

LIFESAVER LIVED LIFE OF SERVICE



Cyril O'Neill put the life into Surf Life Saving at the Christchurch suburb of North Beach. The district identity and pillar of lifesaving through 81 years of membership of the North Beach Surf Club died recently at the age of 90.

O'Neill was a "North Beach boy through and through", says local community board chairman and fellow surf lifesaver David East.

"He was passionate about North Beach and everything to do with it. He was one of surf lifesaving's great characters".

The only extended time O'Neill spent away from the area was in World War 2, when he served with the army in Greece, Crete and North Africa. He was invalided home in 1943.

His community involvement included roles in the New Brighton Rugby Club, New Brighton RSA and Rawhiti Golf Club, and as a volunteer swimming teacher. An avid gardener, he kept many people supplied with vegetables.

O'Neill crossed town briefly to attend Christchurch West High School (now Hagley). However, his father died young and O'Neill left school early to support the family, digging potatoes in the Depression. He then qualified as a wool classer and worked for Pyne Gould Guinness until war broke out.

The nickname Squib had been applied as a lad because he was small. He grew tall during the war, but remained Squib for the rest of his life. Jobs after the war included auctioneer at the Christchurch fruit and vegetable market and tally clerk at Borthwick's freezing works in Belfast. He married childhood sweetheart Zena Jack in 1951.

His lifesaving involvement began when he was eight and never really ended. He served on beach patrols, took part in competitions up to national level, was an instructor, examiner and judge and held administrative positions. North Beach Surf Lifesaving Club made him a life member in 1952, president from 1966 to 1968, patron from 1982 and joint patron with his wife from 1993.

East says O'Neill was as strong swimmer, tough competitor, tireless instructor and renowned judge. He used his army experience to drill teams in marching and is remembered for turning a "rabble" into a military-style outfit.

O'Neill was elected a life member and patron of Canterbury Surf Lifesaving Association. He was also made a life member of the New Zealand body and received its Distinguished Service Award. The Royal Lifesaving Service awarded him its Commonwealth Recommendation Badge in 1966 and he received the Queen's Service Medal in 1991.

East says O'Neill never stopped visiting the beach and clubrooms to check how "the boys" were doing and how well the training was going. He was well liked, but could get a bit grumpy if things were not entirely shipshape. He had a wicked sense of humour and a fund of great yarns to tell.

He never talked about his part in the war, except to joke that Hitler once ordered German Field Marshall Rommel to "watch out for O'Neill", to which Rommel replied: "Which one?" O'Neill's older brother Ray was also in the area.

Early morning starts to his jobs meant O'Neill had time in the afternoon for his many activities. He and his wife had no children and she fully supported his interests. Together they ran a weekly raffle for 25 years, the proceeds of which paid for most of the 1979 rebuilding of the clubrooms on Marine Parade. They played golf together at Rawhiti and attended functions together at the RSA, where O'Neill was elected patron. When he stopped playing rugby, they tended the rugby club's gardens together. "Zena was always right there with him," East says.

His selflessness was shown mostly in the countless hours he spent teaching children to swim. He used to say: "there is no reason why anyone living at North Beach should not be able to swim." His voluntary efforts extended from working with pupils at the local school to disabled young people at the nearby Burwood Hospital.

"He had an outstanding record of service to the community. And he was a great character," East says. Former Christchurch City councillor and lifesaving enthusiast Mike Stevens says O'Neill had a "major influence" on surf lifesaving and swimming. He was a "true North Beach identity".

Cyril O'Neill, born Christchurch July 29, 1919; died Christchurch February 24, 2010. Survived by wife Zena.

Mike Crean, The Press - Christchurch

2009 BP SURF RESCUE OF THE YEAR



Danny Tenhuevel, Christopher Butt, Amber Prestegard, Billie Haresnape, Dayna King, Ben Tapurau, Rick Wells, Sean Joyce and Ian Boyce, Muriwai Surf Life Saving Club.

On Saturday 21 March a report came through of a boogie boarder being swept around the rocks near Maori Bay. Amber Prestegard and Billie Haresnape completed a full sweep of the area in an IRB but with testing conditions of 4-6ft dumping surf the lifeguards could not spot a boogie boarder in distress. Patrol Captain Danny Tenhuevel and Dayna King then proceeded on foot to the steps leading into the Sugarloaf Rock area.

Danny heard some yelling from a fisherman standing on a high ledge on Sugarloaf Rock. The fisherman was agitated and pointing to the water. Danny immediately radioed to base to send the IRB back and sent Dayna into the water to contact the fisherman and search for patients around Split Rock.

As Amber and Billie returned to the area they saw a person face down in the water. They quickly pulled up the lifeless body of a fisherman. Danny immediately radioed SurfCom to let them know of the situation and to request the Westpac rescue helicopter and an ambulance.

Amber and Billie raced the unconscious victim back to the beach where patrol members Rick Wells and Ian Boyce carried him up the beach and prepared resuscitation equipment. Showing no signs of breathing and an undetectable pulse,

Amber commenced CPR, whilst Billie commenced oxygen therapy under the direction of Dayna. Rick and Ian provided scene management. After approximately two minutes of chest compressions the victim aspirated water and begun to breathe weakly on his own. Amber and Billie continued to provide oxygen therapy, and monitored the patient's vital signs. The patient's condition began to improve and he was responsive to pain and verbal stimuli by the time the Westpac helicopter arrived.

