



Bruce Mason updated his status.
3 May 2017 ·

Kenneth David Mason
30 August 1945 - 17 April 2017
Bruce's Eulogy

Ken was born in Dunedin in 1945. He was the first of three Post-WW2 baby-boomers. I followed four years later, then Peter, as an apparent after-thought, six years later.

Ken had a very difficult breech birth - the GP gave up on deliveries after that. [A breech birth occurs when a baby is born bottom first instead of head first. There is probably something deep and meaningful in such an arrival].

Ken also contracted the 'H Bug' infection from returning service men. [The 'H', or 'Hospital Bug', a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* characteristic of the epidemic, was resistant to the most commonly used antibiotics]. He spent six months in Karitane Hospital.

He had a hole in the head, but never revealed where. He wore surgical boots. He had poor eye sight. He was different. He was not well placed to survive inevitable playground savagery. I remember seeing him regularly running home from school bruised and bloodied. That had a lasting impression on both of us - bullies must be stood up to, and we have throughout our lives.

There was strong influence from our parents; Marjorie from her father's mastery of horticulture and the Burt family history of wandering the local hills on Sunday excursions, and David for a strong community focus as a sportsman in providing facilities for tennis in particular. The notion of accumulating personal wealth is not in the Mason DNA. Community service is.

As youngsters we holidayed at Peel Forest with other families. One time, while Ken and I were out exploring the forest, Peter went missing. A do-it-yourself SAR operation involving all campers scoured the forest and the nearby Rangitata River but with no success. Parental desperation level was high. Then Peter emerged from under his camp stretcher, having had a good sleep.

At the Dansey Pass Camp, on the Duntroon side of the Pass, Ken and I climbed our first mountain - Ben Lomond. The whole camp turned out as

the explorers crossed the river and climbed the steep slope opposite. We wondered what the fuss was about. The heroes' welcome on our return to camp must have had an influence on us, however we were never treated as heroes hereafter. It wasn't in our interests to do so, usually down-playing our exploits before Worrying Mother.

By age seven Ken was profoundly influenced by Dr Lance Richdale who took nature studies at St Clair Primary School. Richdale was the saviour of the Royal Albatross at Taiaroa Head. Ken was taken to poke around in rock pools and elsewhere near St Clair.

[Contribution by Peter: Ken had a variety of creepy-crawlies at home. There were the crabs and lobsters found scuttling around the skirting boards in the morning and spiders everywhere. There was a designated nursery bush in the back garden for spiders - individually numbered for 'scientific' study. The study often extended indoors. Pride of place was reserved for Bertie who's web sat directly overhead Mothers Place on the sofa. By fear of insurrection Mother was deterred from dusting Bertie aside. Feeding was at news time on the telly, with Mother well-installed. Bertie was summoned by a gentle blow on his web and a juicy fly was placed, entombed, then dispatched, accompanied by chomp-by-chomp commentary by Ken].

Tonga Park at the rear of 181 Surrey Street featured strongly in our childhoods. We could get away with most indiscretions out of sight of Mother-At-The-Kitchen-Window. Ken was into volcanoes big time. Adjoining Queens High had not been built then. Earthy market gardens and sand provided a perfect medium for building large coned volcanoes, with a central crater leading down to the fire box. The poor neighbours had to frequently put up with sooty ash deposits over their washing.

Kite flying reached unsurpassed levels of technical innovation; sometimes hundreds of feet of cord would be out when the inevitable happened. We kept well out of sight when the authorities arrived to clear the tangles around their power lines. When we got our first crampons we stomped around Tonga Park under the cover of darkness. Unfortunately a cricket pitch received unwanted 'aeration'. The trunks of the large plane trees in the park were prime for front-pointing.

In 1963-64 we discovered THE GREAT OUTDOORS. We were in awe of the hairy-legged members of the Otago Tramping Club, including the women, and their apparent ease in traversing broken country. There was a whole Another World to be found outside the confines of Dunedin.

