

35 THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER



Recently, I met a canoeing friend in Nelson who had not heard that Graham had died. I know that Graham did not write about his fight with melanoma cancer but he mentions it briefly at the end of Issue 34, after the Index (which he typed up back in June or July). Graham's melanoma spread from his amputated big toe (Nov. '89) to his groin (Aug. '90) to his spine (March-May '91) and into his lungs in July '91. He died at home on September 17.

As a tribute to Graham, I have included some of the articles written about him after he died. I have not re-typed them - just photocopied them as they came. I know that two members of the sea kayaking fraternity, friends of Graham's, want to write their own tributes in a future newsletter. Thanks, Paul and Grahame.

If ever any of the readers of the Sea Canoeist Newsletter are in our area, do call in and see us, and the beautiful estuary that Graham paddled and sailed on. I wish Craig Hornblow, and other paddlers who have offered to assist him, all the best with future issues of this newsletter.

Regards to you all, and a happy Christmas and safe 1992.
Jan Egarr, 50 Tahi Street, Mapua, NELSON.

Water safety legacy great

Many New Zealanders owe their lives to water safety expert Graham Egarr, who died at Mapua yesterday, Water Safety Council director Alan Muir said today.

Mr Egarr, 42, died at home after a long battle with cancer. His immense contribution to water sports and safety was recognised last January when he was awarded the Queen's Service Medal in the New Year's honours list.

Mr Egarr had been Water Safety Council education and research director for 12 years until the time of his death.

Mr Muir said Mr Egarr was responsible for many of the council's successful education awareness campaigns.

"His contribution to water safety is unique. He will leave a legacy of safety and education programmes built up over a lifetime of work in the field of water safety, on rivers and in the sea.

"A large number of people in this country who enjoy the water indirectly owe their lives to the education programmes he instituted.

"He will be very difficult for us to replace."

Mr Egarr was responsible for technical input into council safety campaigns, including the recent Footrot Flats promotion and television advertisements last summer.

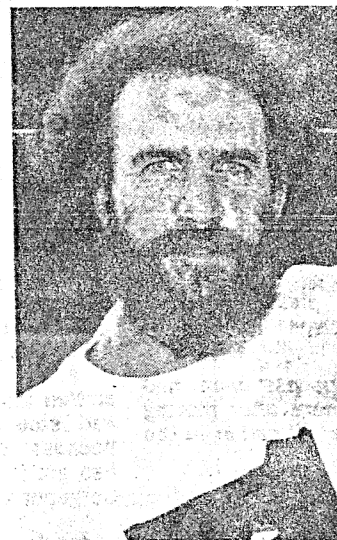
He was involved with numerous aquatic recreational groups for 30 years and was one of New Zealand's leading kayakers and canoeists in the late 1960s.

Mr Egarr was a long-serving official of the New Zealand Canoeing Association, editing its magazine from 1976 to 1985.

He wrote two books, including Whitewater River Running in New Zealand and North Island Rivers - a Guide for Canoeists and Rafters. Despite his illness, he was working on a South Island version of the guide.

A noted conservationist, Mr Egarr worked for the Maruia Society at one stage and played a leading role in having the Motu declared the first New Zealand wild and scenic river.

He and his wife Jan



Graham Egarr

surveyed more than 1000 rivers to produce the New Zealand Recreational River Survey, published by the National Water and Soil Conservation organisation.

Mr Egarr also took an active part in issues affecting the Mapua community.

He is survived by Jan and their three children.

TRIBUTE TO GRAHAM EGARR

MADE BY MURRAY HAXTON, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, NZWSC

AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF NEW ZEALAND WATER SAFETY COUNCIL INC.

22 SEPTEMBER 1991

We all know of the tragic death of Graham Egarr. He would not want us to weep or cry at this time.

He wasn't a large, tall or big man in build but the shadow he cast over all those with whom he worked was that of a giant as were the giant footprints he left behind as a monument and legend of his labours and achievements.

The gap or void he has left will be very hard to fill - if not impossible for the man that we had - one man working in many branches of outdoor recreation/sport and water safety. It will take up to 3, 4 or maybe more years to fill the shadow he has cast and plug the gap left by his sudden departure and last canoe ride up the mighty river to above.

One of his greatest attributes was his ability to listen to anybody - no matter how silly the idea. He would not shun you but after plenty of advice and help to anybody who asked for help or advice he would welcome you and assist.

To find somebody to achieve the same dedication and get the results that Graham achieved will be very hard.

At his Service which was held on the Estuary at Mapua where Graham worked and played with his wife and family - a beautiful spot out of Nelson where he had his home and office. The whole family enjoyed their life in and on the water as a dedicated family which they also shared with others.

I have spent many a Christmas in the area watching the water flow through the gap; helping to patrol the area with Surf IRB's; performing many rescues and passing many hours with Graham.

