

# Climbing doctor an inspiration to all

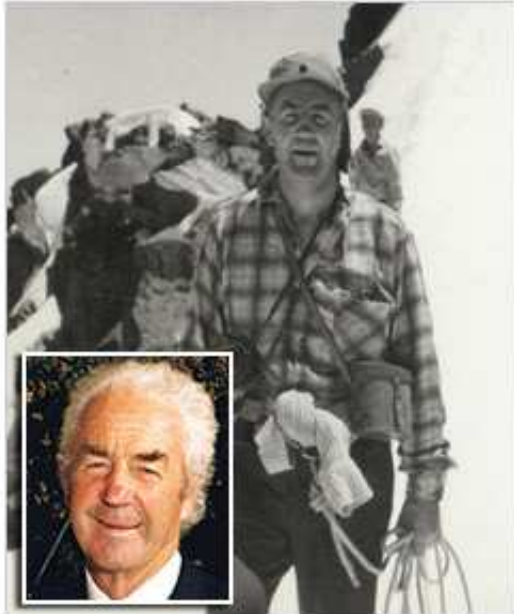
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Lindsay Stewart then and now (inset).

Lindsay Stewart, doctor, surgeon, sportsman and one of New Zealand's foremost mountaineers, died in Queenstown aged 93 on April 1.

In spite of being born in Ngaruawahia, Lindsay, or Doc Stewart as he was also known by his friends, was a Southlander all his life, attending Waihopai Primary School, Invercargill, from 1923 to 1928 and Southland Boys' High School from 1929 to 1934.

There he played violin in the orchestra, was prop in the 1st XV, senior gymnastic champion, prefect and dux. He was awarded a junior national scholarship and studied medicine at the University of New Zealand, Dunedin, graduating with an MB ChB in 1940.

Lindsay attempted to enlist for the war three times, but his medical skills were needed in New Zealand.

For the next 37 years he was a surgeon at Southland Hospital, visiting surgeon at Kew and Park hospitals and a respected general practitioner in Invercargill, retiring in 1977 to his crib in Queenstown, from where he also spent time as a locum in Lumsden, Gore and Motueka.

Lindsay developed a great love of the outdoors at an early age.

His first recorded trip was a tramp from Queenstown, where his family had a crib, to Moke Lake, Moonlight, Arthurs Point and back when he was 11 years old with a friend of the same age.

Other multi-day excursions as a schoolboy followed, including a traverse of the daunting Grave-Talbot Pass.

University offered him the opportunity to climb the challenging Darran Mountains. Between 1935 and 1940, he made first ascents of Mt Cosmos, Barren Peak, Mt Gifford (all with brother Murray), Sentinel Peak, Mt Te Wera, East Peak of Twin Peaks, Mt Revelation, Taiaroa Peak, Karetai Peak, Mt Underwood and Mt Patuki.

Lindsay's Ledges, leading up beside Karetai Peak from Lake Turner and the Lindsay Stewart Buttress on Mt Crosscut mark some of his routes that are now used by dedicated mountaineers,

although these were not named by Lindsay. Always keen to encourage other climbers as well as push himself, in 1952 he planned and led the first ascent of the South Face of Mt Tutoko. In 1961 he and son Richard completed the first father-son grand traverse of Mt Cook. For his 64th birthday, he climbed Mt Aspiring and was still doing good climbs after then.

Lindsay's ascent of Nevado Cayesh (5721m), then the highest virgin and most sought-after peak in the Cordillera Blanca, in the Andes, in 1960 with Lynn Crawford and Dal Ryan is described in Lloyd Warburton's aptly named book *The Steepest Mountain*.

The expedition was officially known as the New Zealand Andes Expedition 1960, but was in fact a Southland expedition, paving the way for the subsequent mountaineering expeditions originating from Southland in the 1970s and 80s.

Lindsay's terrific mental and physical courage saw him and Lynn also nearly make a first ascent of the South Face of Huascarán (6768m), in Peru, turning back from near the summit. This involved two nights in the open at altitude with only a bag of dates, a few biscuits and half a bar of chocolate between them.

The rescue party on the third day was astonished to find that not only were Lindsay

and Lynn alive, but did not need rescuing.

Lindsay was elected associate member of the New Zealand Alpine Club in 1934 and qualified as a member in 1938. In 1954 he was instrumental in building the Southland Section hut in Moraine Creek, off the Hollyford road.

In 1955 he was elected president of the New Zealand Alpine Club and was made a life member in 1977. As president, his assertion that "easy climbs mean mediocre climbers ... risk is an element in all sports and calculated risks are perfectly justifiable in mountaineering" caused a few raised eyebrows, but were true to his own beliefs. He was renowned for not only pushing new routes himself but for encouraging others, especially younger climbers, to attempt challenging climbs, and always with a vision for what could be possible.

He held wider interests in the mountain environment, serving as a member of the Fiordland National Park Board from 1958 to 1981 and then the New Zealand National Parks Authority until 1987. His involvement with the Southland Mountain Safety Council saw Lindsay serve as a survival instructor at Scott Base in 1970.

Mountains were Lindsay's chief interest, but for much of his life he also enjoyed bowls, becoming a life member of the Queenstown Bowling Club.

He also served on the Southland High Schools Board between 1962 and 1968 and was invested into the Order of St John in 1976.

He helped with the Wakatipu Senior Citizens Association in the 1970s, becoming an honorary life member, and acted as unpaid co-ordinator for the New Zealand Foundation for the Blind.

As a teenager, Lindsay had eyed his future wife Hilary Hyndman at Hyndman's Bookshop across the road from his father's Stewart's Pharmacy. They married on December 6, 1940, and had three sons, Donald who died on Mt Erebus in 1979, Richard, who died in 1991, and surviving son Ross.

Hilary was a strong supporter of Lindsay, acting as unpaid receptionist and nurse in Lindsay's practice as well as managing the house and bringing up the children. Hilary died in 2005 at Queenstown.

Everyone who knew him found Lindsay thoroughly courteous and cheerful, but those who knew him well could add inspirational and determined.