

Building strong foundations – the Jim and Geoff Smale legacy

Brothers Jim and Geoff Smale built strong foundations for Smales Farm with their philosophy of hard work, thrift and strong sense of community. The values, ideas and personalities of the two brothers continue to underpin the Smales Farm brand: putting people first, contributing to the wider community, a constant desire to improve, behaving honourably in all dealings and adding to the business life on the North Shore are all values that remain at the heart of the Smales Farm culture.

The lives of the brothers Jim and Geoff Smale help shed light on the origin of these enduring 'old fashioned' values. Both were raised in a period where everyone 'made do'. The Great Depression came when Jim was 13 and Geoff was five, and was to last for ten years.

Jim left Takapuna Grammar at the age of 15 to work with his father William (Bill) Smale at W. Smale Ltd, known as Smale's Quarry. It was the start of the Great Depression, and it was more important to get work and pay the bills than have the luxury of further education at that time. Jim worked at the quarry for most of the next 75 years, until ill health forced him to retire in 2006 at the age of 90.

A pick and shovel

The early years at the quarry were hard as the only equipment available was a pick and shovel. As the Great Depression wore on, a young Jim had to move South and undertake roading contracts in Otorohonga as this was the only work available. Jim was living alone in a primitive caravan working seven days a week. These tough years had a huge impact on Jim's business decision making through the rest of his working life. Jim used a primitive excavator assembled locally from available materials which he purchased himself for 850 Pounds. This increased the opportunity for roading contracts available to them.

During World War II Jim was kept in Auckland as an 'essential service' for setting up infrastructure for the war effort. He and his excavator worked 11–12 hour days at



Geoff (seated) and Jim Smale at Smales Quarry in the 1970's.

Whenuapai Air Base preparing the air strips and he lived in his caravan on site. He said "The work just had to be done, so I just got on with it." This summed up much about his attitude to life, and the twin values of hard work and thrift were to continue throughout his life.

After the Great Depression

After the uncertainties of the Depression years, Jim was very focused on keeping the family secure. Under the careful stewardship of Jim and his brother Geoff, the farm purchased by their father William (Bill) Smale began to be developed by the third

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Jim Smale

generation of family members into Smales Farm Technology Office Park. The old corrugated tin sheds of the quarry – where the two brothers continued to work together – were affectionately known as the Corporate Headquarters of Smales Farm. Tuesday night 'pizza meetings' (held at 5.30pm, after the

more important work of the quarry was done) were where Jim and Geoff and their sons Greg, Bill and Chris helped to strategise the growth and direction of Smales Farm. The whole family knew that it was "OK" if Smales Farm didn't grow quickly, but they had better be sure that they, and future generations, would be proud of what they were creating.

The younger members of the Smale family used to joke that walking into Smales Quarry was like going through a time warp. Bits and pieces of horse drawn carts were all still carefully saved from a former age – nothing was thrown away that might be useful in some form again. The Quarry was an extension in many ways of both Jim and Geoff. They both had a dogged determination to keep pushing forward, always cobbling something together to get the job done better, using the modern advances of today

but firmly grounded in the knowledge of where they had come from.

A talent for sailing

Jim worked long hours at the quarry and did not have time for many recreational activities, but in his early years he was a keen sailor. Jim was a long serving member of the Wakatere Boating Club at Narrow Neck Beach. He competed for many years in the International 14ft Regatta on Lake Rotorua. He had many sailing successes, including winning the Duke of Edinburgh Cup at the Royal Auckland Regatta in the presence of HM The Queen and Prince Phillip.

Jim's younger brother Geoff Smale also attended Takapuna Grammar School, going on to study engineering at Auckland University. Geoff was also a talented sailor, representing New Zealand in sailing at the 1968 Mexico Olympics and placing eighth overall. In 1968 Geoff Smale was awarded the Sir Bernard Fergusson Trophy as New Zealand Sailor of the Year for his win in the Olympic Trials and development of the Rothmans Father and Son sailing class.

Geoff had a rare mix of engineering ability and original thinking. He was always making or doing something, and always on the lookout for good ideas. He saw the concrete recycling concept on an overseas trip in 1965 and this became the main focus of the quarry operation in later years. Jim and Geoff became recyclers long before recycling was fashionable. Geoff designed and built his own concrete crushing jaws to speed up productivity in the quarry.

