
OBITUARY

Timothy McEvoy
(1917-1984)



First we heard of a heart attack. A few hours later the final news was brought. *What instruments we have agree! The day of his death was a dark cold day.* It was February 10th 1984.

Timothy McEvoy, usually referred to as “Mr. McEvoy” and by his friends as “Tim”, was born in Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny, the son of a sea captain, on 24th March 1917. He attended the Christian Brothers’ School in Tipperary until 1936, and University College, Dublin, from 1936 to 1942. He was awarded the degrees of B.Agr.Sc. (Forestry) with 1st class honours in all subjects in 1941, and of M.Agr.Sc. in 1943 for a dissertation on the Ecology of Native Woodlands, which was in itself a pioneering study. He was encouraged by his professors to proceed to a Ph.D. degree, but this did not happen.

He spent his practical year (1938-39) in Killavullen Forest (where he is still remembered: “always the boy for the books”) and in Ballygar Forest, under the late Harry Silke. (“Why wouldn’t he get on”, said Harry, years afterwards, “didn’t I train him!”)

His first employment in the State Forest Service was as Foreman in Glendalough Forest in 1942. Subsequently he worked in Glenmalure, Avondale and Rathdrum Forests until, his appointment as Assistant District Inspector in Rathdrum in 1945.

Promotion to a Grade 2 post in Dublin came in 1949, where his task was to develop and set up the land acquisition system which still operates. He was promoted Grade 1 in 1950, Senior Inspector in 1964, Inspector General in 1966 and Chief Inspector in 1973. He retired in March 1982.

In the course of his career he was President of the Society of Irish Foresters in 1950-51 and 1954-55; Editor of *Irish Forestry* in 1946-49, and Business Editor in 1944-45. He was both Chairman and President of the Institute of Professional Civil Servants and he represented the Forest Service of the Republic of Ireland at World Forestry Congresses in Madrid, Buenos Aires and Jakarta. At the time of his retirement he gave the proceeds of a presentation collection by colleagues to the Society of Irish Foresters as the foundation of an educational awards fund for young foresters.

Tim McEvoy was above all a professional forester. He was involved quietly in the background in most of the important developments in Irish Forestry from the middle 1940s onwards. That was his way, and in line with the pattern of his life — effective without trying to be spectacular.

With colleagues and subordinates he listened a lot, and listened actively. He was quick to spot inaccuracies and inconsistencies. To answer his questioning was no easy exercise, but it was an intellectual challenge, never a personal affront. When he spoke his words were always informative or illuminating. In all aspects of the work which he controlled he insisted on, and therefore got, the highest possible standards.

Tim McEvoy was interested in and concerned about the human side of every individual. If at times he seemed to enquire very closely this was because of a deep concern for personal circumstances and he always took those into account where necessary. He was shrewdly aware of the motivation behind every action or intention, and would respond accordingly. To anyone with a technical, personal or any other kind of problem he was always available to listen and to give useful and helpful advice. He did not court easy popularity by trying to explain publicly the valid, often compelling reasons behind difficult and unpopular decisions.

He mixed freely on social occasions, and enjoyed good conversation and laughter. He was careful about his appearance which was always discreet but appropriate.

Many of his colleagues have known the hospitality of his house, and the welcome always extended by his wife, Maura, to whom, as his widow, our sympathy is offered.

The science and practice of forestry in Ireland, the forestry profession, and many people within it (including the present writer), are greatly in his debt.

Niall O'Carroll