I have never seen the waters so calm there-normally only 20-30 minutes at the top or bottom of the tide which rises and falls 15 to 18 feet and can reach a speed of 18 knots at this point.

For the two hours we were there the water was calm - I think he still had his finger in the pie, controlling things!

In listening to his many achievements spoken by his friends, colleagues and workmates at this Service I learnt many more things than I ever dreamed possible that this man achieved in his short 42 years he shared with us.

Did you know that he had written over 500 articles and books covering water safety, river guide manuals on safety, mountain safety guides and canoeing of which he was the National Editor of this magazine. Books on sailing for beginners, evaluating river and running waters in both the North and South Islands - of which there were several volumes, the last of which is soon to be published, together with lots of articles for local and national papers are a few of the achievements.

As I said before it will take more than one person to fill this gap.

But this was only a small part of his life. His dedication to water safety in the 12 years he was with us and the results he achieved through the love for what he was doing would have taken more than one normal man many more years to achieve.

How many lives saved could be a direct result of his work and writings but this we will really never know.

Did you know that in his attack on Parliament and other sections of bureaucracy with his many letters trying to save our rivers so that we and our children and their children could enjoy our natural resources Alan was then working for Electricorp who were wanting to dam them.

His six year old son Tristan also spoke at the Funeral telling of his father's love to him and other members of the family and the great times they spent together in and on the water - this statement brought more than a tear to most - if not all eyes - I know I did.

His daughter Kate who is only 4 was talking to another young girl and said "My Father is in there" - this also caused a few watery eyes.

When the coffin was being carried away all the birds in the trees and seagulls started to sing as though by command.

I heard somebody say that he should have been put to his last resting place like to Vikings - put on a raft or canoe and sent to sea - but the remark was that he would like to know where his lifejacket was.

- A Final Canoe Trip -

19 September 1991

The rain stopped shortly before 11am, the tide was an hour from turning and the sea calm. Most of his friends and family were there to farewell him. There was no breeze, ideal conditions to start his last canoe trip that would finish on the Clarence river. His cedar strip canoe lay behind him, ready for the journey.

Graham Egarr touched the lives of a huge range of people. Beside his family and neighbours, representatives from Water Safety, canoeing and sea kayaking groups, rafting fraternity, Hillary Commission, conservation groups, boating clubs, tramping and mountain clubs, local Iwi were there to say farewell.

Kayak manufacturer Grahame Sissions summed it up with his parting words, "He was a visionary, always a jump ahead and ten years ahead of his time."

Sea kayaker Paul Caffyn described him as a talented all-rounder who lifted the public perception of the outdoors.

Each person saw something different in Graham and as the years slip by, his prolific works on water safety, canoeing, river conservation and the outdoors in general will be a reminder to us of what Graham Egarr did for the New Zealand Outdoors. And to Jan and the children, I know that many of the canoeing fraternity look forwards to dropping in and taking you and the children on a canoeing trip.

Graham found his peace on his final canoe trip and as we continue our different journey's on lakes, rivers and sea, his memory will be kept alive.

GRAHAM EGARR PROBABLY ACHIEVED MORE IN HIS LIMITED LIFETIME THAN MANY OF US WILL, OVER OUR OWN. HIS INTERESTS INCLUDED CANOEING, YACHTING, RAFTING; HE WAS AN AUTHOR, TEACHER, RESEARCHER, WRITER, AQUATIC SPECIALIST AND PERHAPS KNOWN TO A LESSER EXTENT, AS A CRAFTSMAN, BUILDER OF BOATS AND INTEREST IN POTTERY. HE HAS WRITTEN COUNTLESS ARTICLES FOR NEWSPAPER, MAGAZINES AND SPECIALIST PUBLICATIONS, AS WELL AS BOTH TV AND RADIO INTERVIEWS, ASSOCIATED WITH MANY WATER RECREATION AND WATER SAFETY TOPICS. HE HAS ALSO HAD BOOKS PUBLISHED.

MY ASSOCIATION WITH GRAHAM DATES BACK TO HIS APPOINTMENT AS THE FIRST PAID OFFICER OF THE WATER SAFETY COUNCIL. IN THOSE DAYS THE COUNCIL STAFF COMPRISED OF ONLY 2 FULLTIME OFFICERS, FUNDED BY THE DEPT. OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, NAMELY AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND A NATIONAL SECRETARY. RIGHT FROM THE START, I WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS WILLING, SUPPORTIVE NATURE, ALWAYS READY TO ASSIST VOLUNTEER WATER SAFETY PEOPLE WITH THEIR VARIOUS ACTIVITIES. I RECALL ASKING GRAHAM TO GIVE A TALK TO THE MARLBOROUGH RED CROSS RESCUE TEAM ON HYPOTHERMIA. GRAHAM DULY ARRIVED AT THE HALL, PULLED UP A CHAIR AND SAT AMONGST THE GROUP TO WHOM HE WAS TO SPEAK TO AND IN HIS VERY RELAXED WAY, GAVE HIS TALK TO A RESPONSIVE AUDIENCE. I COULD NOT HELP BUT NOTICE THAT HIS QUIET AND RELAXED MANNER, HELD THE ATTENTION OF ALL THOSE PRESENT. THIS WAS TRULY GRAHAM'S STYLE.

