

Molly Mabee's Eulogy, 13 September 2022

Good morning, I'm Lorelle George, President of Graduate Women North Shore, and it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the North Shore Branch of Graduate Women New Zealand, and our members ... and to provide a brief history of Molly's involvement with the NZ Federation of University Women and our international organization IFUW - now known as New Zealand Graduate Women and Graduate Women International.

It was a friend of Molly's parents who introduced her to Ella Spencer, President of the Auckland Branch of the Federation of University Women, and who invited Molly to a meeting and as Molly wrote in her memoir '*Jewels on my Journey*', "my fate was sealed"! Molly joined the Auckland Branch in 1948, and before long she became Branch Treasurer and involved in the upgrading of the University Halls of Residence in Brighton Road.

In 1957 on a return trip to Britain, Molly was asked to be the representative of NZFUW at an International FUW Council meeting being held in Dublin. In her memoir, Molly describes this as "a window of opportunity that led me down high roads and winding lanes, around the world and through the years, enriching my life and that of my family."

In 1962 Molly became the President of the Auckland Branch of the Federation of University Women; and made special mention in her memoir that she was one of two women to attend the Inaugural Dinner of the newly autonomous University of Auckland – all the Professors were men!

It was also during this time that FUW Auckland joined forces with the National Council of Women to raise money for a proper Student Union. As a result of this involvement Molly was appointed to the Management Committee of the Student Union, and became involved in all the laws and regulations required. She saw the result as a remarkable joint effort of town and gown.

Another project at this time was fundraising to support the NZFUW Fellowship Fund, providing initially for one graduate to study overseas.

1964 saw the NZFUW Executive established in Auckland with Dorothy Winstone as President and Molly as one of the Vice- Presidents.

Also at this time the FUW members, who lived on the North Shore and had to travel to Auckland to attend meetings, decided that the time had come to found a North Shore Branch.

And so it was, because of Molly's enthusiasm, energy and drive, that the North Shore Branch of NZFUW was founded in Takapuna in 1966, on what is described in our 2010 historical document *'True Minds'*, as a "wave of enthusiasm and energy that stretched the length of our small peninsula". The IFUW constitution, with its emphasis on friendship, support and understanding, brought the members of the new branch together with the common purpose of working to promote women's education.

The new branch got off to a good start with members becoming involved in local issues as well as national and international matters affecting women's rights and education. Molly was elected Branch Vice-President in 1966 and President in 1968 and again in 1974-75.

Alongside Molly's involvement with NZFUW and North Shore FUW, Molly was also a member of NCW, and involved in the establishment of the North Shore Branch NCW, becoming the Foundation President of this Branch in 1970.

From 1979-1982 Molly was Vice-President of NZFUW based in Auckland, and was also the NZFUW representative to the National Council of Women, which involved attending NCW Conferences around the country meeting women who shared their knowledge and enthusiasm.

In the late 1970s she formed a committee that oversaw the compilation of the *"Footprints of Kate Edger: A History of the NZ Federation of University Women 1921-1981"*, published in 1982, which she edited. She also wrote the preface and a contributory entry to the collection of reflections of the North Shore Branch, *'True Minds'*, published in 2010.

Another door opened in 1982 when Molly was nominated by NCW Auckland Branch and subsequently appointed to join the Northbridge Retirement Trust Board, a position she held for 10 years.

In her memoir Molly describes her attendance at IFUW Conferences in Tokyo and Kyoto in 1974, and notes that the IFUW Conference in Vancouver in 1980 was of importance, when Dame Daphne Purvis, a New Zealander who had been President of IFUW for 3 years retired.

In 1989 Molly attended a further IFUW Conference in Helsinki, Finland, where the Conference theme was '*Women, Leadership and Development*'..... and the IFUW tale goes on until 1998 when she attended the IFUW Conference in Graz, Austria, with a pre-conference visit to Vienna and Salzburg. In 2004 Molly attended her last IFUW Conference in Perth, Australia, together with six other North Shore FUW members.

Apart from the personal friendships made, Molly was very interested in all the stimulating conference discussions that took place.

Alongside the Civic awards Molly received in recognition of her community roles, such as

- The awarding of her Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year's Honours in 1998, for 50 years of service to the community, and
- The North Shore City Council's Civic Award, which added Molly to the List of Women's Firsts in 1993 as Foundation President of the North Shore Branch of the National Council of Women....

were awards from both FUW and NCW North Shore:

- NCW North Shore awarded Molly a Life Membership in 1980, and
- FUW North Shore named Molly an Honoured Member in 1973, and
- a Member Emerita in 1991.

Molly says in her memoir, "the award which I most treasure came in 1991, at a NZFUW Conference. Here I received the recognition of Member Emerita, quite unexpectedly, and I was not really dressed for the occasion, or with a prepared speech. But my posy of flowers put it up there with the Oscars."

As both FUW and NCW believed that it was important to have women in positions of decision-making and to have equal pay and opportunity, Molly was an example to us all.

Molly comments in her memoir: "For 56 years the Federation has been a mainstream of my life, along with my family and my friends – in fact all three strands are closely interwoven."

I would like to close with some reflections from members :

For Dorothy Meyer, Molly was a mentor. Dorothy says... “she took me under her wing at the Stanford conference in 1992, and as her alternate delegate she guided me to speak on pertinent remits. Molly nominated me for National President in 1997 and supported the election process. She was a ‘constant’, always there as a sounding board.

Those of us in FUW, now Graduate Women, who have known and worked with Molly will remember her graciousness, kindness and generous hospitality.”

For Beverley Turner “Like Dorothy, I remember her graciousness, and generous hospitality. She didn’t push herself forward. Nothing was ever too much trouble.”

Frances Bell remembers particularly “the Branch End-of-Year Dinner in 1999, when the 80th birthday of IFUW was celebrated with messages and representatives from other national associations. Molly spoke of her long involvement with FUW and IFUW and of the history of the North Shore Branch. As one of the key people behind setting up this new branch it was fascinating to hear her personal memories from those early years.”

“All of us are very aware of the guiding light who, with her wide knowledge of IFUW and NZFUW, was always there to advise and mentor. We have all appreciated Molly’s support, wisdom and experience over the many years she was active in the Branch.”

“We have all been privileged to know this wonderful lady.”

Thank you.....