

## Foundation May 2002 Issue 8

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### **GORE HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION Incorporating the EX-PUPILS ASSOCIATION**

The Gore High School Foundation aims to keep past pupils informed of what is happening in the school and to assist in fostering a greater involvement in the school's development and in ex-pupil activities.



### **WRITING THE NEWS**

Many journalists have built careers on skills fostered at Gore High School. Some started locally as cadets, and a few, like Barry Soper of IRN, have become national names, while others have made the special challenges of local reporting their life. This edition looks at just a few of the journalists in our midst.

#### **The challenges of staying in Gore**

Working in your home community has its advantages when it comes to journalism. You know everyone and everyone knows you -- or your parents, and your cousin's brother's aunty's best friend. You know the background to stories, and whom to talk to. People feel at ease with another local and are likely to tell more. But there's the rub. They might not want you printing

it...

*Newslink* journalist Margaret Phillips explains the dilemma: "Sometimes people think they're just talking to me as a friend. I ring them up and say I'm doing a story and it's 'How are you? How's your mother?' and so on and on, then it's 'Oh no, you can't say that!'"

It's tough when there's a story that someone doesn't want written. Sometimes even the journalist's own children may not like a story being done, especially if it's about their school. But, as *Southland Times* colleague Sonia Gerken says, a journalist can't make friends with everybody. You have also got to take criticism and put up with it.

"You can't afford to let it affect you. Otherwise you aren't in the right job."

No matter how much you tried to get things right by balancing stories, putting forward all sides of the argument, you will offend somebody. Maintaining professional distance is an issue for journalists everywhere, but it's harder where you can never get away from the role, even when out socially. It also means not getting involved in potentially sensitive community activities (such as school boards of trustees), even where you might have something to contribute, especially after all those years observing at meetings. For all that, being a journalist in Gore is not too bad, both women agree.

"It's very good to ask the questions that everyone wants to know but they're too afraid to ask," Sonia says.

## **Southland Times Company Staff**

### **Margaret (Evans) Phillips**

Margaret began as Mataura contributor to *Newslink*, the *Southland Times* community newspaper, 12 years ago when her youngest child went to school. She had expected to do mostly features, but senior reporter, Catherine Ladbrooke (currently on maternity leave from the *Otago Daily Times*) encouraged a talent for news.

Previously Margaret had worked as a receptionist, stock booking clerk, waitress, shop assistant, a trained cook, and Avon lady. ("Now I'm a reporter, mother, farmer, cook, gardener and groom.") The insights from varied work experience are assets in journalism.

"I've mixed with different people - I can talk to most people. Everyone has a story and everyone has their own perspective."

A newspaper has to appeal to a wide readership, and the coverage must be balanced, but Margaret especially enjoys digging for stories that should be uncovered because the public ought to know.

We all need to take responsibility for what takes place, she says.

"It makes for a better community when everyone's involved."

However the reporter's responsibility is only in reporting, to inform and maybe provoke; making changes is over to others.

"You can write things and there is a short term reaction but often nobody makes the effort to push for a real change."

Margaret also likes stories of everyday people who show extra courage - people who live with infirmity, constant pain. People making a success of life. Her ambitions include learning how to probe deeper, though she notes the trend across all news media for staffing levels to be pulled ever tighter. There's less time for digging, and this is very evident in national television, where stories get the once over lightly, she says.

"It's all tip of iceberg stuff."

Reflecting on her education, Margaret thinks life experience has been a stronger influence than schooling, describing herself as a "really quiet kid." Though Matura primary school gave her a good grounding, the Matura library (and Miss Muir) was important - and her mother.

"My mother was a real stickler. I never got to do anything without doing all these spelling words and read a chapter of a book and that wasn't even homework!"

### **Diane Bishop**

Journalism has allowed Diane to combine her two favourite things, farming and writing. She has a particular interest in feature writing and enjoys talking to farmers and finding out what drives their business success.

After completing sixth form at Gore High School Diane gained a 18-month cadetship at Jeff Farm at Kaiwera, then worked for six years in the Southland dairy industry, graduating from farm worker to herd manager.

Looking for a change, in 1998 she did a Diploma in Journalism at Aoraki Polytechnic in Timaru, followed by six months on the Kapiti Weekly News. This didn't include farming stories so when a chance vacancy arose with the Otago Southland Farmer (a Times subsidiary) based in Gore, Diane jumped at the opportunity to head home.

The best part of the job is interviewing progressive farmers and finding out how they have achieved their goals and become better farmers, she says. Coming from a sheep farming background, Diane has a special interest in this field, but is aware of giving equal attention to the other industries, especially dairying, which has boomed in recent years. The job can be stressful, requiring a lot of travel in pursuit of stories, which eats into writing time. However, there are compensations.

"I've met a lot of the region's farmers, and have established firm friendships with some. It's neat to go to field days and instantly strike up a conversation with someone I have previously interviewed," she says.

The assistance of several freelance journalists makes the job a lot easier, and Diane's two flatmates, who work in the sheep industry, have also been a great source of help when it comes to finding stories.

"Although considering where their interests lie I think they have a hidden agenda!"

### **Sonia (Humphries) Gerken**

Sonia is a former Ensign cadet, having started back in the days when the paper was a vibrant enterprise employing six reporters, four subs, as well as the editor. Its reputation as a good newspaper, she later discovered, extended all the way to London, and was a good credential for landing a job there editing T&T Mag an Aussie-Kiwi publication with a circulation of 55,000.

But that was later. First Sonia had to learn her craft, and she remains convinced that learning

by doing and making mistakes is the best way to learn. She well remembers her first story, about some CWI or WD event, and her contact, a lovely old lady who knew it was the young reporter's first story and brought her a plasticky cane thing for pens on her desk.

"It might have been the Rose Bowl - and I'm still writing about it 25 years later.!"

Sonia's five years OE, which included working in Cyprus as well as the UK, came to a sudden end when she was too honest at immigration on returning to London after a weekend in Germany. She had applied for a visa, but meantime was not supposed to be working (though everyone did.)

