

Community service a way of life

By ROSEMARY McLENNAN

Joe Cochrane "lived respected and died regretted", mourners at his funeral were told.

Mr Cochrane died suddenly on June 6, aged 85.

Celebrant Kevin Nelson described Mr Cochrane as a remarkable man who was honoured with an Upper Hutt Civic award and Queen's Service Medal for his lifetime of service to his community.

More than 500 people attended Mr Cochrane's funeral at Heretaunga Christian Centre on June 13.

Pastor Miles Davison said that 57 years ago his father, Raymond Davison, and Mr Cochrane shared a cabin on a boat from Sydney to Wellington. They checked out Wellington together, shared a flat and were best man at each other's wedding.

Both died from heart attacks serving others and it was somehow appropriate that Mr Cochrane collapsed at a Lions meeting in the King Lion Hall.

Mr Cochrane was born in Dundee in 1926, the youngest of five children. His father, a mines explosives expert, suffered the effects of gassing in World War I. Mr Cochrane lived in tenement housing and was still young when the Depression began.

An athletic boy and a good swimmer, he had a milk run, did deliveries and joined the ATC before World War II began.

He was evacuated to a farm and loved his time there.

At 14 he started work as a butcher.

Towards the end of the war he joined the air force but swapped to the army. Regiments he served with included the Gordon Highlanders and Black Watch, seeing active service in the Middle East where British troops faced continual dangers even after the war ended.

He was discharged in 1948 and returned to Scotland but left for Hong Kong where he worked as a butcher for two years.

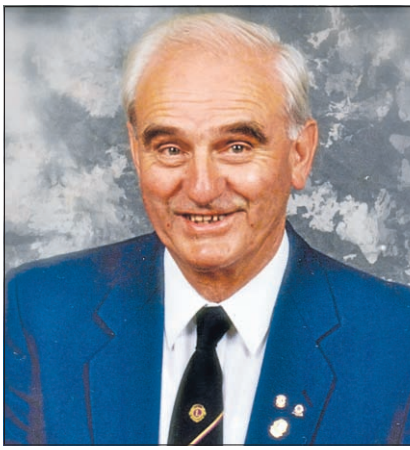
He wanted to see the world and visit relatives in Australia before returning to Scotland.

Arriving in Wellington he called at a butchery in Courtenay Place and was offered a job at 20 pounds a week, which was twice the average wage in the capital.

He met his future wife, Shirley, at a dance but mislaid her address. Knowing only her name and that she lived in Tawa he travelled there the next day and asked around until he found her.

They married in 1956 and lived above a butchery in Karori before moving to Upper Hutt.

Keeping work and private life



Epitome of service: Joe Cochrane

separate, he worked in several Wellington butcheries and one in Trentham. He bought a butchery in Karori. After he sold it, he worked at Toops and Placemakers until he retired.

Rob Cochrane, Joe Cochrane's son, said his mother's support was the key to his father's many achievements.

He was a focused and persistent worker for the community; supportive of his children and their friends.

A lifetime car and motorcycle enthusiast, he supported Rob's efforts to set up a BSA club.

He was involved in establishing junior soccer and through Lions became involved in Special Olympics and Riding for the Disabled (RDA).

He believed his father chose to live life to the full and died "utterly exhausted" as he did not want his family to go through what others had experienced when a

relative became ill.

His grandchildren said he was highly respected, demonstrated compassion and was an inspiration. He did not do things for recognition but due to the obligation he felt to his neighbours.

Norm Griffin from Rimutaka Lions said Mr Cochrane was the "epitome of service".

His community service and Lions' work were so intermingled they were hard to separate.

Mr Cochrane joined Rimutaka Lions in 1978 and had 30 years of 100 per cent attendance.

Involvements included the IHC, Special Olympics, Christmas Day Room at the Inn lunch, fundraising appeals for several locals to have transplants overseas, soccer, RDA and the Royal Foundation of the Blind.

He gladly took on a job and completed it and was an expert at cooking sausages for fundraising barbecues.

In 1992 he was honoured with a Melvin Jones Fellowship (the Lions International Foundation's highest honour) and in 1993 made a member of the Lloyd Morgan Lions Clubs Charitable Trust. In 2005 he received a Lions' district award for his work for the blind and the collection of glasses.

The treasurer of the Upper Hutt RSA, Tom Cormack, said Mr Cochrane was a key figure in the club for many years.

He joined in the 1960s and served as president from 2001 to 2005. Until recently he was also the club's serving welfare officer.

In April he was made a life member. He died the week before

the presentation was to be made.

Mr Cochrane had the ability to gather around him the people to get a job done, he said.

Poppy Day takings had doubled since Mr Cochrane took over.

He developed the welfare section into an efficient body, visited RSA members in rest homes and their homes and attended nearly every RSA funeral.

His death will leave Upper Hutt "so much the poorer," Mr Cormack said.

Adrienne Manthel from Hutt Valley RDA said Mr Cochrane and Rimutaka Lions had given "amazing help" to the club's humble beginnings at Trentham Racecourse to its new headquarters at Silverstream.

Shirley Cochrane told mourners her family had been overwhelmed with messages of sympathy and thanked "all the wonderful people" involved in her husband's life.

Upper Hutt RSA president Syd Giles, giving the formal RSA tribute and Last Post, said Mr Cochrane's Scottish regiments were remembered for their wartime exploits. His discharge described him as an honest, sober and cheerful man with initiative, who held responsibility as a despatch rider.

Mr Cochrane's casket, covered with the Scottish and Lions International flags, was piped from the church by his nephew David Andrew from Gisborne and given a guard of honour. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, six children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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