

## OBITUARIES

### JEANETTE LEA GILLESPIE

1959-2000



It is with much sadness that we record the unexpected and sudden death of Jeanette Gillespie, an Assistant Lecturer and PhD researcher in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Waikato. Jeanette died following a very brief illness from complications that initiated from influenza and pneumonia, which developed into septicaemia. The event has left her many friends and colleagues in the geoscience fraternity throughout the country, and overseas, in a state of shock and disbelief. Jeanette had so much to give as a person, a teacher and a researcher, and her loss is immeasurable.

Prior to any Earth Sciences interests, Jeanette had worked as a tour guide and dancer for five years at the Polynesian Cultural Center at Laie, Hawaii, then for a time as a graphic artist at the Waikato Art Museum in Hamilton, and later as a clerk at the Hamilton City Council. She came to the University of Waikato in 1987 to study for a BSocSc degree in Geography, and fortuitously happened to include the two 1<sup>st</sup> year Earth Sciences courses in her programme. Jeanette topped those courses and found a new opportunity called Earth Sciences had opened up to her, and so in the following year converted her degree to a BSc majoring in Earth Sciences. Several of Jeanette's essays and fieldtrip reports from her undergraduate courses remain model answers for today's students. She had tremendous ability for artwork and graphic design, and as an undergraduate student was employed to create cabinet and corridor wall displays on various Earth Sciences themes which remain as permanent department fixtures.

Jeanette completed an excellent BSc in Earth Sciences in 1989 and immediately proceeded to the MSc degree, graduating in 1992 with 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours. For her thesis research she joined a New Zealand Oceanographic Institute expedition off southern Taranaki peninsula where she studied the nature and distribution of the predominantly carbonate seafloor sediments, and determined the history of marine sedimentation for the region over the past 12,000 years or so. The results of this work were published in the *New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics*, *Sedimentary Geology*, and *SEPM Special Publication 56 on Cool-Water Carbonates*.

Since 1992 Jeanette was a part-time Tutor, and later Assistant Lecturer, in the Department of Earth Sciences, and in 1993 she enrolled for part-time PhD study, her topic being the Late

Quaternary volcanic histories of White Island and Mayor Island in the Bay of Plenty. She had access to multiple sediment cores collected from the region by NIWA and its predecessors, and was identifying, dating and correlating volcanic ash layers in these cores and relating them back to either a White Island or Mayor Island or mainland source. From this information Jeanette was beginning to build up a picture of the frequency and size of past volcanic eruptions from these volcanoes, very relevant for beginning to assess volcanic risk and mitigation scenarios for the Bay of Plenty region. Preliminary results of some of this work were presented at several annual conferences of the Geological Society of New Zealand.

The success of Jeanette as a young geoscientist can be gauged from the many awards she has won and the publications she has written. She gained several Earth Sciences prizes as an undergraduate student, was recipient of a University of Waikato Postgraduate Scholarship for PhD study, received Student Paper Awards at no fewer than three annual conferences of the Geological Society of New Zealand, including in 1992, 1994 and 1999, and most recently won a Postgraduate Fellowship from the New Zealand Federation of University Women and a Claude McCarthy Fellowship administered by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee, both to assist with PhD analytical costs. Jeanette has published three substantive papers in peer-reviewed journals, and has about a dozen miscellaneous publications, including conference abstracts and course manuals. The list is highly creditable for someone at this stage of their career, and for someone so heavily involved in another aspect of university life, namely teaching.

For nine years Jeanette was in charge of organising and presenting the tutorials, and sometimes laboratories, associated with the Department of Earth Sciences 1<sup>st</sup> year courses. Jeanette was a natural as a teacher, and always conveyed a relaxed, entertaining and informative instruction style. She quickly captured the attention and interest of her audience - as anyone who has listened to a conference talk by Jeanette will affirm. At the introductory Earth Sciences level Jeanette had a huge positive influence on the 1<sup>st</sup> year students, whom she adored and encouraged. Her teaching has impacted on at least 3000 1<sup>st</sup> year students over the years, and helped make Earth Sciences a generally thoroughly enjoyable experience for them. As a consequence of Jeanette's influence, many students who would not otherwise have considered an Earth Sciences degree, have done so, and have gone ahead and graduated and entered geoscience employment. The Department of Earth Sciences at Waikato truly values the tremendous teaching and nurturing skills that Jeanette brought to the classroom and gave her students.