"Some officious little immigration officer decided I'd overstayed my welcome."

So it was back to Gore, arriving dressed for Bali, without luggage (the airline had lost it) and with only 40c in her pocket. The rest is summarised quickly:

"I just stayed, got married, had children."

Gore's a great place to live once you have a family, it's just that you have to go away to appreciate that, Sonia says. In London if she wanted to play tennis it cost £5000 to join the local club, while here there's virtually free access to community facilities like tennis courts. For Sonia and husband Chris the affordability of a southern lifestyle means they have their own patch of land, a few horses and ponies, and the chance for their children to participate in as many activities as possible.



Another former *Ensign* cadet (though he started as a university graduate) Steve Mason is now the Southland Times chief reporter, based in the Invercargill office.



## BEYOND 5R - 1968 ... John Keir

I did agriculture at Gore High School during the mid-60's - Murray Darling ("Yar-dar" in the parlance of the time) taught us "general agriculture" and Allan Coleman ("Stove" - on account of his pot belly) was in charge of "animal husbandry".

Even today I remember much of what they taught us ... like: "the most productive work you'll ever do is the hour you spend each day sitting on your gatepost, thinking ..."

The practical boys in the third form rural class scoffed at Murray Darling for that, but it remains one of the most useful bits of advise I ever retained.

All these years later, the sad fact of it is that Allan Coleman's nickname might now equally be applied to me ...

Like all of my classmates in 5R, 1968, I expected to leave school, go home and work on the family farm - and indeed that's exactly what I did. I threw my school bag into the air - "no more spelling, no more sums ..." I was free.

But then I saw Barry Soper driving around Gore in the Mataura Ensign car, racing off to fires or making police calls, and I got to thinking he was having more fun than I was.

Somehow the notion of being "a reporter" seemed more exciting than being stuck at home crutching shitty-arsed lambs or pushing in bearings. Throughout the winter of 1969 (that was the year I took my little transistor radio to listen to the first man landing on the moon while I put up a break in the swedes) the idea of journalism began to form in my mind, but it took many more months to pluck up the courage to tell my father that I didn't want to be a farmer anymore. To this day I remember that as the hardest thing I have ever had to do.

Bob Foster, the deputy principal of Gore High School at the time, told my father, "If that's what the boy wants then he'll need some qualifications". So in 1970, after a year working on the Charlton farm, I went back to the classroom. These days they'd call my farming experiences a "gap year" but at that time going back to school was a very strange thing to do and I remember a keen sense of embarrassment at having to get back into uniform (even with the long pants of the Sixth Form) and mixing with classmates a year younger while my own year level went on ahead.

I have one dominant memory of 1970 - my Sixth Form English teacher John Barclay Meiklejohn (we shared the same middle name) gave me some words of encouragement over my first essay. That one moment set the course for the rest of my life. It validated a difficult decision I had made on my own and gave me the confidence to think I could do anything I wanted. I often wonder if teachers fully understand the power they hold? The power to define careers - and indeed lives.

University Entrance led to Otago University at the beginning of 1971. My parents dropped me off at Myrtle Swanson's house at the top of Pine Hill where I was to board for my first year. I have never forgotten the sense of misery as they drove away that afternoon. Myrtle - a kindly white haired old lady - felt so sorry for me that, when she heard a "Mr Whippy" van coming up the street, she ran out and bought a snow-cone to try and cheer me up. Even today when I hear the "Mr Whippy" jingle that awful sense of homesickness comes back. After the ice cream I went for a walk - the country boy in the big city for the first time. I remember passing a little girl on a tricycle. She was probably three or four. As I walked past her I said "hello" as cheerfully as I could, and she screamed, "you dirty old man!" I was 18 years old and I thought "if this is the city, I've made a huge mistake ..."

But then university delivered all the experiences I'd been hoping for and I confess I never missed the farm again.

During the varsity holidays I worked on newspapers as a cadet reporter. First the Evening Star, and then, after my second year at Otago University, I came home and worked for the Ensign. The Ensign job was especially enjoyable - Finn McArthur was editor in those days, Gary Caffell was chief reporter, Bill Thomson was the senior journalist, "Old Jock" Condie subbed my spelling and grammar mistakes, and Joyce Bishop from out the back took me under her wing. They were very happy days.

Then after three years at university it was time to find a full-time job. I wanted to work in television (for the NZBC) and organised a job interview with Gerard Curran who ran radio current affairs in Dunedin. I felt nervous. He asked me where I'd gone to school. I told him Gore High. Somehow, that seemed like the wrong answer. He asked me if I'd had any previous journalism experience. When I got to the Mataura Ensign, I definitely knew I'd blown it ... then he burst into a grin ... "I went to Gore High School," he said. "I worked on the Ensign ..." I started work at the NZBC the day immediately after finals finished. More happy days ...

My time in Dunedin brought me into contact with other contemporaries in journalism from Gore High - Barry Soper by now rising up the grades at the Otago Daily Times and Ross Stevens (who had lived behind my grandparents in Gore and had taken me to Boys Brigade for the first time at the age of 12) was back in Dunedin as producer of "The South Tonight" after becoming a star on radio and television current affairs in Wellington.

Over the years I moved in and out of the NZBC (and its later permutations) - but always remained doing exactly the same thing: making film and television, forever struggling to get the next project into production. I worked alongside Barry during his introduction to television (at TV2 in Wellington during the late 70's) but ironically I only ever worked with Ross Stevens once (one Easter a few years before he died we made a "60 Minutes" story together about Professor Lloyd Geering - as two Gore boys we both had strong memories of the 1967 heresy trial and the impact it had around Eastern Southland Presbyterian circles).

Sometimes our paths crossed in other ways. One year I was at the Cannes Film Festival. I had produced Grant Lahood's short film "Lemming Aid" which went on to win Grant yet another film prize and Ross was there making a programme about the kiwi contingent in Cannes.