Lifeguards returned to Sugarloaf Rock where Dayna again made contact with the stranded fisherman and encouraged him into the water and into a waiting IRB crewed by Ben Tapurau and Sean Joyce. Dayna swam back around Sugarloaf Rock to check for other potential victims, but due to the large surf she was unable to continue her search.

The Westpac rescue helicopter with senior lifeguard Christopher Butt performed an aerial search for a possible second patient. The resuscitated fisherman's status had begun to rapidly decline so the helicopter returned to transport the patient to hospital. He was still in intensive care the next day.

The resuscitated fisherman's survival and the successful rescue of another fisherman at the same time is testament to the skill and bravery of the volunteer lifeguards at Muriwai Beach.

2009 NZLGB SURF LIFEGUARD OF THE YEAR



Rob Pidgeon,
United North Piha Lifeguard Service

As a Patrol Captain and Director of Lifesaving for United North Piha Lifeguard Service, Rob Pidgeon is at the forefront of Surf Life Saving.

During his 114 hours of patrol, Rob could often be found on flag duty, training fellow clubbies in IRBs or taking members through their paces in surf swims and rock work at one of New Zealand's most beautiful, but dangerous West Coast beaches. Not restricting his expertise solely to Auckland's rugged West Coast, he could also be found assisting other clubs - including Raglan, to help boost patrol numbers when they were in need.

Rob's hard work, dedication and proven leadership skills are valuable assets that he has applied to his role as Patrol Captain. The responsibility of this position requires extensive environmental knowledge, resourcefulness, equipment management and commands respect from fellow patrol members which Rob has managed to achieve with great aplomb.

His patrol skills are second to none and Rob's experience and knowledge were utilised to the highest level in January this year, when he coordinated the successful rescue and resuscitation of a local West Auckland man. The patient - Ross Melles, a father of four and local artist based in Piha - was caught in a rip and pulled from the water by UNP lifeguards with no pulse. Rob and his patrol team executed 'text book CPR' as Rob modestly puts it - and successfully resuscitated Mr Melles. As we all know without the dedication and expertise of members like Rob - Mr Melles and many others, may very well not be here today.

Rob also coordinated the rescue of a rock fisherman caught on rocks at high tide in testing conditions at North Piha, most likely preventing the drowning of yet another fisherman on Auckland's West Coast. This rescue won Northern

Region Rescue of the Month and went on to win the NZ Rescue of the Month in April 2009. Rob was also involved in two additional Northern Region Rescue of the Month awards in 2009.

Not only a high achiever on the patrol front, Rob carried his quest for excellence through to the 2009 Trillian Trust District Patrol Championships in Omaha where his expertise and leadership led the United North Piha Team to victory.

As the Director of Lifesaving for United North Piha, Rob is responsible for activities such as formulating patrol operations, managing a roster system of 85 patrolling members and five active patrols, day to day management of United North Piha SLSC and maintenance control of equipment. Rob also assisted with organising and facilitating club refreshers, IRB and Surf Lifeguard Award instruction.

Last year Rob was selected as the Cathay Pacific High Flyers Community Award recipient and chose to travel to Canada to attend the Royal Lifesaving Society Commonwealth Conference in Canada. The event saw delegates from around the world discuss the future of international lifesaving which has provided invaluable direction and motivation for Rob and his club.

Recognising Rob's dedication to his Club and the wider activities of Surf Life Saving in his local District, Surf Life Saving Northern Region awarded Rob the 2009 Lifeguard of the Year.

It is Rob's unassuming leadership and his ability to efficiently organise patrols that has earned him the respect of both younger and older club members of the United North Piha Lifeguard Service and beyond. Rob is a shining example of a member who consistently provides outstanding service above and beyond the call of duty.



SLSNZ HONOURS AND AWARDS

LIFE MEMBER AWARDS

Graeme Danks
Peter Gibbons
Brian Quirk
David Emett
Ted Varcoe
June McGregor

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

Warwick Donnelly
Grant Florence
George Cowper
Heather Kohn
Jason Hutchings
Ray Stoddart
Ron Valentine

SERVICE AWARDS

Scott Pritchard
Cherie Dillon
Gregory Hall
Grant Florence
David Bradley
Phillip Watkins
John Murphy
Marcus Gardner
Rik Walsh
Malcolm Heke
Andrew Cronin
Donald Whiterod
Dale Wills
Graeme Blanchard
Jan Robinson
Craig Jones

50 YEAR SERVICE BADGE

Kevin Crowther QSM
Kevin Lanyon
John Murphy
Leon Peters
Tony Johnson
Murray Lord
Des Lyons
Denis Quane
Neal Truscott
Dave Price



2009 DHL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Seth McPhee, Brighton SLSC

2009 DHL OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR

Wayne Franich, Orewa SLSC

2009 DHL SURF COACH OF THE YEAR

Chris Swain, Westshore SLSC

2009 DHL INSTRUCTOR/EXAMINER OF THE YEAR

Faron Turner, Orewa SLSC

2009 DHL HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT RESULT OF THE YEAR

Ben Willis, Paekakariki SLSC

LONDON TROPHY 2008-09 SEASON

Kotuku SLSC

The London Trophy is awarded to the club which gains the most Surf Lifeguard and Instructor Awards per number of members

GUDSELL TROPHY 2008-09 SEASON

Mairangi Bay SLSC

The Gudsell Trophy is awarded to the club who gains the most Surf Lifeguards Awards in a year.