Many of Geoff's ideas related to his main love of sailing. He was forever seeking that new way to improve boat speed to give himself and others an advantage, with endless hull shape tweaks or sail modifications. Geoff was competitive, but it was not a selfish form of competitiveness. He was focused on helping others to develop their skills and performance. He loved to win, but he also loved a really hard race.

Murray's Bay Boating club

Geoff and a number of his sailing 'cronies' were the core around which Auckland's Murray's Bay Boating club formed. One of his projects was the development of the Father and Son class, capable of being sailed by a father and son and also used with an outboard for fishing or being rowed. Geoff Smale developed a radical rig for the craft which featured a pre-bent mast and fully battened sail, which also rotated and was held in the boat by just three stays. It looked unorthodox but worked superbly.

Sailing in one form or another was a major keystone to Geoff's life. When he stopped competing in the Flying Dutchman class he had a nine year break from yachting, before being introduced to Radio Controlled Model Yachts in 1986 by another sailing crony. Again he widened his group of friends by competing internationally; making his own hulls and sails to improve the performance of his boat and also those around him. Geoff established the yacht pond on the shores of Lake Pupuke alongside the family quarry, and was one of the enthusiasts behind the



Geoff Smale adjusts a model yacht in Wattle Downs, Manukau circa 1990.



Smales Farm Directors in 2002 (from left to right) Jim Smale and sons Greg and Bill Smale. Chris Smale and mother and father Shirley and Geoff Smale. Today Greg, Bill, Chris and Shirley remain as Directors of Smales Farm.

development of model yachting or remote controlled yachting in New Zealand.

Geoff Smale continued with an enthusiasm for sailing right through his life. Flying – which was eventually to claim his life – was a natural progression for him, even though he obtained his pilot's licence at 82 years old.

Jim and Geoff became recyclers in the 1960's, long before recycling was fashionable.

Hall of Fame

In 2004 both Jim and Geoff were inducted as inaugural members of the North Shore Business Hall of Fame along with Steven Tindall and close family friend Ralph Roberts.

Jim passed away in July 2010 aged 94 and Geoff in June 2011 aged 86. While they will be missed by their children and grandchildren, their legacy is the influence they have both had on the business attitudes and philosophies of future generations of Smale family members.

"The Smale family vision is to provide 'the best place to work and do business,'" General Manager Daniel Henderson says.

"Aspiring to being the 'best' means delivering the best to all stakeholders, in the widest sense. This includes shouldering responsibility as good corporate citizens to make a positive contribution to the economy and country as a whole."

Growth strategy

Smales Farm has expanded its activities significantly in recent times, launching a new growth strategy by acquiring property outside the geographical footprint of the original Smales Farm Technology Office Park site in Takapuna's Taharoto Road.

Each new building acquisition is managed by Smales Farm Corporate Services. This is a specialist property management company, set up by the Smale Family specifically to

deliver the high quality property management services that reflect the Smales Farm philosophy of providing excellent service to its tenants.

Growth is forecast to continue within the Smales Farm Technology Office Park site, alongside developments outside the Park. The 10.8 ha Park has been developed progressively since the TelstraClear building opened in 1999, and now has a gross floor area of 45,000m². The total business park floor area is expected to reach 105,000m² in 2017, with 3830 car parks.



Geoff and Shirley Smale in 1990 at Red Bluff Rise, North Shore.

Fixed cost developments

A plan change granted for Smales Farm allows a fixed cost and timeframe for new developments, taking the uncertainty away from future new building proposals. Prospective anchor tenants are typically large organizations considering an alternative to long-term leasing in the CBD, says Daniel Henderson.

"Our unique blend of infrastructure is very attractive to this type of tenant. The 24-hour medical centre, pharmacy, crèche, shops, banking, gym, cafes, easy parking and our own bus station – all in a landscaped park-like environment – help our tenants to flourish," he says.

"We build on foundations laid by Jim and Geoff Smale, and we hold to their philosophy and values in a fast changing world. Hard work, honourable dealings and giving back to the community are just some of the elements of their legacy that we will never outgrow." ■