Lest that all sounds terribly glamorous, let me explain the yo-yo reality of life in film and television. After Grant had been presented with his prize (by Clint Eastwood) he and I went out to drink some celebratory champagne (it was free - neither of us could have afforded to buy it!). The Riviera was warm and wonderful that night and the world felt pretty good to a couple of boys from rural New Zealand. Grant lifted his glass and said, "I think this is as good as it gets ...". A year or so later we were back with Grant's first feature length movie ("Chicken") which I had also produced. But this time there were to be no prizes. Grant and I found ourselves being delivered a piece of disappointing news in an especially dirty little café ... it was one of those moments ... I looked at Grant and said "And this is as bad as it gets...."

Working in the media, mostly as a freelance journalist, director and producer of film and television, over nearly 30 years has provided me with many experiences I could never have anticipated during my years at Gore High School. It has taken me to many places in the world and introduced me to people (and ideas) I could never have otherwise met.

I have never wanted to do anything else. Not for a single minute.

So thank you Mr Meiklejohn for giving me a boost at the time in my life when I most needed it.

It's funny the little things we all keep in our memories. I remember some years ago my young son was desperate to go for a ride in a helicopter. One day that became possible and, during some filming for a Westpac Bank video, I was able to take him for a flight over Wellington. A few days later I asked him: "When you grow up and you think about what you did when you were a kid - what do you think you'll remember?" He thought for a moment. I expected him to say "going for a ride in the chopper" because he'd looked forward to that for so long. But he didn't. He pondered for a moment more, then answered ... "climbing trees and making toffee ..."

Two things I remember ... Barry Soper in the Ensign car and Ross Stevens in a little French car that year in Cannes saying "come with us and I'll show you where Katherine Mansfield used to live ..."

**John Keir**

*Currently producing the seven part television series "Secret New Zealand" plus some one-off documentaries for Greenstone Pictures in Auckland, making "Our Oldest Soldier" (a TV One ANZAC Day programme) for his own production company, writing movie screenplays in his spare time and, despite turning 50 this year, waiting for Hollywood to call ...*

*Married (Wendy - born Riversdale, went to Columba College, not Gore High) with two children aged 17 (Tim) and 12 (Katie) ...living living in Auckland ...*



## CAREERS NURTURED IN GORE HIGH JOURNALISM CLUB

***The saying that many students don't really shine until they're concentrating on what they actually want to do is true - in my case anyway. - Jess Maddock***



In the seventh form I yo-yoed between being a journalist or a chef, but in the end a family history in the world of publishing and an insight into print media through the school journalism club helped me decide. And unlike many of my school friends who are either still training or doing something totally different to what they studied, there's been no looking back.

My plan to undertake a BA at Otago and (hopefully!) post-graduate journalism at Canterbury went out the window when, flustered by rejection from my chosen hall of residence, I put in a late application to the Peter Arnett School of Journalism at the Southern Institute of Technology.

I got the impression from some quarters that choosing polytech was opting for an easier life and consequently, a lesser qualification, but I had a hell of a year! Studying under Mary

Witsey, the fiery, passionate journalist who led the Southland Times as one of New Zealand's best provincial newspapers, was a highlight, along with meeting school patron, Peter Arnett. The class of 96 marked Mary's first attempt at tutoring and the polytech developing its media course into something more substantial, so most of us felt we had something to prove. No one escaped shedding a few tears of frustration, particularly over shorthand, which was compulsory and had a pass mark of 97.5%

My first story was a business feature and the subject Jamie Mackay, of Radio Hokonui Gold. He later told me I was the worst interviewer he'd ever seen and the story I'd proudly produced, a jumbled mess. Still, I left polytech in no doubt I was ready to work in a newsroom. I've since realised I'm a real "bread and butter" writer - to the point, and (I like to think) accurate, but without a creative bone in my body!

My introduction to the industry wasn't great, with a frustrating 18-month stint at the Ensign, during which I didn't see eye to eye with management on some company policies. However, I did break a story on violent bullying at local primary schools that made the front page of the Press - an enormous buzz!

The chance to give broadcasting a go with Hokonui Gold came up in '98, with a clause attached

"you've got three months to prove yourself, but if you're terrible, you're gone!"

I missed the opportunity print offers to expand on ideas and investigate issues, but there's a real excitement in radio with the pressure of being "live" and working to tighter deadlines. Radio has taught me to write more simply, as listeners have only one sense with which to

take in the information, and also to better summarise facts. The oral and written communication skills from journalism stood me in good stead temping in London and Dublin -- secretary/receptionist/data entry clerk ... whatever. I worked for huge organisations such as MTV and as a website journalist for ITN and for comedian Lenny Henry, in between travelling.

You have to toss up whether a "career break" is a good move, but I think, in journalism, it is. A few cultural and, at times, downright frightening experiences have done me loads of good, and seeing how other people choose, or are forced, to live is an eye-opener.

A later move toward IT has seen me do a full circle back to Hokonui Gold as breakfast announcer and some flashy-sounding title to do with our websites. It's exciting times, giving listeners the opportunity to access programmes via the wireless, or at their convenience using the net.

It's not strictly journalism, but it's a great skill to have, as who's to say how long it will be before we sit down with a coffee and open a web page instead of a newspaper. <

***Getting paid to talk to interesting people about their lives isn't a bad way to make a living.***

***- Rebecca Fox***



I can thank one person for steering me in the right direction, Gore High teacher Jeanette Bell. She is the stalwart behind the Journalism Club and took the time to encourage my writing ability - ability I didn't think I had. She knew better than anyone my appalling spelling and less-than-confident manner, but still believed I had what it took to be a journalist.

It was through the Journalism Club that I was first published in The Ensign. Never did I expect back then that 10 years down the track, I would be back as a senior reporter.

But I had been bitten by the journalism bug, and even though I headed off to Otago University with my eyes open for other opportunities, I couldn't give up on the idea of becoming a journalist. So I joined Radio One, writing weekly news bulletins and even did a stint at The Ensign in my university holidays. It was good grounding

for entry into the notoriously tough Canterbury University Diploma in Journalism course. The course turned my direction from radio to print and ultimately led to a job on the High Country Herald in Timaru.

