

Lex's big part in SA's crop successes



His board was selling nearly all of Australia's barley

Lex grew up on a farm a few kilometres north of Clare at White Hut, where he attended a one-teacher primary school typical of the 1920s and '30s rural areas. A keen student, he was supported by government scholarships through his secondary and tertiary education.

He graduated as an agricultural scientist and was appointed an assistant agronomist at the Waite Institute in 1940.

The war saw him join the RAAF where he served for four years from 1942 as a navigator on Liberator bombers in northern Australia.

Back at the Waite he worked mainly on the toxic weed known as Cape tulip, and taught pasture science. He was co-author of a widely used field guide to identification of pasture species.

In 1951 he joined the SA Department of Agriculture as a senior agronomist, one of a new generation of departmental officers employed by a new Director of Agriculture, A.R. Callaghan, to deal with the increasing complexity of the rural industries.

By 1956 he was chief agronomist, and in 1959 he was made chief of the division of plant industry, responsible for the Branches of Agronomy, Horticulture and Soils.

In 1971 he was appointed one of the three assistant directors of Agriculture with responsibility for all the

department's advisory and research programs.

He was managing the numerous funds through the Federal Government and from primary producers' groups that went towards supporting a vast array of research and advisory projects. These came to account for nearly 30 per cent of the Department of Agriculture's budget.

Lex was instrumental in establishing a first class weed control unit in the department, dealing with research, advice and regulation, and providing an example to be followed by other states for expertise and efficiency.

He was chairman of the SA Weeds Advisory Committee, which laid the foundation for a new Pest Plants Act, which from 1976, for the first time, provided a legal and funding basis for an effective partnership between local and state governments in tackling weed problems in both farming and conservation areas.

Lex was honoured in 1974 with the Roseworthy Old Collegians Association Award of Merit for outstanding service to the state's rural industries.

From 1970 to 1985 he was chairman of the Australian

MILESTONES

ALEXANDER JOHN KERRY WALKER AM

Barley Board chairman

Born: December 11, 1916; Clare

Died: June 27, 2013; Adelaide

Education: Roseworthy Agricultural College; University

of Adelaide

Achievements: Agronomist, deputy director of Agriculture, chairman of ABB

Family: Survived by children Sue, Jill, Michael and Alex, seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Barley Board, which had been established by joint SA and Victorian laws to handle and market the barley crop of both states.

The board was responsible for selling nearly all of Australia's barley since it is nearly all grown in SA and Victoria.

It was a period of rapid changes in the international

market for barley and in opening up new markets for our barley.

Lex had become an astute operator in this dynamic scene, travelling to Japan, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Europe, Russia and South America on successful marketing and sales missions. On his retirement he was made a member of the Or-

der of Australia, especially for his contributions to the Australian barley industry.

Lex was a modest and unassuming man who commanded great respect and affection from his staff and colleagues. He had a dry sense of humour, without any hint of sarcasm, and it helped him win friends and influence people everywhere he went.

He took a particular interest in younger staff and was a mentor to many.

He was a keen follower of sport, a dedicated Norwood Football Club supporter, and keen on first class cricket, lawn bowls and American baseball. He played pennant bowls for many years.

He and his late wife Eleanor were a devoted couple through 65 years of marriage, and as a bridge partnership were strong competitors at the club level.