



JR takes final journey

LUKE PARKER - Western Leader Last updated 09:34 20/07/2010

People have travelled from all around New Zealand to pay their respects to John Ritchie.

The 69-year-old businessman's funeral was held yesterday at Davis Funeral Home after his death on July 14.

Mr Ritchie was affectionately known as JR and ran the bus company Ritchies Coachlines since 1970.

John Morris Cameron Ritchie was born in 1941 in the South Island town of Temuka and worked as a wool classer and sales rep until he took over his father's business with brother Don at age 29.

Ritchies is now the largest bus and tourist coach fleet in New Zealand with 900 buses and 14 depots throughout the country.

Mr Ritchie was a director of the company and part of the management team when he died.

Son Andrew Ritchie says his father was an amazing man.

"He was always there for you," Andrew says.

"It's a very big loss for the family. I've worked with him for 20-odd years. He was my best mate.

"He was known by a lot of people within the company around New Zealand and in his community.

"He was a really good guy to be around. He had his idiosyncrasies. One thing I would say is JR always did things his way. He wasn't too worried about the rule book that much."

Mr Ritchie married his wife Rachael in 1967 and had three children.

The couple lived in Taupaki for 30 years.

The grandfather-of-three spent most of his time in the company's west Auckland depot in Swanson.

He suffered a massive heart attack a few days after an operation on July 2 and his condition deteriorated in the days that followed.

Mr Ritchie was on the board of the Waitakere Hospice and an active member and past-president of the Waitakere City Rotary Club.

He was awarded a Rotary Paul Harris medal for his work in the community and Waitakere Enterprise inducted him into the West Auckland Business Hall of Fame as a business leader in 2009.

Andrew says his father always enjoyed travelling and had started to get into gardening in recent years.

"He and my mother just loved to travel," he says. "They would go all over the world."