Three years on the Timaru Herald followed, finishing up as a senior health reporter before leaving it all behind for the bright lights of London and the Big OE. It was the perfect opportunity to take a break from journalism trying on jobs for size in the fashion industry, banking and computer sectors before coming back home with the firm belief that I had made the right career decision.

So here I am, back at my home-town newspaper enjoying telling Eastern Southlanders' stories! <



## WHERE HAVE THE LAST 25 YEARS GONE - Alison Rudd

Someone once described journalism as a terminal career. I identify with that. It means a career that gets into your blood - one that is so much part of your life you will die doing it. I'm not dead yet, but this year it's 25 years since I left Gore High and began my life as a journalist.



Finding a job was a bit different in those days. About August 1977, the Southland Times advertised a vacancy for a cadet reporter. The interviews came down to two young hopefuls. Sue Allison took the immediate vacancy, I finished my year and took the next. Editor Peter Muller must have had a good eye for new staff as Sue and I are both still writing all these years later.

The Southland Times' Invercargill office was then only one step ahead of the Jurassic age. No such luxury as your own telephone, instead there were four phones in booths on the wall - you had to queue. We did have our own typewriters, and I remember the red-letter day we got self-carbonated paper, which made life so much easier for those of us who invariably put their carbon paper in the wrong way round...

My first job was in the Gore office. It was sink or swim professionally. I was only 17 and expected to cover everything from council meetings and sports games to major dramas. Two incidents spring to mind: the lions escaped from the circus at Riversdale (did they ever find them, I can't remember?) and, of course, the floods of 1978. I was the first journalist allowed into Matura after the waters dropped, hitching a ride on the back of an army truck.

Then to Invercargill. Who could forget the most important news event of this period - the Springbok tour of 1981. It was all hands to the pump the day the Springboks were scheduled to play in Invercargill. Somehow I got myself cornered between a vocal and fired-up protest march and a sombre and focused police red squad. I took refuge on the monument at the Bank Corner while the battle raged round me. It was quite an eye opener to see batons flailing and people falling to the ground in peaceful Invercargill. Later I covered many of the court cases as the protesters appeared on riot, assault and other charges.

I had seven years at the Star in Christchurch, then while the children were small worked freelance. In 1993 we shifted to Oamaru, and the Oamaru Mail. Computers had begun to replace the old newspaper production methods (and journalists' typewriters) and the Mail was one of the first to go fully paginated - that means to use computers to write, sub-edit, lay out and produce the entire newspaper. But writing for a Monday to Friday newspaper with limited staff is hard, and in 1999 I shifted to the even smaller Taieri Herald in Mosgiel. Two of us did everything from whoa to go on computer, not even seeing our pages on paper until our readers did - they were emailed to Timaru to be printed. How much can change in a decade!

I'm now a senior journalist at the Otago Daily Times covering the busy city council beat as well as general news.<

Also at the ODT is news editor Joy (Shirley) Leach.

*The Gregorys will be remembered as a musical family, and they all continue to be involved in all kinds of teaching, arranging, performing activities involving orchestras, bands, jazz groups and theatrical productions. Parents Gordon (who taught music at GHS from 1974-80) and Robin live in Gisborne. Peter works in retail in Wellington, though music is his passion. Hillary has taught in London and Oman, and is now in Taupo, specialising in music and art. Allison*

*still plays the piano at church. Experience with a Community Arts Council in Rangiora led to the rash conclusion that when she finally gets sick of journalism she might become a professional theatrical agent. Allison and husband David Rudd have two children, Timothy, 13, and Ashleigh 12.*



## WHY I'M INVOLVED

Rosemarie Smith, newsletter editor



When I turned 40, I resolved not to do anything unless it was fun, and I renewed that vow at 50.... The definition of fun has had to be stretched at times, but includes this newsletter.

I have no great nostalgia for Gore High, but I'm grateful for the education I got there, and it's fascinating to see what people have done with an education from a rural high school next door to Antarctica, from our most famous achievers to those who have stayed home and maintained a community.

I came back here where life is "good as gold" in 1999 after three years in Israel. And yes, I'm finally working as a journalist, an occupation ruled out for girls of my era (1963-67) as "not nice", or, "there's only one job on a

paper for a woman [i.e. women's editor] and you'd be bored."

A good education over-qualified girls for the few jobs open. No wonder we all went teaching. Then later, as careers opened up, the objections were age, motherhood, and still that expensive fancy education.

We thought our times so progressive, now they're the olden days. Covering the hole-through of the second Deep Cove Tailrace tunnel last year brought home the change, and was the high-point (so far) of a new freelance career writing mildly adventurous middle-aged travel features.

I'm deeply grateful to everyone who had a hand in teaching me literacy skills, at Bible Class (all that intensive textual analysis) as well as school - not to forget elocution with Sister Cuthbert. And I enjoy your stories.

Homesick for Southland? Come for a virtual walk with me at

<http://photos.yahoo.com/bc/rvoland/1st?&.dir=/Hump+Track&.src=ph&.view=t>



## THE ENSIGN SIDE OF THE TRACKS

Two ex-pupils who made a strong impression on recording the news in Gore and training young journalists were Keith Haggart and the late Fin McArthur.

Findlay McArthur worked at the Ensign part time while still a student, and joined the staff in 1937. After war service he became chief reporter, then editor 1959-75. He also made an important contribution to the writing of local history, producing many books and major feature articles on just about every aspect of local life.

Keith Haggart (GHS 1939-42) is still alive and well, enjoying a retirement career as the Waikaia golf club greenkeeper. He has the journalist's gift of story telling, and a fund of lively tales from the days when the details of every dog trial and stock sale found a place in the paper.

"The social aspects could be quite severe, especially at ploughing matches... my wife used to think about that sometimes," he says.

