



Jessie Christine Anderson

October 1945 – November 2009

This tribute to Jessie was written by her twin sister, Margaret, and shares personal as well as professional highlights of Jessie's life.



Jessie was born the middle child in a family of five. She was the elder of twins, being born 10 minutes ahead of me.

Our parents were Jessie Henson, of Hawera, and John Anderson, from the west highlands of Scotland.

On Mum's side we are descended from the Southern Iwi of Kai Tahu, Kati Mamoe and Waitaha, as well as Scots and English settlers. On our first day at school, Jessie, who was left-handed, was smacked across the knuckles by the teacher. I hit the teacher and we ran away and went home

I was angry that the teacher had hit "my Jessie" but she was indignant that we had been to school and had not learnt anything, and so we refused to go back.

As children growing up in Dunedin, Jessie and I were cheeky kids. One neighbour said to us "for two pins I will tell your mother", to which Jessie, perched on the gate, replied, "well, I'm not giving you any pins so you can go away". That neighbour's son was later to be one of Jessie's PhD research colleagues.

By the time we were at High School in Nelson, Jessie's academic ability was obvious, even though we had to do some senior science classes by correspondence. We went back to Dunedin to attend Otago University, where Jessie flew into Medical School with good grades all round, while I was invited to repeat Physics 101 with a seat reserved for me in the front row. This difference came to be known as the Ant (Jessie) and the Grasshopper (me).

Jessie graduated MBChB from Otago University in 1969, then went as a House Surgeon to Taranaki Base Hospital in New Plymouth for 2 years. After returning to Dunedin, she worked as a Medical Registrar in Hypertension (1972), and then as a Registrar in Anaesthetics (1973-74). Following this, Jessie worked as a Registrar/Medical Officer at A&E in Dunedin Hospital from 1975 to 1977. Some of this work was part-time and Jessie went back to studies, completing a BA in Philosophy at Otago University in 1976.

From 1977 onwards Jessie did her training in Psychiatry, specialising in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, achieving membership of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists in 1982 and Fellowship of the College in 1984.

From late 1982 to late 1985 Jessie was awarded a Medical Research Council Fellowship and carried out a research project on the epidemiology of childhood

psychiatric disorders at the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit.

She was awarded a PhD from Otago University in 1989 for this research. One of her supervisors for the PhD, Professor John Werry, says that Jessie broke new ground in this research by personally carrying out a comprehensive psychiatric assessment on all of the more than 800 children in the study, rather than having others conduct interviews or use a questionnaire.

He describes her PhD dissertation as "a classic". The research project was widely recognised internationally and Jessie wrote many academic papers and contributed chapters to major textbooks based on this work. Many of her later students and Registrars were somewhat in awe of Jessie before they even met her, based on this research.

Jessie then moved back to clinical work, first in Dunedin in a joint clinical/academic appointment (1985–1994) where she did general teaching of Behavioural Science to undergraduate medical students as well as teaching and supervision of Post Graduate Trainees in Psychiatry. During this time Jessie also served on the Dunedin Child Protection Team and on the Otago Area Health Board Ethics Committee.

From May to November 1992, Jessie was Visiting Professor in Child Psychiatry at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. She participated in ongoing research projects and was involved in the design of a new study of Child Abuse amongst Native American children in Ontario.

From 1995 to 2004 Jessie was Consultant Child Psychiatrist at Capital and Coast Health, Wellington, where she was clinically responsible for the Porirua and Kapiti areas and for the Kaupapa Māori Team, based at Te Whare Marie in Porirua. During this time she also travelled on a regular basis to Greymouth to provide clinical services for the West Coast. She was also active on the Māori Expert Panel for the Mental Health Commission, a Board Member for Te Rau Matatini (Māori workforce development) and on the Board of the Werry Centre at Auckland University.

Jessie moved to Blenheim in 2004 and continued her clinical consultancy until she retired with ill health in 2008.

Jessie was seen by her peers as a warm and caring clinician who was passionate in her advocacy for children, but with a bit of a reputation for not suffering fools gladly, and expecting the highest standards of clinical work from her trainees.

Her interests included skiing, tramping, gardening and lately art, especially watercolour painting. Another passion was travel and I finally got Jessie to take longer holidays and sing in the sun for a while in places like China, Mongolia, Greece, Alaska and Iceland.

Jessie passed away peacefully in her sleep on 21 November 2009 after a return of breast cancer. She is survived by a brother, Atholl Anderson, and three sisters: Jane Muru, Mary Butler and Margaret Anderson

Margaret Anderson (Jessie's twin sister) wrote this obituary.