

# Guide loved sharing her mountain skills

Vida Lucock sought no reward or honour for her work promoting mountain safety, so a small ruse was necessary to ensure she received recognition.

The Christchurch woman was asked to attend a Duke of Edinburgh Award adventure camp near Lake Rotoiti, to help with the "housework". Great was her surprise when she arrived and a special award for her service to the organisation was announced, and the Duke himself was there to hand it to her.

The award recognised many years of voluntary work as guide, instructor, cook and cleaner, in which Lucock had familiarised a wide range of groups with the mountains and bush and inspired a love of the natural environment.

"She never asked for anything," son Tim says. "She just loved doing it. She always said she wanted to help people see why this is God's Own Country."

Lucock, described by New Zealand Mountain Safety Council chairman Ross Meder as "a pivotal member of the Canterbury branch through its early years", died recently. She was 90.

She was born Dorothy Davida Hopkirk, but was always known as Vida.

Her early life in Wellington was dominated by sport, befitting the daughter of a physical education teacher.

She excelled in tennis, cricket, softball and bowls and "was nuts about sport," Tim says.

She worked briefly as a shorthand typist. Then, on a visit to the South Island with her sister, she fell in love with the mountains and with London-born Christchurch hairdresser George Lucock about the same time. She was 19 when she and George married.

He introduced her to his Presbyterian Harriers Club, which led to her catering for the members on an annual run ending at her home. She introduced him to the mountains, which he came to love. The couple made many tramps together, especially around Arthur's Pass, where they bought a bach.

She drew her husband out of his city house to a large section at McCormacks Bay, which was then a rural location. There she established and organised a



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market garden, which became a family venture with their six children.

Lucock learned mountaineering from some well-known climbers and then set out to share her skills and knowledge with as many people as she could.

She helped form the Mountain Safety Council and acted as an instructor for it. She instructed also with Girl Guides and Rangers. Her teaching of outdoor skills and safety was always on a voluntary basis.

She established the first Over-40s Tramping Club. She helped with the Arthur's Pass Outdoor Education Centre and briefly ran it.

Hundreds of people doing courses with these organisations learned skills such as snow survival, river crossing and first aid from Lucock.

About as many enjoyed the meals she willingly provided at all hours.

She kept this work up until her husband became ill and she stayed at home to nurse him. He died in 1987.

Meder says Lucock was eager to help

young people see the many opportunities available for them, and their families, in the mountains. She was determined that the safety message should be conveyed to them, so they would enjoy what they did and come back for more.

"She held the ideals of the Mountain Safety Council highly, in being as safe a practitioner as an instructor," Meder says.

Lucock claimed a moa sighting, while guiding an Over-40s party through the Heaphy Track in the early 1980s. Her husband, whose health was failing, had become breathless and they stopped to rest, while the others carried on. As they sat quietly, Lucock looked up a gully and saw a small moa, a bird long believed to be extinct.

Tim says she described it as "a bit bigger than a weka".

"She was absolutely definite," he says. She always insisted it was a moa. She was never one to lie or joke about such a thing.

A decade later, ex-British SAS soldier Paddy Sweeney and two climbing mates claimed a moa sighting in the Craigieburn Range, near Arthur's Pass.

Lucock and Sweeney were good friends. She helped set up and run his outdoor education centre at Arthur's Pass, which he later sold.

Lucock lived in Redcliffs, but kept an eye on the family market garden. Son Bill was heavily involved in running the venture and shared his mother's love of the mountains and bush.

His death two years ago "really knocked" her, Tim says. She seemed to decline from that point.

Tim says his mother's greatest reward was seeing others discover the beauty of their country and knowing they were safe doing it.

MIKE CREAM

■ Dorothy Davida Lucock, born Wellington, March 25, 1920; died Christchurch, January 14, 2011. Pre-deceased by husband George, son Bill and one grandchild; survived by sons David, Ron and Tim, daughters Carol and Sally, 16 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.