

## Obituary Philip F J Leonard

State Library of Tasmania staff and many other have learned of the death of Phil Leonard on Sunday, 9 June, with deep sadness.

Phil retired in June 1983 after 12 years as Northern Regional Librarian.

A comparative latecomer to Northern Tasmania and to library work, Phil quickly established himself at the then Launceston City Library, holding positions as bookmobile driver (prior to qualifying as a librarian), Reference Librarian, Assistant City Librarian and in 1970, City Librarian.

At a time when the State Library of Tasmania was developing its network of regional library systems through agreements with local councils, Phil was the ideal person to be the first Northern Regional Librarian in 1971, and to be the manager responsible for extending library services during the early years to a total of 16 municipalities in Northern and Eastern Tasmania and from a new regional library headquarters building in Launceston.

One of Phil's great strengths, from which the library's reputation benefited enormously, was his ability to establish wide contacts throughout the region. Well-known, respected and trusted in the community, he used his public relations skills to make the library service relevant

for many clubs, associations, societies, and other community groups. He was particularly interested in the development and fostering of the Local History Section, and in the provision of a Community Information Service within the library.

Phil was instrumental in establishing the Tasmanian Branch of the National Book Council and maintaining it as a Launceston-based organisation through its first years. His contribution to the promotion of books and reading, for both adults and children, was appropriately acknowledged in an extensive obituary in the Launceston Examiner.

From the outset Phil impressed his staff by the warmth of his personality, by his concern for their professional and personal welfare and by his conviction that library services draw their strength and purpose from the community they serve. Under his management the 1970s was a stimulating and rewarding time to be working at the Northern Regional Library. More than anyone, Phil gave a sense of purpose and style to the new regional library, which is remembered with something like nostalgia in these more austere times.

Phil's strong sense of loyalty to his staff and to the local library service for which he was responsible, prompted him at times to a good humoured disregard for some of



Photograph supplied by *the Examiner*

the more outlandish expectations of his professional superiors at State Library headquarters.

Perhaps without realising it, many library staff who worked with Phil owe the soundness of their professional values and their intrinsic pleasure in their work to the unobtrusive example set by him. To all of us who had the privilege of working with him and the pleasure of calling him a friend, Phil Leonard's death is keenly felt and his too-early absence will be a permanent regret.

*Ray Bartle*

State Library of Tasmania □

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