He has been chuckling over "The Shipping News" for the marked resemblance between the the Gammy Bird and the Mataura Ensign - fixation with car crashes and all. Keith describes himself as a 'child of the depression', whose mother steered her boys into the occupational security of the public service. In his case, this was the Customs Service. But by 1949 he was looking for a change, and, having become engaged to Gore girl Mary Hoffman, he got a job with the Ensign, based at Mataura. Stories had to be filed in Gore, requiring journeys up and down the road eventually equivalent to five times round the world.

Apart from some unsociable hours for sports and council - copy had to be on the editor's desk by 7.30am - it was a pleasant lifestyle with many compensations, like the frequency of 10am to 3pm days. Covering the fractious Mataura Borough Council was less fun, and generated rental housing difficulties after he fell out with one faction. However the company guaranteed a loan, and the Haggarts bought a five-acre farmlet which they stocked with assorted animals.

Mataura was "rough, tough, and close knit," a real community and a great place to work, while Gore was more amorphous, and perhaps less accepting. Keith recalls with some irony his elevation to notice at the Gore Golf Club after being appointed editor at the Ensign in 1978. Keith's career spanned some dramatic Gore moments, including one of the most extraordinary episodes in NZ newspaper history. He was present the day in 1959 town clerk Norman Fryer came into the newsroom, Luger in hand, gunning for editor Horace Hull in response to a provocative editorial on Gore's persistent arsonist. The piece "Find Him: Lock Him Up" was heralded round the newspaper world ("it was a good piece of writing," Keith says), but as Fryer was never convicted of any crime and the Publishing Company paid damages, (partly because of comments Hull made) the episode was rarely referred to again.

These were profitable years in the newspaper world, with great junkets on offer, from being feted by the Wool Marketing Board, to a trip to Stewart Island to a 25-hour marathon air expedition with SPANZ to Auckland, all of them inspiration for an apparently inexhaustible supply of entertaining yarns.

Keith still believes in the old cadet training scheme. Capable kids who could write and spell could be trained, while graduates cost three times as much and weren't as good, he says.



*Gore Publishing Co staff 1975 includes ex-GHS editorial staff Bill Thomson, Keith Haggart, Sonia Gerken, Peter MacDonell, and Donna McIntyre (photographer) and probably many more ex-pupils on the production side*



## WAS A GORE HIGH EDUCATION USEFUL FOR JOURNALISM

Lynn McConnell

"Without a doubt it played a role in my case. The broad-based education suited my interest in history, geography, and proved an ideal background for journalism. I think our class trialled a new approach to geography and history, and this was especially important in teaching us to look at things in different ways.

"Being able to view events from different angles has been especially valuable. So was the way in which we were encouraged to think for ourselves, to look and learn, to apply the lessons we learned, along with a love of, and breadth of, reading which was certainly nurtured at school.

"In a lot of ways, co-education was extremely valuable in teaching respect for others' points of view and existing in what can be a very bitchy world of journalism.

"The way in which some teachers encouraged a sense of humour was also important, crucial even. That's not to forget the lessons of the sports fields too, which, as things have turned out, were important in the basics of what has become my profession."

*Lynn attended Wellington Polytechnic School of Journalism in 1973, along with the late Sue Ritchie, then joined the Southland Times as a cadet. He was sports editor there 1977-87, deputy sports editor at the Evening Post, before deciding he preferred writing to management and took to the field again in 1991. In 2000 Lynn joined the Internet revolution as Senior Editor of CricInfo New Zealand, based in Christchurch, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, sports web site in the world. He has the painfully arduous task of following international sports tours for a living. He has also written 10 books, including the Encyclopedia of New Zealand Cricket, sporting biographies and "Something to Crow About" - the centennial history of Southland rugby.*



## THE GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME

**Russell Kerr is not a journalist, but this piece deserves wide circulation. It was written from the United States on 8 November 2001.**

In one hand I held the local rag: "Day of Evil" - the incredible, unbelievable carnage in New York and Washington DC. In the other hand: "New Zealand's Newest Walk" - Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track, from Tourism Southland's Spring 2001 newsletter.



What to say? Always, when I think of Gore - place of my birth, my childhood, my schooling, my fun - I think of Tom Jones' refrain, "... again I'll touch the green, green grass of home.... in the shade of the old oak tree...." You know the one, down the main street, at the triangle that intersects with Ardwick, Eccles and Main Streets, where the children's playground is before the street crosses the railway going to Wigan (my) Street. Whenever I think of

Gore this song pops into my head, and that is the part of town that first enters my consciousness. Those green hills of the Hokonuis and those over behind East Gore inspire me like those that inspired Tom.

"And there to meet me...." Wow. After the events of 11 Sep, mortality has taken on a whole new meaning. I have seen death. I was the vice president of one of the world's largest international relief aid agencies. It was my job (for over 15 years) to save lives, to restore health, to bring emergency care, shelter, protection and food to the starving, those caught in war, innocent victims of armed conflict, famine is no respecter of persons, and floods wash away all of life's essentials. But those who went to their desks on that fateful Tuesday, high above peaceful New York in the World Trade Centre? They thought it was a normal day at the office. They thought that at the end of the day, "there to meet me... " would be their loved ones, their families, their children. Oh, God.... I am a man of faith - yet all this suffering.

I would give anything to leave Southern California right now and walk the Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track. Just to have time to process, to think, to reflect. What is life? I started in Gore and here I am, wanting right now to return.

What can I say to you my home town, my friends, my old school mates? Every survivor of the NY catastrophe has said that the most meaningful thing you can say is: "I love you" - to your family, your rellies, your friends. I say it to you all. It is almost 40 years since I left Gore. Few, if any, will remember me. I desperately want to come to the next GHS reunion, just to say hello, to revive some faint memories and to resurrect relationships with home-town folks and a quaint little town that I care about - deeply.

Roots have a huge impact on who you become. They feed the foundation of your being. We, the '50s kids of Gore, are scattered to the four winds, but who we are today is a result of the influence of our parents, school, friends, clubs and churches. Forever I will be grateful.

