



WHANGAREI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Civic Honours

Citation - Sophie Christine Edwards

It is with great pleasure that Whangarei District Council awards a Civic Honour to Sophie Edwards.

This award recognizes Sophie's long-standing and generous gift of her time, energy, talents and wisdom to the community and nature of the Tutukaka Coast and wider Whangarei area.

Born in Hungary, Sophie grew up speaking three languages and developed a keen interest in the environment and social issues. Her life was to change dramatically in 1944 when the Russian front entered Hungary. Although she escaped to safety in Austria, she was to lose family members and the family's ancestral home and lands, to which she would not return for 50 years.

At the end of World War Two, Sophie secured a job as an interpreter for the British occupying forces in Austria. Here she met Bill Edwards, a decorated war hero and major in the Royal Artillery. In 1949 the pair married and went to Uganda where Bill served as an agricultural adviser to the King of Buganda.

Three of Sophie's four children were born in Uganda, but she also found time for volunteer work with the YWCA as secretary and fundraiser, for promoting women's agricultural education, and fostering orphaned animals for a wildlife sanctuary including a baby chimp and a young cheetah.

Arriving in England after 14 years in Uganda the immediate task was to find a home base for the growing family as Bill would be leaving shortly to take up his new job in Pakistan. Sophie stayed behind in Devon, looking after the children, the new home and ten acres which gave ample scope to grow organic fruit and vegetables and strawberries for the market.

After Bill's retirement they established a vineyard which became one of the very few certified organic vineyards in the country at the time. Their wine sold well on the niche market.

In 1992, Sophie and Bill decided to join their two daughters living in New Zealand. On a family holiday to Matapouri, they discovered and then bought a Ngunguru property that offered everything they wanted – a rich natural environment, strong community, medical facilities and a golf course.

Continued...

Sophie immersed herself in her new home and life. Ever keen to understand different cultures, she learned Te Reo Maori and soon established a strong affinity for and friendship with tangata whenua. Between 1997 and 2003 she used her artistic talents to illustrate a series of Te Reo Maori 'readers' for children aged five and six.

However, it was for her contribution to community and conservation issues that she would eventually become known around Ngunguru as 'the indomitable Sophie Edwards'.

She has been team member at the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre since shortly after its formation in 1992, as secretary for several years and still being actively involved. She also joined the Coastal Care Group in 1993. Serving for six years on the Tutukaka Coast Ratepayers and Residents Association her value as a writer of powerful, well-researched submissions became evident. GE Free New Zealand/Northland received her support, remembering her years of experience in the field. Passionate concern for the environment was evident in her tireless support of the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society from 2005 to this day. Effectiveness as a fundraiser helped to create the Ngunguru playground and her tenacity as a campaigner made Shoebridge Crescent safer for pedestrians.

The Tutukaka Coast Civil Defence Response Plan came about largely because of Sophie's vision and tenacity, qualities she also brings to her work with Transition Aotearoa.

Throughout her life, Sophie has nurtured a deep interest in ancient cultures and comparative religion and explores these with characteristic determination. In 1995 Sophie was asked to join a team writing Biblical commentaries for St. Paul's Anglican Church in Kamo. Her monthly contributions appeared in the Parish Newsletter regularly from 1995 to 2004. With a keen interest in history she continues her studies and exploration today.

Sophie Edwards is a true citizen of the world, and we are privileged she has chosen this corner of it to exercise her big-picture philosophies, universal compassion, hard work and full heart.

For this, we honour her.



Mayor

Wednesday 21 August 2013

WHANGAREI: LOVE IT HERE!



WHANGAREI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Civic Honours

Citation - Fredrick Franklin Field and Mary Nell Field

It is with great pleasure that Whangarei District Council awards a Civic Honour to Fred and Mary Field in recognition of their enormous contribution to the wider Mangakahia community and to young people in need.

Married for 54 years, Fred and Mary have lived on their Mangakahia farm all their wedded lives. Their property was home to their four daughters, and during the 1970s and 80s became a happy and nurturing home away from home for the many foster children sent to them for brief or lengthy stays by the Department of Social Welfare and Birthright.

Testament to the stability and warmth Mary and Fred offered these children, many still keep in touch decades later, and remember with great fondness learning about farm life, having fun in the outdoors, and the great food during their stay.

