

Stan's pungent eloquence is the result of an inquiring mind and a wide ranging interest in books. Recent issues of gardening magazines and peace newsletters, sheafs of news clippings, Forest and Bird's latest *Conservation News* and several books on pesticides share space on a cluttered dining table with Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Stan was reading it to find a suitable quote from the Mad Hatter to use in a letter.

He left school at 14 in the depression days of the mid 1930s and earned a living helping out on fishing boats around Banks Peninsula. "I had no wages, sea boots, or warm clothes for the first 18 months. It's lucky I haven't got rheumatism."

Though he regrets his lack of formal education, his reading and a magpie eye for news stories and articles which can provide springboards for statements to the media and ministers, help ensure the letters fly "like chips from a chip mill". A quote from King George VI, remembered on a plaque on a Lyttelton building, is a favourite and has inspired several letters: "The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after."

***"It's a philosophy which spurred Hemsley to collect more than 6,000 signatures for New Zealand's largest petition, the Maruia Declaration. He became a regular sight on the city's bus routes canvassing pedestrians and passengers. 'I couldn't stop asking people'."***

When plans to chip West Coast beech forests resurfaced in 1986 Stan wrote, "It appears to matter little to the Minister [of Forests] that thousands of birds will die, being unable to traverse a treeless landscape". In a recent letter to the Prime Minister, decrying the logging of west Southland forests, Stan said, "the mute testimony of our appalling endangered and extinct bird species list provides sufficient proof that we have been poor land managers".

Stan was born in Lyttelton and has spent most of his life there, apart from spells at sea working on fishing boats or as a seaman on coastal freighters around New Zealand and across the Tasman.

He attributes his interest in the natural environment to a happy childhood with much time spent outdoors. Repelled by the smoke from his sailor father's cigarettes, Stan slept under the stars through spring, summer and "halfway through the winter until my mother made me come inside again" on "an old iron bedstead with a bit of canvas pulled over me when it rained".

The second youngest of a family of nine children, most of whom had their own friends, he had the Port Hills as his playground and their flowers, plants, trees, and birds as his playmates. "I used to love reading about [North American] Indians. They had a great love of their natural surroundings," he says.

To remind people of the enduring wisdom of indigenous peoples' understanding of the natural world, Stan has framed and given away over 100 copies of Chief Seattle's 1854 statement on the environment, "The Earth is Precious". Beech leaves and fern fronds pressed beneath the glass highlight the statement's relevance to New Zealand.

Good friend and fellow activist, Tom Hay introduced Stan to the environment movement on a Forest and Bird field trip several decades ago. He hasn't looked back. "Where most people waffle on and do little, Stan's practical help has been invaluable," Hay says.

As well as being an "indefatigable letter writer", Stan has been a stalwart at Forest and Bird and Native Forest Action Council gatherings and stalls for more years than he cares to remember, and has made banners and marched on issues as diverse as the Gulf War and cuts to social services. His carpentry skills have seen replicas of inter-continental ballistic missiles decorating his front lawn and on display in local marches, and new signs erected at Forest and Bird's Chatham Island reserves.

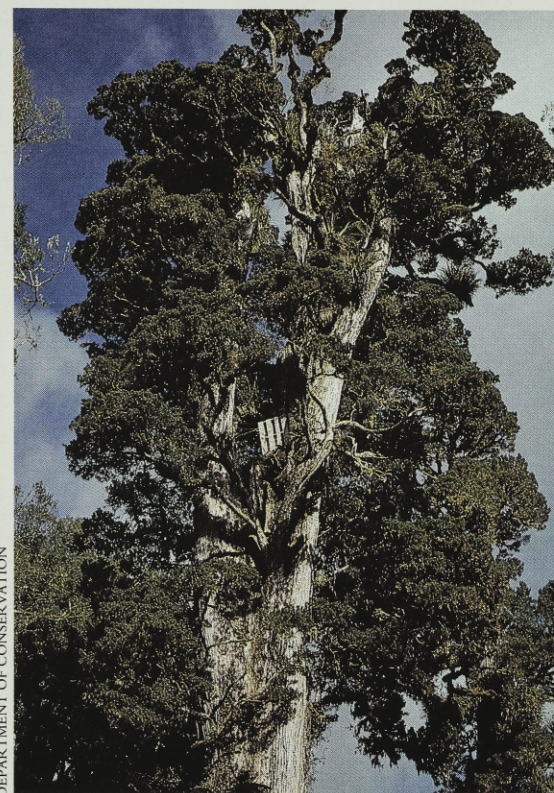
He lost count long ago of the epistles he has sent hither and yon. Ideas for letters often come to him in the middle of the night so he keeps a pen and paper by his bed and polishes his nocturnal insights in the morning. Stan is modest about his writing, saying he is only doing his bit.

"I wished I had been more political and outspoken years ago. I was too naive to realise what politicians were. Politicians are supposed to be our servants but instead they are like old George Orwell warned us about. They are becoming our masters. Look at this lot!"

While none of his immediate family

shares his passion for conservation and political activism, Stan says his grandchildren and their counterparts motivate and energise him. "You see all the young children playing so innocently. If we adults don't do something we are betraying them."

He has tramped widely in New Zealand's national and forest parks. Though less active now he still draws strength from the majesty of the forest heritage he has campaigned so tirelessly to protect. Whenever he visits Akaroa he calls in at the Montgomery Reserve to hug one of



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*Stan was a fervent advocate for the campaign to save Pureora forest. This ancient totara in Pureora with its famous protestor's platform became the focus for much of the campaign.*

the few remaining 800 to 900-year-old totara trees on Banks Peninsula.

Human life has a short span compared to the forest trees which Stan watches over, something he wishes others would recognise. "We can't live forever . . . If only people would realise the brevity of life they would love one another, be kind to one another . . . we could live in a paradise."

He is unsure what the next decade holds, but promises, "I'll keep writing letters as long as my brain holds out. Never give up is my motto."

All strength to your pen Stan. ❖

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