I left Gore and studied at Lincoln College (now University). Joined the government to administer crown land and settle young farmers on newly developed farms west of Ashburton. Got sick of the bureaucracy and joined a branch of Reid Farmers. Saw an advertisement for an agriculturalist in Asia and moved to Manila for a two-year OE stint. Ended up the country director after four years, moved to Africa to help in the drought in the early 80s and was asked to join the head office of the aid agency (World Vision) in California in 1984. Stayed in executive management until I left the agency early in 2000, having been involved on front line, personally starting new programmes in dozens of countries from Angola north to Romania and east to North Korea.

I had the most incredible experiences and saw humanity in its neediest, violent and most passionate forms. The struggle for freedom was exceeded only by the desire to survive. Child soldiers in West Africa, bandits in Somalia, abstinent bureaucrats in Sudan, the most cruel "care givers" in Eastern Europe and the blind brain washing of North Korea gave me phenomenal insights into the plight of fellow beings across the globe. The compassion of private donors and the value of western government investors gave us a way to improve the well-being of common and innocent people, permanently - often saving their lives. Time does not permit me to share the thousands of stories of bravery and the struggle for survival of people in this modern day and age when we would expect there to be peace, harmony and prosperity for all.

After almost 25 years in the aid business, having handed over my responsibilities to four regional teams, it was time for a break. I returned to NZ from Europe and spent 2000 catching up with my home country and its beautiful people. There is NO place like home. I walked the Routeburn track and spent time in the bush and on the beach. My wife and I decided to stay

so she took a job with Auckland Health Care and I started my own little company to promote NZ to the USA. Now after a year at it, we are back in the USA to be close to our adult daughters and starting over here as the economy took its toll on our NZ efforts. Pam now works as Assistant Executive Director in an Assisted Living community and I am starting next week as an investment representative for a large USA company. It is a major change in career but I am looking forward to getting established in this Dana Point, Southern California, area which reminds us of Auckland.

I guess we are now members of the international community. Not sure where we fit, but family and friends play an increasing role in bringing satisfaction. So for now it is here and later we plan to retire in NZ. We visit when we can. In fact I was in Auckland recently setting up our house for rent. The city, the country and its people are great. Reading the big advertisement from Southland in the Herald last week caused some pangs of longing to return. If only we could live in multiple places simultaneously or live several lives! There is so much to experience and enjoy in this world. People and relationships are the key and through contacts like you have provided me we can "keep in touch" and be connected with the lives we sometimes wish we could return to!

God bless Gore! You have made a tremendous contribution to my life. The foundation was laid and nurtured - as it is the lives of hundreds of your children today. The world is a better place because you cared. You instilled in the lives of us who left a respect for humanity, a spirit of adventure, a hardiness to withstand difficulties and equipped us to transform challenges into opportunities. Enjoy the good life and be grateful for the fabulous people that you are!

*Russell attended Gore High 1960 -1963, followed by younger brother and sisters, Murray, Daphne and Janet*



## HEAD STUDENTS 2002



Head girl Jessica Patterson (17) has been a netball rep for three years, and plays badminton for the school. She enjoys singing and playing the organ, and will attend Otago University in 2003 with career goals around working with children in some rehabilitation role. Jessica's mother, Heather (Hubber) is an ex-GHS pupil.



Head boy Hayden Blatch (17) captains the 1st XV Rugby side and has represented Southland at U-16 and 18 levels. He enjoys golf, water-skiing and fishing and next year will attend Lincoln University toward a career in farming.

Jason Thompson and Laura Crosbie are the deputies.

### Record breaker



This year's School Athletic sports were notable for the achievements of Krishanee Tamou

She broke three records:

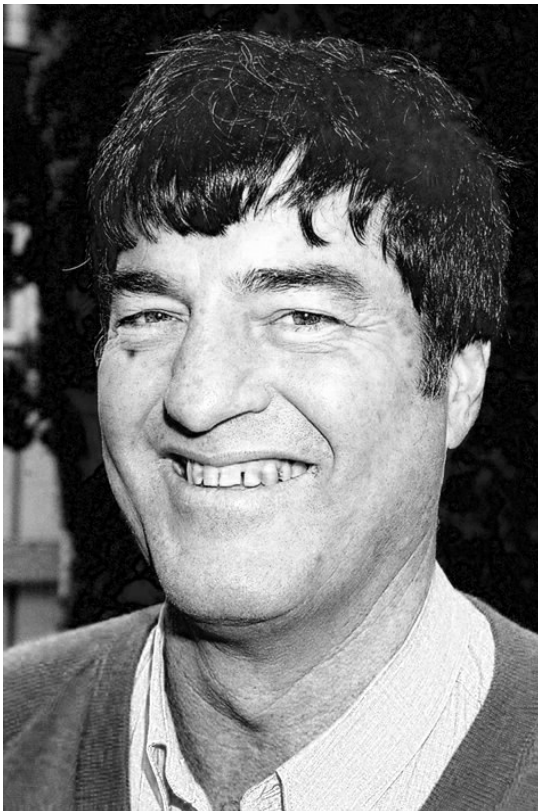
\* Junior Girls Javelin, throwing 25.71m, beating the 1997 record of 24.24m)\* Junior Girls Triple Jump, jumping 9.97m, beating the 1998 mark of 9.25m

\* Junior Girls Long Jump, jumping 4.95m in the U15 Girls, beating the mark set in 1996 by 9 cm).

Krishanee went on to win the same three events at the South Island champs, coming within 5cm of the South Island Long Jump record, jumping 5.27m.



### BOB BUCHANAN - MAYOR OF MARTON



Eric Roy may be our only parliamentarian, but surely Gore High has produced a few mayors - and not just of Gore.

The latest of this hopefully illustrious crowd of civic leaders is Bob Buchanan, new mayor of Rangitikei, i.e. of the 16,000 inhabitants of Marton, Taihape, Bulls, Hunterville, Mangaweka, Ohingaiti, Turakina, Ratana and the surrounding rural districts.