Despite being busy with their farm, family and foster children, Fred and Mary still found time to make a significant contribution to their community. Each became involved in their own and mutual interests, supporting the other and getting a lot of enjoyment from their participation.

Aside from being a Justice of the Peace since 1987, Fred has been a stalwart and very reliable member of the Mangakahia Lions Club, its President for one year and Treasurer for six. He was Chairman of the Parakao School Committee between 1977 and 1983, and a member and Secretary of Mangakahia Young Farmers.

As a long-standing member of the Parakao Hall Society and Domain Committee, Fred has at various times taken the roles of Secretary/Treasurer and Chairman, and continues to take bookings and maintain the facility when the need arises.

Both were founding members of the Mangakahia LandCare Group, contributing to improvements to the health of the Mangakahia River area. Mary was also President of the Mangakahia Garden Club for two years and Treasurer for a further 26 years, working tirelessly for the Club's fundraising Flower Shows, with Fred as her back-up for the heavier work.

Continued...

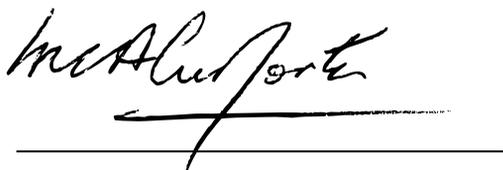
Sport has been another shared love, and their contribution to the maintenance and management of sports' facilities around the district, as well as their five-decades of teaching swimming, tennis, badminton and ballroom dancing to local children, has benefitted generations of residents. They also opened their own home swimming pool to local children when the local pool closed down.

They still play badminton and have a long association with the Parakao Club, the Whangarei Sub-Association and the Northland Association of which they are both life members and Fred Patron. They helped add extra courts to the Whangarei Club hall, and when this burnt down, assisted in establishing Northland Badminton's international standard court headquarters in Porowini Ave. They fundraised for many years, provided meals for inter-association teams and catered for 60's Up Club fundraising Christmas dinners.

Both were members of the Pakotai Tennis Club for around 20 years, where they were active in fundraising, improvement and maintenance work. Fred was a delegate for the Whangarei Tennis Sub-Association when the Northland Tennis Headquarters were being established, participating in working bees, fundraising and serving as a competition volunteer.

Quite simply, there is little that Fred and Mary haven't been involved in creating or supporting in Mangakahia over the past 50 years. They have been, and remain, enormous assets to their community, as well as loving and interested parents, grandparents and foster parents to those fortunate enough to have been in their care.

For this, we honour them.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Hurst', is written over a horizontal line.

Mayor

Wednesday 21 August 2013

WHANGAREI: LOVE IT HERE!



WHANGAREI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Civic Honours

Citation - Mervyn Thomas Rusk

It is with great pleasure that Whangarei District Council awards a Civic Honour to Merv Rusk in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being of the people of Hikurangi, Whangarei and New Zealand.

Born in Kawakawa, Merv started worked on the family farm after high school, married Maureen in 1969. Together they bought a farm at Marua a year later where they raised four children and home-schooled the three youngest.

Merv's community service began at the tender age of 18 when he was elected Chairman of the Towai Young Farmers Club, a position he held for some years. He served rural communities in sports administration, as Chairman of Whangarei District Young Farmers and Northland Vice President, as a member of the Dominion Executive of New Zealand Young Farmers for three years, and as Chairman of Whakapara Federated Farmers whose membership he grew significantly before becoming the district's Sub-provincial Vice President.

Merv won a Young Farmers Club writing competition in 1964 and has contributed articles to farming magazines ever since. He also won the New Zealand Field Days Prototype Award in 1973 for his invention and patent of a mobile stock pen.

His interest in farm safety led to three years on the New Zealand National Farm Safety Association Executive and promoting farm safety to rural groups around the country. He successfully campaigned to make safety frames compulsory on all tractors, and following the recent death of a friend in a quad bike accident, is again contributing to improving farm safety at a national level.

Merv's long-term commitment to his home community has seen him serve as secretary for the Hikurangi Presbyterian Board of Managers, and devote 24 years to the Hikurangi Christian Fellowship for which he acted as Chairman for nine years, a lay preacher, an officiator at several funerals, and a major contributor to four church building projects.

He was made a life member of the Northland Lawn Tennis Association and, together with his father-in-law and others, built the Northland Tennis Headquarters facility at Springs Flat. Many other local people and organisations have employed and appreciated Merv's skills as a number cruncher, writer and confidante.