Ken did his first serious tramp in 1963. This was a Kings High School party to George Sound, led by Jim Strang. Quite ambitious for school kids. All survived and many went on to greater things.

The make-or-break trip for Ken and me was the OTC 1964 Christmas Beansburn-Rockburn circuit, west of the Dart Valley. Eleven of the twelve days were wet. All our gear including sleeping bags became sodden. I remember trying to lie still in my bag, at the aptly-named Cow Saddle, so as not to disturb the slightly warm water next to my body. We had a near-

drowning, and our leader Henry Stoddart fell over a bluff in the Rockburn Gorge. A week later someone died in the Rockburn. All character-building. This led to decades of ambitious tramps throughout the South Island and the Otago high country in particular. Ken has documented over 600 trips. His forte was multi-week transalpine trips in Charlie Douglas country - the northern Olivines especially.

His involvement with the OTC, latter to become the OTMC, led to positions as Chief Guide and Life Member. He became the FMC representative on the Otago Walkways Committee. He saw through the gazettal of the Skyline and Silverpeak Walkways. There was a unofficial collaboration between me, as a Lands and Survey ranger on the inside, and Ken on the outside. We used walkways as the means of preventing skyline communication installations, forestry, and roading and in obtaining protection through the setting aside and proper management of public reserves. In this we were largely successful. This required decades of forceful effort by Ken, ensuring that officials did their jobs, and censoring them when they didn't.

Ken's first employment was with the Geology Department of the University of Otago as photographer, technician, and field assistant. The former was, in the pre-digital era, using large format cameras with processing in a poorly ventilated darkroom. I saw some of his published works - sections of rock and fossil - that were as much works of art as of record.

His outdoor skills led to him accompanying senior students and staff on expeditions to the west Otago alps and Fiordland. This was exploratory geological mapping of some of the roughest country on the Planet. His job, in addition to being general dogsbody, was to prevent researchers killing themselves in their single-minded quest for rock samples. Invariably the best rock exposure was where there was least vegetation, which meant scrambling up waterfalls hundreds of feet high, hanging on for dear life to whatever there was in the form of fern and vine. Ken invariably got the rough end of the tape measure. The geologist was able to scramble around obstacles to his next site. Ken had to keep the tape straight irrespective of cascading water and obstacle. In Doubtful Sound Ken was tasked with driving a small plywood runabout and holding the bow against cliffs so the geologist could chip off rock samples. This usually happened irrespective of weather, waves, and swell. The University didn't supply life jackets!

A change of direction saw Ken off to Teachers College. There was a call for older males to take up the profession. After graduation he was posted to a variety of primary and intermediate schools around Dunedin, however he ended up permanently relief teaching. The recruitment policy for males was reversed. He could not get a permanent position and was frustrated by being on daily call. I saw some of his teaching materials and they appeared excellent, designed to get the attention of pupils. I gather that Ken was good at teaching. What a waste.

A season down on The Ice as a snow craft instructor and field assistant saw Ken chasing and tagging seals. This was a potentially hazardous sport as, in

addition to shitting and snotting on their pursuers, they showed inclination to bite more than their natural diets. Ken managed to visit all the historic hut sites on Ross Island and he got a good look at the wildlife.

On the ending of permanent employment Ken increasingly applied his green fingers to native forest restoration in the greater Dunedin area. I have had the recent honour of delving through his archives. These provide a meticulous record of ecological restoration, on both a minor and major scale. He contributed to evolving restoration thinking nationally. His approach was founded on observation of what was present, and on what was present before. Site-specific recognition of micro climates and application of experience resulted in high success rates in ecosystem re-establishment. Once a forest structure was established Ken launched into pest control, so enabling some bird relocations. He was creating mini mainland islands before the Orokoni Sanctuary was conceived. It is fervently hoped that his projects will continue in his absence.