An upset victory in last year's poll saw Bob take the position off one-term incumbent John Vickers by a 100-vote majority.

He also topped the council poll by 600 in a strong vote of confidence, especially given his complete lack of previous local body experience.

When this lack of background was raised during the campaign, Bob says he countered by mentioning the names of Tim Shadbolt, Vicky Buck, and Mark Blumsky.

He did not think there would be a problem taking on his new responsibilities.

"When I started out selling fruit juice I didn't know anything about that either. But I'm a quick learner and a quick worker."

He attributed his success to a campaign that took him knocking on the doors of 4000 district households and an ability to communicate directly with any section of the population.

"I am known for standing my ground and seem to have a knack of saying what the majority think, but are a bit hesitant to say."

The issues were those you would find in every district, he said.

People thought the rates were too high, elected members were not communicating sufficiently with ratepayers, there were concerns around who was making the decisions, and about land fills, transfer stations and rubbish bags.

"So they put me in there to sort it out."

Bob has lived in the North Island since 1970, but says he still feels a fondness for down south.

Education at Gore Main and Gore High taught him how to learn, he says. He calls himself a North Islander now, having moved there in 1970, working for the Post Office until he was made redundant in 1989.

"But as my teenage years were spent in Gore, I still have a fondness for the town and am looking forward to attending the reunion in 2008 to catch up and chat to as many of the 1961-63 pupils as possible."

*Bob is married to Beverly McDonald of McNab. His Mum still lives in Canning Street, and of the rest of the family: Keith is in Dunedin, Alistair is in Winton, Graeme (who lived in Gore until last year) is a building inspector in Christchurch, Carolyn is in Rolleston, Elaine is in Gore, Donald is fire brigade tutor near Sydney, and Jeffrey is in the lab at the works in Balclutha and Robyn is in Invercargill.*



## **JUDGE RETURNS TO GORE - From the Southland Times, 6 September 2001 : Sonia Gerken**

The formality of the judicial system was mixed with hints of familiarity in the Gore District Court yesterday. Fourteen years ago Gore woman Jane McMeeken, lawyer and national basketballer, left for parts north, never imagining she would eventually return to listen to submissions from counsel who were once colleagues. However, yesterday she did. For the past week, the first woman judge to come out of Gore, Judge McMeeken, now of Whangarei, has been presiding over district court sittings in the south.

Any doubts that she may have returned to unfamiliar territory in Gore were dispelled within minutes of yesterday's session starting. Her first case, reinstatement of a driver's licence, and her first familiar face -- indeed a former client from her days as a lawyer in Gore. Judge McMeeken couldn't resist.

"Nice to see you again," she said.

She has been surprised by the amount of publicity given to the district court sitting compared with Auckland, where the utterance of judges dealing with the daily list are hardly ever reported.

Even though she has been away for so long Judge McMeeken still counts herself as a Southlander through and through.

In fact she made a point of telling people she was from Gore, she said. The reaction has changed from when the hoon image was all that people commented on, in the past couple of years people had become interested in the south.

She repeatedly heard positive comments about such things as the Southern Institute of Technology's fee-free scheme, Stadium Southland, the booming economy and Tim Shadbolt,

Judge McMeeken said.

"I'm proud I'm a Southlander," she said.

It was obvious by the number of people who popped into yesterday's court sitting that there were many on Gore who have pride in this local achiever.



## MARGARET MEECHANG - SPORTY ARTIST

While best known for her landscapes, some of Margaret's paintings also reflect her sporting interests



Until she was appointed Gore District Council arts and recreation officer in the 1980s, Margaret Meechang was best known in Gore as a very successful sportswoman. However the art component of the job led to focus on her own previously unexplored talents, and to Margaret's own surprise, it launched a new career. In 1993 she enrolled at Gore High as School cert art student, the oldest in the class by many years.

That didn't affect her enjoyment of the course and she remembers the year with affection, particularly for her teenage classmates.

"The kids were wonderful, I learned a lot from them and they learned a lot from me." Teacher Mike Friend made a big impact on her work.

"He challenged me to create art instead of just doing it. 'I know you can draw, I want to see art!'"

In 1994, Margaret moved back to hometown Nelson, where she continued painting and also working with felt.

She also became very involved in the Nelson art scene, including working as a manager of the Nelson Arts Council. She staged several exhibitions of her work, the most recent at the Suter Gallery consisting of 24 oil and acrylic landscapes based around experiences leading tramping trips during her years in Gore. She describes her approach as an emotional one, where she seeks to convey her feelings about a place, giving a taste of some of her impressions, treasured sensations and friendships from those trips.

This year Margaret and husband Morrie have returned south, setting up home in Kingston. Planning regulations prevent her from having a gallery, but people will be very welcome to call in and visit her in her new studio when it's completed.

*Son Tony teaches phys ed at Central Southland College, and Terry lectures at Aoraki Polytechnic. (Daughter Rachel died tragically some years ago.)  
Mike Friend is teaching at Nayland College, and his wife Lorraine is at Waimea College*



## BETH MASLIN - TENNIS VETERAN

The strength of sport in Gore owes a great deal to a few stalwarts who bear the brunt of the work in running the show for others to enjoy. Several generations of ex-GHS people coming back to town would find the same names and faces still doing what they love best for the good of sport. Here Jan Adams took a look at tennis player Beth (Maslin) McCann for the Ensign



When the 2001-2002 Eastern tennis season opened on October 13, Beth still played for the Gore Tennis Club and served the sport as an administrator on the Eastern Southland Tennis Sub-Association.

But she was quick to say she was not the only stalwart around, pointing to Mataura's Pauline Henry and Citizens' Jill Shelton.

And it seemed that if it were not for the commitment of about a small but committed core of people, tennis could well be a dying sport in the district.

"There are too many other things and there's not the commitment today," Beth said.

The biggest Eastern membership was 520 players in 1985-86 when there were 65 teams of eight with four men and four

women.

