

# Green trail left by dedicated planter

**Desmond George Foulis, OAM**

Pioneer of native tree planting

**Born:** November 28, 1924; Ororoo

**Died:** February 27, 2007; Booleroo Centre

**D**ES Foulis planted his first gum tree 55 years ago, nurtured it with bathtub water and went on to be recognised nationally for his price-less plantings. In 1985, Des won the national ABC-TV's *Country Wide Tree Care Award*, a forerunner to the Land Care Awards, and collected a trophy in Canberra.

In 1986, the ABC's *Country Wide* program released a book called *Trees - Why We Need Them*, with a chapter on Des's tree-growing efforts.

In 2006, Des was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for "service to the environment, particularly through contribution to native vegetation".

Des served on the Ororoo Area School council and provided trees for school Arbor days. His first fenced tree patch was planted in 1953. Eucalypt species were suggested by the late Noel Lothian, of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, and bought from the late Wally Hancock (Port Augusta Nursery).

Des collected his own seeds and grew his own seedlings of South Australian and Western Australian eucalypt species.

He later added smaller native plants and salt bush to the trees he grew.

As land was bought, each farm had a designated tree patch. Des also planted trees in Wilmington and around Willowie. In 1978, he moved to Wilmington.

He was a member of the Society of Growing



Australian Plants, Coolabah Club and Northern Field Naturalist and was visited by specialists from the 9th World Soil Science Congress. Known as a deep thinker, Des was also a local agricultural bureau member and served as a councillor on the Mount Remarkable Council.

His first stroke slowed him down but in 2003 a more serious stroke ended his tree-planting and farming career.

He later moved to Mt View Homes in Booleroo Centre.

Born at Ororoo Hospital, Des was the only son of E.C. (Manny) Foulis and P.V. (Prue)

nee Pattingale of Willowie. His grandparents were Willowie and Port Broughton pioneers.

He began school at Port Broughton and completed it at Willowie. He attended the Willowie Methodist Church and Sunday school and church remained important all of his life.

Farming at Willowie with his father was hard work, with horse teams used when cropping. During World War II, Des took on farm work at Meadows and other places.

With Don Greig and Dean Hughes he formed a dance band and played drums and piano for dances in halls throughout the Willowie district.

Des played social tennis, was wicket-keeper at cricket and full-back in B-grade football for Willowie teams.

He married Ethel Grace (Gay) Nicholls at the Booleroo Whim Methodist Church on February 9, 1952. Rilda, Russell, Clyde and Bentley were children born to this marriage over five years. Des planned and had built three new homes for his family.

Taking a break from farming, Des and his wife toured Australia in their caravan, meeting other tree growers.

After a short illness, Des died peacefully in the Booleroo Centre Hospital, aged 82.

Many of the trees he planted provided a silent guard of honour along the road to his burial in the Willowie Cemetery on March 2.

Des is survived by his wife Gay, four children, 11 grandchildren and their spouses or partners.

**Rilda Sharp**