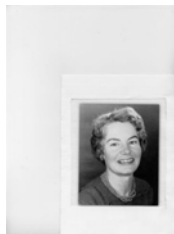


Obituary

Betty Jane Searle (nee Paul) 1915 – 2009

Contributed by Noeline Creighton and Beth H Gordon.



Betty Jane Paul was born in Wanganui on 25 October 1915, the eldest of five children. The Paul family lived in a substantial home on St. John's Hill with large gardens, a tennis court and a pony to ride.

Betty attended Clifton House, a small private school for girls and had no formal secondary schooling as there was no expectation that she would need any educational qualifications. The depression of the 1930s brought a reversal in fortunes for the Paul family and she faced the unexpected prospect of having to work. After a brief stint as a governess, Betty worked in a hair salon for several years.

During the Second World War she became a member of the Red Cross and trained as a Red Cross nurse aide. She was sent to Silverstream Hospital in Upper Hutt where she nursed a number of critically ill young men who had been prisoners of war. She then transferred to the Servicemens Hospital, Rotorua. After seeing the work of occupational therapists there, Betty decided on occupational therapy as her future career.

She commenced training aged 31 in 1946, passing with honours. She chose the psychiatric field, firstly at Tokanui, Te Awamutu and next at Seaview, Hokitika where she opened the department and joined the West Coast Alpine Club (deer stalking, mountain climbing and skiing). A move to Auckland enabled her to work at the Auckland Mental Hospital and with the exception of two years overseas she stayed with the Hospital until her retirement.

Betty was an active member of NZAOT, being the New Zealand delegate to WFOT in 1951. In 1964 she was appointed to the Occupational Therapy Board for a two year term and was reappointed for a further three terms. She was also a strong supporter of the Public Service Association.

Betty married Colin Searle on 14 December 1956. They were keen members of the Auckland Tramping Club and became active members of the New Zealand Ornithological Society. They built a weekend house together on Waiheke Island and travelled extensively around Australia and the Pacific.

At this time Betty was Charge Occupational Therapist at the Auckland Mental Hospital where all 2nd Year student groups spent six months on clinical placement under her supervision. During her time, the staff increased from two to nineteen, and she introduced

many new approaches and services to clinical practice - domestic rehabilitation, industrial therapy and art therapy. Her staff was involved with new therapies including ECT, Insulin treatment, new drugs and emerging psychotherapies. Of special note was her involvement with Dr West's drama therapy and she kept an album of all fourteen plays.

Betty was dedicated to the welfare and wellbeing of all patients and demonstrated her commitment by organising evening and weekend social activities. She was an exemplary role model to students, hospital staff and management.

In her retirement Betty was actively involved in the local community and in particular she took great delight in assisting and supporting the development of the Miranda Shorebird Centre, Firth of Thames. Widowed in 1999 she stayed on in Thames, gaining great pleasure from her weaving and tapestry, and exhibiting with the local weaving society.

She passed away peacefully on 4 October 2009 shortly before her 94th birthday.