Jeanette had several outside interests and hobbies, and was well known for her art and graphics skills. She was a regular attendee at the gym, got involved in power lifting for a time with some success, and was active in tramping and rock climbing. Jeanette played a solid role in supporting the activities of the Waikato Branch of the Geological Society of New Zealand, and was an office holder in that branch on several occasions. She was also a committee member of the Waikato Branch of the New Zealand Federation of University Women. Jeanette was a lover of chocolate, espresso coffee, coke and McDonald's, and was known for the practical jokes she played on her close and not so close friends!

The Department of Earth Sciences was exceptionally proud of Jeanette and her achievements in all facets of the many contributions she made to its day-to-day life, and we miss her greatly. The department intends to permanently acknowledge her substantive contributions, and everything that Jeanette stood for, by establishing a new award to be named the "Jeanette Gillespie Memorial Prize in Earth Sciences". The prize will be awarded annually from 2001 to the top 1st year student (or students) in Earth Sciences. Funding to support this prize will come from donations, and if you would like to consider contributing to the fund you are invited to do so by forwarding a cheque to The University of Waikato Foundation, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand. All contributions will be formally acknowledged and are tax deductible. Further information is available from the Secretary, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand [phone: 07-8384024; email: [s.wright@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:s.wright@waikato.ac.nz)].

**Cam Nelson**  
University of Waikato

*Since the last newsletter we have been sorry to note the deaths also of the following New Zealand earth scientists:*

**ROGER BURNS** was well known for his major role in developing mineral spectroscopy. His work on crystal field theory led to an understanding of mineral structure that could not be obtained by other research techniques, and more recently he had worked on the geochemistry of the Mars. From 1970 until his death he was based at MIT.

**ROB CHRISTIE** was General Surgeon at Hutt Hospital. He had a lifelong interest in geology, and gained a B.Sc. in geology part-time from Victoria in 1982. He began working on his M.Sc. in 1993. Retirement enabled him to devote himself to it full-time, but his promising geological career was cut short by cancer. His main work was on the petrology of submarine volcanoes of the southern end of the Kermadec arc, some of which has been published.

**ALEX MUTCH**, a founding member of the Geological Society, who had been in poor health for several years. Alex spent most of his career working in Otago and Southland for the New Zealand Geological Survey, mainly on economic and applied projects. He also produced several geological maps, the most noteworthy being the Morley Sheet, which has provided the background for many subsequent research projects on the Permian and Triassic rocks in the region.

**ROBIN OLIVER** completed the first detailed map of Campbell Island while he was a coastwatcher during the war. After completing an MSc, he worked in Australia (at the University Adelaide) for many years, including research in Antarctica.

## ROBERT RICHARD BROOKS

9-4-1926 to 23-1-2001

Robert Brooks, Emeritus Professor of Geochemistry at Massey University, Palmerston North, passed away on 23 January 2001 after failing to recover from an infection following heart surgery last October. He was one of the characters around the Massey campus for four decades and his contribution to geochemistry is being recognized internationally by a series of symposia and special issues dedicated in his honour.

Robert was born on 9 April 1926 in Bristol, England. He was educated at King Edward VII School in Sheffield, and during his boyhood spent many holidays in France with his grandparents who lived near Dieppe, which not only taught him French but also led to his superlative linguistic skills he was to treasure throughout his life.

In fact shortly before World War II (referred to by Robert as "the Big One") he spent time in Germany honing his German language skills. In 1944 he joined the British Army and spent time in East Africa where he supervised an Italian prisoner of war camp (which honed his Italian and Swahili language skills). He was always proud of the fact that whilst in Kenya he was able to climb to the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro, and had a fascination with the place for the rest of his life. He later served in the Middle East. Upon release from the Armed Services in 1948, Robert began to study Chemistry at Bristol University, where he met and married Mary, and in 1952 he gained his BSc (Hons.). This enabled him to gain employment as an analytical chemist for Imperial Smelting Corporation in nearby Avonmouth until 1954, and then with E.S. & A. Robinson Ltd. back in Bristol until 1956.

It was at this stage in his career he decided to travel to South Africa, and became an analytical chemist for Cape Times Ltd. in Cape Town, South Africa. Whilst there he began study for a PhD under Louis Ahrens, and by 1958 had become Lecturer in Chemistry & Physics at the University of Cape Town. In 1960 he graduated with his PhD in geochemistry. He then accepted a position in Chemistry at what was Massey Agricultural College, which shortly became Massey University. During his first decade with the University, Robert began to develop an interest in *biogeochemistry*.

As early as 1966 he was publishing research on biogeochemical prospecting (the study of metal uptake patterns by plants as an indicator of underlying mineralisation). In 1970,



*Robert Brooks sampling serpentine vegetation on the Great Dyke in Zimbabwe, March 1999.*