

Otago Climber

Newsletter of the Otago Section, New Zealand Alpine Club

MAY 2010

Lindsay Rutherford Stewart: 22 February 1917 - 1 April 2010

It is an honour to say something on behalf of this remarkable man who died recently in Frankton Hospital, Queenstown. I am sure much more will be said in a comprehensive obituary in the New Zealand Alpine Journal later this year. Only recently some of Lindsay's diaries and photographs were published in the 2006 journal and he is a star in Gerard Hall-Jones' recent book, "Mountaineering from the Milford Road".

I climbed with Richard his son and have many warm memories of dropping in to see Lindsay and his wife, Hillary, in Queenstown, where he lived in his retirement after a busy life as a GP in Invercargill.

As a climber and a member of the Southland Section Lindsay made a singular contribution to the exploration and climbing of the mountains of Fiordland. From the 1930's right through to the late 60's and early seventies he climbed and when I last visited him in Frankton in hospital a couple of years ago, he still had that glint in his eye when you began to "talk mountains". He had a wonderful view of Ben Lomond from his window and on my way to the funeral on 12th April the mountain had clouds draping its summit which seemed to be as it should be.

Amongst his many original climbs were the first ascent of Tutoko from Leader Creek up the south snow face with Colin Lea and Rod Ryan in 1952. The Lindsay Stewart Buttress on Crosscut was named after him, which he first climbed in 1967 with his son Don and Harold Jacobs over a harrowing 2 days reaching the summit in a storm. This was after a number of

attempts by himself and others. He was a member of the New Zealand Peruvian expedition to the Andes in 1960 and made the first ascent of Nevado Cayesh. with Dal Ryan and Lyn Crawford along with a famous "night out" on Huascarán. He was a member of the Fiordland National Park Board in its formative days and a past President of the NZAC.

Like father, like son, I can remember the time Richard [Lindsay's son], Jim Milne, John Mackinnon and I climbed Rolleston out of the head of the Waimak in the middle of winter 1962. Richard woke us up saying the climbing conditions were perfect and we should get out of the sack. It was snowing heavily outside the bivvy but he reckoned he had glimpsed some stars and we should go. We all grumbled but went and Richard was right. There is a very similar account in the New Zealand Alpine Journal describing the morning of the epic 2 day ascent of the new line on Crosscut. I quote Lindsay's words: "the weather looked bad, there was fog. However the stars could be seen faintly shining through....it was just ground fog. Despite Harold's insistence that fog was different from mist I felt it was academic only, and the climb was on". This summed Lindsay up pretty well.

Our thoughts are with the family and Ross, his son, who survives Donald who was killed in the Erebus disaster and Richard who died of motor neurone disease at a much too young an age. Hillary died in 2004. Despite these huge family losses Lindsay still had a sparkle. This was characteristic of the man and it was great to see so many older climbers and his climbing companions from the Southland Section bidding him farewell.

Pete Strang < petestrang@xtra.co.nz >