Moore's Bush in the Leith Valley was Ken's first major project, followed by Tomahawk Lagoons and Quarantine Island, made possible by leading hundreds of young volunteers on weed control, fencing, planting and tending until forest structures were re-established. Ken's greatest legacy is the introduction of hundreds of young people, and parents, to practical nature protection. Many of the participants in the groups he established, the Dunedin Kiwi Conservation Club, Dunedin Teen Greens, and Students for Environment Action, have become leaders in the conservation movement. They have been influenced by Ken's example and his persistence in achieving his goals.

Ken was shaped by parental influence and his early contact with nature. He outgrew his childhood physical limitations and was no doubt the stronger for it. He was independent in thought and observation. He was persistent and sociable.

His lasting, tangible legacy are the many enhanced natural environments in the greater Dunedin area and the installing of his love of the outdoors in hundreds of young people, including his sons Brett and Mark.

Ken we are proud of you.

Tribute by sons Brett and Mark

Ken was a dad of adventures and taking us places less visited. Camping out beside the old graveyard on Quarantine Island. Exploring the bush in the Lenz Reserve. Mountain biking the rail trail before it was finished. It seemed we were lucky to have so many great adventures. He liked to remind us of a promise young Brett made to him one day to carry him to the top of the Rock and Pillar Range in return for doing the same.

For many of our trips we were also able to bring our friends along, where they too got to know his humour and “dad jokes”. Some of them may have probably found him funnier than we did.

We both also enjoyed the freedom we had to explore and get muddy - like donning mini boiler suits and playing in the creeks and paddocks. Or in a very over engineered tree house. We are pretty sure he was also the most popular parent on school camps.

We were also very lucky to have a wide range of pets. From bugs to fantails and everything in between even if it wasn't a good idea. And of course “spunky” the lamb. Later on dad got to enjoy having even more pets of his own with the building of the farm park.

Dancing. Dancing did not come naturally to Ken but we really admire that he stuck with it and it became a new passion. Even if we were never keen to join him on the dance floor - apart from the time he rescued Brett and Kirsty on the dance floor at their wedding. He described dancing as a great escape from other commitments - likening it to how someone else might feel escaping down to the pub.

More recently, Dad took delight in picking off some big travel goals. Ticking off Iceland - even if he had to go through boring London to get there. And then another long term goal - the Chatham Islands. The list of places next on his list were just as impressive both near and far from home. Among his many forward thinking plans was to reconnect with old friends who he appreciated so much.

Dad has left both of us with a love of the outdoors.

In recent years we have both enjoyed trips with dad into the hills together including a well planned exploration of the gold mining history at Skippers. Mark has enjoyed returning with Ken to his old stomping grounds. His route finding experience made hard terrain easy; getting further afield and enabling more trip time to be spent in amazing places. His skills and motivational attitude he passed on will continue to get us outdoors. Along with many inspiring photos and a written list of over 700 trips to mine for ideas.

We are both very proud of how Ken lived his life and the passion he showed.

In loving memory of
Kenneth David Mason



Celebrating the life of

Ken

held in

Gillions Chapel, 407 Hillside Road, Dunedin

21 April 2017

11.00 am

Followed by a private cremation

OFFICIATING

Tracey Crampton Smith

WELCOME

EULOGY

Bruce

Peter

TRIBUTES

Brett and Mark

Open time for sharing

SILENT TIME OF REFLECTION

COMMITTAL

FAREWELL MUSIC

"My Way" Frank Sinatra

Ghost Mentor

"To me a mentor doesn't have to be living within your lifetime. Charlie Douglas, the great Victorian era South Westland explorer was one of these. On remoter trips, we frequently spoke of him as if we were about to meet around the next bend. When held up in rain between flooded rivers his quote 'Oh I am indeed miserable' came to the fore.

My 1885 Mt Cook in the Arawata was Charlie's prime surveying objective. Fog cheated us of the summit in 1972. We found our way back by using the blue light of ice axe shaft holes. I

wondered if Charlie's steps cut by billhook (short slasher) could have done the same for him."

