

Fact Sheet

Roseworthy Old Collegians Association Inc.

Roseworthy

ROCA AWARD OF MERIT 1973 – Rex Kuchel

Rex Kuchel (RDOen, 1939) was in the second 'batch' of students in the 'new' Oenology Course at Roseworthy after completing two years of the RDA. He was subsequently awarded a BSc with honours in plant physiology from The University of Adelaide in 1942.

Rex was appointed as Microbiology Lecturer at the College in 1943 and Agricultural Biologist in 1946, then put in charge of the Oenology Course in 1948. In 1957, Rex was granted two years leave of absence as Vine Industry Consultant in Cyprus. After a distinguished association with Roseworthy Agricultural College lasting 27 years, Rex took up an appointment as Botanist in the then State Herbarium, at the Adelaide Botanic Garden (ABG) in 1962.

As a botanist, Rex was granted three months overseas leave, this time to visit India to help overcome viticultural problems, and during this time he visited herbaria and botanic gardens, collecting plant specimens and seeds for the ABG. During his 15 years at the ABG, Rex made numerous plant collecting trips and field excursions, including to the Flinders Ranges, the Strezlecki Track and to Western Australia.

Rex was appointed to the new position of Superintendent of the ABG in 1965 to manage the general garden maintenance, advisory work, the seed exchange program, the trainee scheme and to liaise between the ABG and the Zoological Gardens. He also lectured in botany for The University of Adelaide, the WEA and the Adult Education Branch of the Education Department, as well as being a regular contributor to the ABC TV series, "In Your Garden".

Rex liaised with the Police Department by collecting botanical material and giving evidence based on these data in criminal trials, and in 1969 presented a paper on "Plant Ecology and its application to the Forensic Sciences" at the first Forensic Science Conference in Melbourne. This was to mark a career change for Rex that occurred some seven years later.



As well as his ABG responsibilities, Rex was on the Council of the Royal Zoological Society and Chairman of its Grounds Committee. He continued with investigations for the Forensic Science and Drug Sections of the Police Department, he gave advice and assistance to the Customs Department and to the Poisons Centre at the Adelaide Children's Hospital, concerning the identification and poisonous properties of plants, and was elected Vice-President then President of the South Australia Forensic Science Society (a branch of the British Society).

Rex was appointed Assistant Director of the ABG in 1972 and the following year was recipient of the Roseworthy Old Collegians Award of Merit for meritorious and outstanding service to agriculture, the College, ROCA and the community.

Rex resigned from the ABG in 1978 and was for the next five years a forensic consultant to the South Australian Police Department in relation to illicit plants and botanical evidence in criminal matters.