"Last season there were only about 218 players who are in teams of four juniors (usually all girls or all boys) and teams of six mixed sex seniors who played in order of merit."

Waimumu, Willowbank, Brydone, Waipahi, Knapdale and St Andrews clubs were in recess and Eastern representative games against South Otago, Oamaru and Waimate, so important in the past, were no longer held.

Another big event to go by the bye was the Eastern Senior Championship tournaments.

"People used to come from everywhere for them. I remember once someone came and stayed in a caravan near the courts," Beth said.

However, numbers of junior players were about the same, indicating that as they became

more senior they dropped out.

Despite the disappointing statistics, there were still 10 clubs within the Eastern Sub-Association, each happy to welcome new players.

Three original clubs remained active, Gore and Mataura formed over 100 years ago, and Citizens not much younger.

Beth started playing tennis before reaching her teens and was still going strong.

"I enjoy it but when the old body is ready I guess I'll have to give up," she said.

A very active person who played squash in winter since giving up hockey, it looked likely Beth would be on court for a long time yet.

While she was competitive Beth said she did not "have to win".

She recalled the days when whites were worn as a matter of course. Any colour served the purpose now, although a certain standard of dress was expected.

"And no, no-one dresses like the Williams sisters."

Playing tennis in 2001-2002 would be basically free with coaching available for children too.

"But if kids want to get anywhere with tennis nowadays they have to travel.

"The Mataura Licensing Trust has been a great help with sponsorship," Beth noted.

Involved in the administrative side of tennis since 1975 when she first became secretary of the Gore club, Beth had since served another three years in the job, also putting in marathon work with the Eastern Southland Tennis Sub-Association. For this she was honoured with a New Zealand Tennis Association Administrators' Award in 1997. On the Eastern committee as secretary since 1976, Beth was 10 years secretary of draws, secretary and controller of tournaments, and longer as delegate to the Southland association. For six years until 2001 she had also controlled junior tourneys.

Not one to boast of her efforts, Beth was more keen to talk about what others had contributed to the sport.

"Jill Shelton has been with the Citizens' club since 1948 and she's been co-opted back on to Eastern recently. Pauline Henry has done so much too.

"John Henry is Eastern chairman and he has done a lot for tennis," Beth said.

She recalled former local players who made their mark on the wider tennis scene - Robin Welsh, NZ junior men's singles champ in the 1950s, Lois Miller (nee Cullen), Lee Mulvey (nee Milne), David Muir, Francis and Chris Wallis, Nigel Roy, Jenny Mockford (nee Morris) and Rachel O'Shea, Jenny Christie, Aaron Kimura and Mark Ferszt who won the South Island High Schools Mixed Teams event in 1994.

Beth was not the only veteran player in the Gore club.

"Graeme (Townsend) still plays. He taught me how to hold a racquet," Beth laughed.

Linda Hitchens, Rodney Byars and Marilyn Windle had also taken to the courts for years and the commitment of former players like Diane Townsend, Ian Southern and Rosalie and Jim Copland had been major contributors to the Gore club.

Asked what had kept her interested in tennis all these years, Beth, a committed follower of the

sport in the wider sense, said.

"I like the people and I like the game."



## GOREY DETAILS

Has the Golden Mile returned? Back in the 60s owning a shop on Gore's Main Street was a licence to print money - or so they say. Perhaps millions aren't being made, but the south, particularly Gore, continues to bubble away on the back of the booming rural economy. Regional growth, home and vehicle sales, and certainly land prices, are all at the peak of the curve, and showing no signs of slowing down in the short term. New businesses, large and small, are opening in town and it's harder to walk past an empty shop. These are good times for Gore - and it shows.

It is not without its worries though. GP Kevin Samson has announced the closure of his Hokonui Health Centre. He'd been looking for a replacement for four years. With full patient lists around the district, doctors are compiling waiting lists. It's a long way to Invercargill for a flu remedy!

Rates on the rise: the Gore District Council has signed off on an overall rate increase of 8.55%, with ward increases of 8.61% for Gore, 8.38% for Mataura and 8.5% for rural. Rural ratepayers, in particular, are concerned at the hefty hike. The system, based on capital values, does apportion the rural sector with much of the cost. Comments from some councillors that rural landowners may be more likely to absorb the increase than their urban counterparts haven't exactly gone down well with those on the land. Wonder why?

Back to happier matters: Ice Sports Southland's new \$1.9m skating rink has just been officially opened. Construction started April 2001, was completed in November and since the skating season started on February 23rd the new Olympic short course rink has attracted good numbers through its doors. Next up is the new swimming pool alongside the rink in Wayland Park.

Gore is to be the topic of a study by 70 University of Otago tourism students in a year-long project, "The Future of Gore as a Visitor Destination." They will look at strategies to enhance Gore as a tourist destination. Similar studies have been carried out very successfully in Oamaru and Lawrence. Gore's unique events and closeness to major centres makes it an interesting case study.

The Southern Field Days at Waimumu in February were the biggest ever, with more than 400 exhibitors packed into over 6km of site frontage. A little liquid sunshine failed to stop the record 13,000 attendance enjoying the spectacular variety of products on show. Should it become a yearly, or a three-day event? Either way, volunteers from the Eastern Southland Young Farmers Club who put the event together without a hitch deserve praise.

Will Gore voters kill the golden goose of the MLT and opt for being able to buy booze at the supermarkets? The current referendum will determine the question.

Golden evening: Four previous Gold Guitar Awards winners, including Patsy Rigger (1974), will be in town this year for the Friday night Spectacular to fundraise for the Hands of Fame statue.

- Nick Jeffery



And remember for those of you who really want to keep up with news from down south, parts of the *Southland Times* are loaded each day on the internet at [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz)

This newsletter was edited by Rosemarie Smith. Suggestions, comments, requests, can be sent to her at [rvoland@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rvoland@paradise.net.nz) or to the Foundation secretary [bruce@reunion.com](mailto:bruce@reunion.com)

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