Continued...

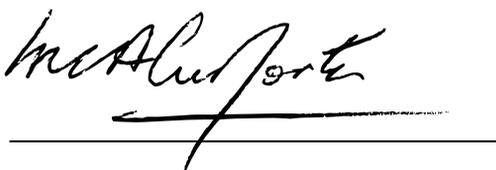
Merv's natural compassion and empathy have resulted in counselling couples with relationship difficulties and at risk youth, service as a Justice of the Peace, and voluntary transport for people to and from medical treatments in both Whangarei and Auckland. For many years, he and Maureen also offered their home as a half way house for adults in rehabilitation.

On a civic level, Merv wrote a major submission on town and country planning for the first review of the County District Scheme by the then Whangarei County Council. He was a member of the Mayoral Flood Relief Fund Committee in 2007 and worked for over 15 years researching and assisting with the Hikurangi Swamp Flood Control Scheme. He led a push to restore the Kioreroa Cemetery, and waged a successful five-year campaign to get legislation passed to allow citizen-initiated referenda.

Merv continues his voluntary work by teaming with Maureen to perform regular therapeutic singing sessions for members of the Northland Parkinsons Society. Merv plays guitar and Maureen the piano and together they make a harmonious and effective duo - as they have all their married lives in support of others.

Merv Rusk is a much loved and valued member of the Whangarei community, and demonstrates the true spirit of volunteerism and good citizenship.

For this, we honour him.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Merv Rusk', is written over a horizontal line.

Mayor

Wednesday 21 August 2013



WHANGAREI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Civic Honours

Citation - Desmond John Coutts

Whangarei District Council takes great pleasure in awarding a Civic Honour to Des Coutts in acknowledgement of his long-standing commitment to, and support of, the Hikurangi community.

Born in Hikurangi, primary school-educated there and raising four sons with his wife Christine on the Hikurangi farm they have owned throughout their 30-year marriage, Des has become a popular, reliable and invaluable contributor to local events and organisations. He is always first with his hand up when a new community project arises and is well known for his encouragement of all others involved.

As a business owner, he has been a dedicated member of the Hikurangi Business Association since its formation, inspiring fellow members with his generous contribution of time, energy, ideas, enthusiasm, organisational skills and labour for projects benefitting the place and people of Hikurangi.

His sons being the fourth generation of Coutts children to attend Hikurangi Primary School, Des threw himself into school fundraisers and projects from the day his eldest son began in Year One. He served on every Board of Trustees while his sons were pupils of the school, as the Board Chairman for three years, and in 2002 was awarded a Long Service Merit Award by the Northland School Trustees Association for his outstanding service to the school.

Despite the youngest of his children leaving Hikurangi Primary seven years ago, Des remains an active and integral member of the group organising the school's much-needed annual fundraising trail bike ride. He 'scopes' the course to ensure participant safety, and donates his time, business equipment and project management experience free of charge to maximise profits.

These resources have also been put to good use in his decade-long involvement with the Friends of Waro Lake, for whom he has provided significant man and machine hours building a walking track around the lake, and worked with Council to improve access to the track and make it more user-friendly.

Continued...

Des took over the chairmanship of the committee organising the Hikurangi 150th Anniversary celebrations following the sudden death of Yvonne Stewart. He co-ordinated many of the activities, offered his machinery and expertise, supported other committee members when required, and worked tirelessly on the day. He was also heavily involved in the 125th Anniversary celebrations for Hikurangi School.

Again using his business machinery and experience, Des metalled the Marua Hall grounds at no cost, as he did for a similar project with the Whananaki Fire Station. He donates annually to the Hikurangi Golf Club for their Daffodil Day and has helped Tornado Youth with makeover projects for houses on George St and Valley Rd.

A keen tennis player, Des has served on the committee and as Vice Chair for the Hikurangi Tennis Club. He is also a current Marua Hall committee member.

There are few in Hikurangi who haven't benefitted from Des' good will, hard work and cheerful contribution. When he is involved in a community project, everyone relaxes knowing it will be done well and that they will enjoy and be enhanced by the experience.

Des Coutts is universally described as a man of integrity, commitment and community spirit.

For this, we honour him.



Mayor

Wednesday 21 August 2013