Ken Mason 2017

Charlie Douglas' theories on conservation were far ahead of his time, and were stimulated, like Ken's, by his own independence of observation. "Fools say that knowledge can only be acquired from books & men."

Charles Douglas, South Westland explorer, philosopher and naturalist)



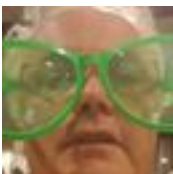
Ken's family thank you all for your love and support, which is greatly appreciated and would be pleased if you could sign the Memorial Cards to record your presence here today.

Donations to Save The Otago Peninsula would be welcomed and may be left in the collection box located in the foyer.

After the service you are invited to meet the family for refreshments in the adjacent lounge.



John Begg Thanks Bruce for posting the above tributes. I enjoyed the time I spent with Ken, at otmc and the geology dept. Had a lot of fun times. Appreciated his knowledge and humour.



Peter McKellar Great eulogy **Bruce**. Reminded me even more of Ken as I read it. One regret I have is that I didn't get a chance to reprimand him about the photo of me, taken in 1973, that still appears online in the

Geology Dept archives. I know that without Ken's rare skills for meticulous recording then those photos would no longer exist.



Mark Edwin Ayre Thanks Bruce so well written. RIP



Sue Maturin Thanks for posting Bruce - We were down in the Lenz Reserve walking Ken's track last weekend, just one of his many legacies, and its great that his sons have inherited his love and passion for the outdoors.



Bob McKerrow I have fond memories of Ken when I joined the OTC at 16. It seems he was an excellent Dad and a loyal brother, and a conservationist at heart. R.I.P Ken.

[Manage](#)



Bruce McKinlay Hi Bruce, Great Eulogy. the trip Ken you and I did with other through Arthurs Pass was a great time together.

[Manage](#)



John Bellamy Ken took me under his wing when, as a sixteen year old beginner in the Otago Tramping Club. (The minimum age for joining was supposed to be seventeen, but, oh well!) Our first solo trip was to the top of swampy summit to view the sundew plants and just simply enjoy the terrain up there. I also remember the boiler plate frost on one occasion when we tramped up Leith Valley to access the silver peaks on my early adventures into that superb local hinterland. Not many of us had cars in those days so it always meant going the extra mile when we wanted to get anywhere. It never seemed to be too much trouble. In those days we generally started our tramping days by having what was called an Adventure Leadership Course. Based in the Scout Camp at Whare Flat. Ken and Les Cuthbertson would instruct at river crossing, and Brian Freeman would teach how to light fires in the pouring rain. All great fun and learning! Later that year I was invited by Ian James to join Athol Anderson, Dick Brazier and Bruce and Ken on an epic Christmas trip into the then relatively unexplored territory up and behind the Young Valley.

Up and over Governors Pass, into the Okuru, (where Bruce lost all our plates and cutlery down a waterfall on the second day in!) over Cow Saddle and down into the Burke. Fifteen wonderful days, though we had to quarantine Ken and Bruce into their own tent at night because we couldn't get to sleep because of their arguing! Haha! It was a great trip and totally hooked me into the mountains for many years.

On one of our frequent day trips in those early days, I remember being impressed with the quality of Kens photography taken on what was then a very new Asahi Pentax camera.



Rob Archibald Thanks Bruce for posting the eulogy. Although we only had a few tramping trips together I salute his achievements. Sorry to read of his passing.



David Still Great memories of Ken. Thanks Bruce for passing on his Eulogy.
[Manage](#)



Terry Fitzgibbon Wonderful tributes, Bruce. Condolences to you and the rest of your whanau. Thanks for posting this thoughtful and fitting eulogy.
[Manage](#)



Mike Britton Sorry to hear. Ken was always dedicated to nature and to his community



Sophie Allen He was a great force of inspiration for Students for Environmental Action - sorry to hear he has passed away.