

Devoted to alternative medicines

Levin beekeeper Graeham Gaisford, an entrepreneur and pioneer of alternative treatments for arthritis and burns sufferers, who died at Hokio last Saturday was an optimist who made the most of every opportunity.

Mr Gaisford, 70, spent the last 20 years devoted to researching the properties of bee venom, royal jelly and beeswax inspired by Chinese alternative medicines for treating arthritis and burns.

He was known for his tenacity of spirit but was frustrated with the battle he had with the Health Ministry, which he believed did not take the treatment seriously, his daughter Cassandra Gaisford said.

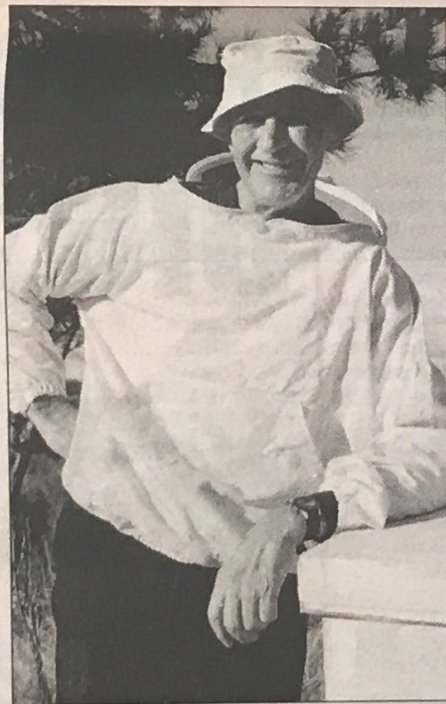
"He badgered the Health Ministry for years. He thought Mebo (Moist Exposed Burns Ointment) was a far superior treatment than the western way of treating burns.

"But the ministry won't import it as a medical treatment. It's used for cosmetic purposes now in pharmacies but that was never his agenda. It was much bigger than that for him.

"He was a visionary who saw the potential of things but he lacked the diplomacy to get through the political red tape and scepticism and I'm sure time will tell. People will catch up and start to be more open-minded.

"He believed people had a patronising attitude towards Chinese medicines."

Mr Gaisford was born in Palmerston North in 1934 and was sent to board at King's College in Auckland at the age of four.



Graeham Gaisford was a firm believer in the properties of bee products as a treatment for a wide range of conditions.

"That shapes a person. He was very independent," Miss Gaisford said.

He became a school boxing champ in 1947 when he won the light heavyweight King's

School boxing medal.

In 1953 he won the Walsh Flying Scholarship and subsequently became a topdressing pilot. Miss Gaisford said her father became very good at flying and was known as the Red Baron.

"He pretty much owned the skies."

He married his former wife Joy Lynette Fairweather in 1964 and they had a son and two daughters.

Mr Gaisford became a property investor and spent most of his life as an entrepreneur.

He moved to his family's farm at Hokio Beach when his mother died 20 years ago and from there his interest in bees began.

"He initially got bees to rent out to kiwifruit farmers and then started to read up on it and that led him down this trail that really became his life work," Miss Gaisford said.

Mr Gaisford went to China in 1993 to further his research and learned about the properties of bee venom sting as a treatment for arthritis.

In 1997 he was appointed to the Council of International Apitherapy and Bee Acupuncture Association as a New Zealand representative. He also became New Zealand's representative on the American Institute of Apitherapy.

"He was self-taught and an avid researcher. He was open-minded and knew where to get information. He just believed in it.

"He used to go around with a jar of bees

and do house calls."

Miss Gaisford said her father was most proud of his efforts to bring Mebo products into New Zealand and saw dramatic improvements in serious burns sufferers.

"It was a significant burns treatment because of the huge psychological and physical impact it had. It rejuvenated scar tissue.

"He was very much driven not by the pursuit of money but motivated by improving people's well-being."

But his efforts to get the alternative treatments approved in New Zealand for medicinal purposes were always a struggle, Miss Gaisford said.

"The battle for him was something to focus on. It was a huge battle just to be heard.

"For him it was about getting wisdom and understanding. He couldn't stand people who had closed minds and selfish agendas."

The negativity never got him down, though.

"He was passionate, optimistic and never down in the dumps. He always saw the silver lining."

He had a close relationship with people in China who supported him in his work and respected him as an authority which was a high point in his life, Miss Gaisford said.

Chinese professor from Mebo International Group Rongxiang Xu said he would carry Mr Gaisford in his heart forever.

"We will not forget Mr Gaisford's great contribution he made to introduce Mebo into New Zealand. He is a pioneer of Mebo application in New Zealand.

"He became the first true believer and distributor of Mebo in New Zealand and contributed a lot to bringing this new technique to benefit people in New Zealand.

"He devoted a huge portion of his life to promote Mebo in New Zealand, not for himself or the Mebo Company but for the burn victims, for them to get recovered without miserable scars and disabilities."

Mr Gaisford is survived by his three children Cassandra, Hadyn and Sophie and his granddaughter Hannah.

His funeral service was held in Wellington on Wednesday. - Celia Williams

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