

Obituary: Loyd Forrest Jr., energy panel's first chief

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Loyd Henry Forrest Jr., a renewable energy expert and career manager in state government who became the first executive director of the California Energy Commission, has died.

He died Saturday at his home in Wilton after an 11-year battle with colon and liver cancers, said his daughter, Sheri Forrest-McGhee. He was 66.

Mr. Forrest was active until recently as president and chief executive officer of TSS Consultants of Rancho Cordova. He founded the energy consulting firm after 23 years in state government, mostly as a management troubleshooter.

He served three years as executive director of the California Energy Commission, which was created to set policy and plan for the state's energy needs following world oil embargoes in the early 1970s. He was an early proponent for converting biomass - including wood chips, rice straw, corn and forest slash - into energy sources as alternatives to fossil fuels.

"Loyd was the guy that was tagged to make something that no one had ever tried before work," said B.B. Blevins, the agency's current executive director. "We've all tried to maintain the momentum that he created."

Born in 1940 in Tulare, Mr. Forrest grew up on his family's farm in Dinuba. He earned a bachelor's degree in forest management from California State University, Humboldt, and a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Sacramento.

He began his public service career as a forester for the California Department of Forestry before working as a budget analyst in the departments of conservation and finance. His broad experience and management skills led to a series of top posts at the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and the Departments of Motor Vehicles, Health, General Services and Forestry.

In 1975, he was named the first director of the state Energy Commission. At a time when oil was still relatively cheap and plentiful, he warned about the need to reduce California's reliance on petroleum to generate electricity. Influenced by his forestry background, he championed development of biomass energy as an environmentally friendly source of power for homes, businesses and transportation.

He continued promoting alternative fuels when he left state government in 1986 to start TSS Consultants, which assists development of renewable energy sources. In recognition of his efforts, the California Energy Commission plans to dedicate a major report on biofuels commissioned by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to Mr. Forrest.

Since 1975, Mr. Forrest also was a top breeder of quarter horses, including almost 400 show horses bred at his small ranch in Wilton, his daughter said. He was a board member of the Pacific Coast Quarter Horse Association and active member of the American Quarter Horse Association.

Family members and friends attributed much of his success in life to a strong work ethic he acquired while growing up on a Central Valley farm that grew cotton, hay, grain and orchard crops. Colleagues joked that he was difficult to travel with on business because he never ate, never slept and was always working.

"My father always told me, 'It doesn't matter what your job is in this world, whether a ditch digger or the president,' " Forrest-McGhee said. " 'What matters is that you give your very best effort to the task at hand.' "

Loyd Henry Forrest Jr.

Born: Jan. 6, 1940

Died: March 25, 2006

Remembered for: First executive director of the California Energy Commission; founded renewable energy consulting firm; longtime quarter horse breeder

Survived by: Wife, Lisa Forrest of Wilton; daughter, Sheri Forrest-McGhee of Gold River; father, Loyd Forrest Sr. of Visalia; sister, Shirley Cherry of Sacramento; stepsons, Sean Perry of Rancho Murieta and Scotte Perry of Portland, Ore.; and six grandchildren

Services: Visitation, 4-8 p.m. Friday at Elk Grove Funeral Chapel, 9101 Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove; memorial service, 3 p.m. Saturday at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2140 Mission Ave., Carmichael

Remembrances: Donations may be made to Northern California Society of American Foresters, Education Trust Fund, 1851 Hartnell Ave., Redding, CA, 96002; or National Foundation for Cancer Research, P.O. Box 96017, Washington, D.C., 20077.