I GREW TO ADMIRE AND RESPECT HIS HONESTY AND LOYALTY, HE WAS A MAN OF HIGH PRINCIPLES WHICH HE STUCK TO EARNESTLY, SOMETIMES AT HIS PERSONAL COST. HE LOVED AND VALUED HIGHLY HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN AND MARRIAGE. PERHAPS HIS OTHER GREATEST LOVE WAS FOR THE OUTDOORS AND THE ENVIRONMENT, HIS AFFINITY WITH SEAS AND RIVERS ARE WELL KNOWN. HE WAS A CONSERVATIONIST AND VALUED HIGHLY WHAT NATURE HAD TO OFFER. GRAHAM'S LIFE CAN PERHAPS BE PARALLELED WITH THAT OF NATURE. LIKE THAT OF A FINE ROSE AMONGST THE THORNS, HE STOOD OUT AS SOMEONE WHO GAVE PLEASURE, WHOSE COMPANY WE COULD ENJOY, LOVE AND ADMIRE BUT LIKE THE ROSE AND A LOT OF THE GOOD THINGS IN LIFE, WE ONLY HAVE THEM FOR A SHORT TIME.

THIS MODEST MAN WILL BE MISSED BUT CERTAINLY NOT FORGOTTEN.

THE END OF AN ERA

Back in 1974 I built a kayak mould so that I could build myself a boat for my own use. I joined the Nelson Canoe Club and as an affiliated member of the New Zealand Canoe Association, I began to receive the NZCA Newsletter.

This newsletter was gripping stuff. The editor was obviously fearless of litigation and was prepared to take on anyone who contemplated doing 'simple' things like building hydro dams or denying access to rivers. I was amazed that my new sport had such a high profile administration with abundant funding to produce such an interesting newsletter.

I was more concerned with mortgages and sleepless nights from waking children to fully understand what this guy was really on about! After all, Muldoon was on television every second night telling us that we did need all the extra electricity and trout fishermen, buy buying a license, assumed, 'ownership' of the rivers.

I remember it was a spring day about 1977. I was having a cleanup under the house when this stranger wandered into my life. I was flattered that "The Editor" had taken the trouble to call around and make himself known. I had not been long since I designed my first kayak design, the Gap one, and my visitor was I think, the first mainstream kayaker to see its virtues without knocking it. He told me of his interest in boat building, both of kayaks and a keeler yacht.

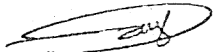
Some months later he arrived in my workshop with his father. They were both saturated to the skin. He had just sailed from New Plymouth (and got plastered) in the keeler. He didn't say too much but I think he had an increased respect for the sea after that trip. The keeler spent much time on the mooring. We met Jan when they finally moved to Nelson. Their kayaks were always being used.

A paddling trip with friends

on a rising in-flood Aorere river left him with changed emphasis on his future paddling. He lost two friends to the river and only his skills as a rockclimber ensured his own survival. His love of canoeing continued, but now looking for challenges in more tranquil situations.

There was along with the very present paddling a constant stream of publications mostly aimed at making the government aware that people did play on rivers and that recreation was a valid end use which could compete with dam building.

He had a family, and built a shed so that he could build an open canoe and also build the house. Actually, before the house was finished he had a fleet of open canoes coming out of the shed and the house.


Doug Barron

My friend Graham Eggar has always been ahead of his time. Some of the rivers - younger paddlers take for granted, are still there because he and some of his friends fought for their retention for recreation. His open minded approach to all kayaking matters has given others the confidence to have a go.

Graham's perception has at times been amazing. Like the time he referred to me as a 'crusty bastard'. He was of course 100% correct! But the time he got it wrong to our mutual continued mirth, was when he looked at the Southern Light plug and exclaimed "its too big".

Although we at times may have gone a year without seeing each other invariably we found our interests moving closer together. Graham's interest in life in all its facets made him an interesting person to have around. I could have stood a lot more of him.

Like the time he battled the Tasman Bay storm and that Aorere river bluff, we all know he gave this last battle his best shot.

He gave up his battle on the 17th September 1991.

On behalf of all his newsletter subscribers and others he has helped over the years, thanks.

Graham is survived by his wife and best friend, Jan and their three children.

Grahame Sisson.