9/1933, in Nairobi, Kenya, to Harold and Grace Wilkinson (nee Udall). Harold was an entomologist and Grace later became head of Girl Guides in Africa with Olave Baden-Powell. Gordon's early idyllic childhood and schooling in Kenya was disrupted when he was sent to an English boarding school, Sedbergh from 1947-1951. Gordon excelled in all sports, playing rugby in the first fifteen, and winning the open athletics trophy, including the pole vault using a bamboo pole. After school, he worked for a year on farms in Yorkshire and Hereford. He then completed an agriculture diploma (1952-54) at Seale-Hayne college in Devon; also winning the overall college athlete award. In 1954-5, Gordon secured work as a farm manager in Sussex. In 1956, Gordon left England and returned to Kenya to do national service. Between 1958 - 1962, Gordon worked as a farm manager for Theta Coffee in Ruiru. In December 1959, he married Susan Johnston, and in August 1960, he became a father to twins Melville and Charles, and later Timothy in November 1961. In 1962, Gordon immigrated to Australia on his own, buying an old van, looking for a job on the land. His family immigrated six months later by ship, under the 10 pound migrant scheme. Gordon was employed as an agriculture officer with Qld Primary Industries on the Atherton Tabelands from 1962-4, living in Tolga. In 1964, he bought a farm nearby at Walkamin, growing tropical legume seeds for Terranova. He sold the farm in 1969 and moved to Mackay, working as a seed consultant, and also learnt to fly. Later that year, he moved to Buderim for a year, and in 1971 moved to Annerley for a year, working at Yerongpilly as a fauna ranger for Primary Industries, which later became National Parks and Wildlife. At this time, there were only 2 fauna rangers in Qld. During his time with National Parks and Wildlife, (1971-1990), Gordon, under a departmental scholarship, completed the first environmental science degree offered in Australia, from 1975-8 at Griffith Uni. Gordon later moved office to Moggill, and was involved in pioneering work conserving the bilby, northern hairy nosed wombat, and bridled nail tail wallaby, as well as educating farmers on conservation. Gordon bought a house at Sherwood in 1972 (flooded in 1974), which he sold in 1983. He also bought acreage in Brookfield in 1973, and built his house in 1980-3. Gordon retired in 1990 and spent the last 40 years on his beloved rural property in Brookfield, planting trees and donating part of his property to Land for Wildlife. Gordon travelled extensively, particularly to visit natural environments and national parks, including Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, Borneo, central America, USA, Mexico, Malta, and PNG. Gordon was a lover of nature and conservation and spent many years growing trees and restoring his property, as well as in the community. He had a deep interest and knowledge of plants and wildlife. Gordon was a talented sportsman, artist, recycler, conservationist, loved to discuss any current scientific topic, and put his hand to fixing anything, rather than throw it away. He loved his grandchildren dearly and kept up to date with all of their activities. He believed in the 'survival of the fittest' and kept very fit and was very conscious of nutrition. Gordon set a

very fine example to us all, cheerful and accepting his fate at the very end. He will be sorely missed by his family and the community.

