



Big man, big contribution

by Wynsley Wrigley

MOURNERS farewellled late All Black great Richard White on Saturday, just as the present generation of Poverty Bay club footballers were kicking off the new rugby season with the traditional "Tiny" White opening day.

It was a timely indication that the legacy and mana of the 86-year-old All Black No. 511 would live on.

Those paying their respects were reminded that Tiny White was not just an All Black legend.

He was a former Gisborne mayor, hospital board chairman, J Force veteran, farmer, justice of the peace, had long been active in the Queen Elizabeth 2 Trust and Order of St John, had been awarded the QSO and was a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather.

Long-time friend Reverend Ted Dashfield, whose friendship with Mr White dated back to the army in 1946, said it was not often one sat in the

presence of greatness.

He remembered seeing Mr White as they sailed to Japan.

"I thought Tarzan was on board."

Reverend Dashfield, from Wairarapa, quoted an All Black great from his own province, Brian Lochore, who described Mr White as his boyhood hero.

"Tiny White was a big guy," said Mr Lochore.

"He got the business done."

Reverend Dashfield said Mr White was a fit, durable and intelligent footballer whose greatest enjoyment on the field was to outwit an opponent.

The lock would plan ahead from his locking position in the tight.

The former schoolboy centre had athleticism as well as size and power, and was equally outstanding in loose play.

Toti Tuhaka, patron of the Korea-

‘Tiny White was a big guy. He got the business done’

South East Asia Association, said he asked Mr White in hospital what he thought was his greatest contribution to society.

"My family," Mr White said.

"Every time someone looks at one of them, they will be looking at me or be reminded of me."

Mr Tuhaka described Mr White as "one of the most gracious human beings I have ever had the privilege to meet".

Mr White's youngest son Chris, said his father had contributed much to public life because — in his own words — "everyone gets to do their own bit".

He had taken his father to the Rugby World Cup last year. At 1.30am, he had been trying catch a taxi — but his father didn't want to go home

"He was on fire."

Mr White, in battling his illness, had "fought the good fight" while the staff at

Gisborne Hospital's Ward 8 were "stars".

His father's influence had shown how to be independent, to give life "a good shot" and to be genuine.

Mr White's second-oldest child, Anne, said his grandchildren had been taught to live their life the best way they could.

Mourners reflected Mr White's contribution to public and sporting life in Gisborne and included Mayor Meng Foon, Tairāwhiti District Health chairman David Scott, former TDH chairwoman Ingrid Collins (wife of the late Poverty Bay All Black John Collins), East Coast All Black Andy Jefferd, Poverty Bay All Black Ian Kirkpatrick, Poverty Bay Rugby Football Union chairman Malcolm Maclean, others from the PBRFU and Mr White's own club HSOB, a large contingent of St John Ambulance personnel and many former servicemen.

The funeral concluded with the Last Post and Reveille.

Pictures by Dave Thomas



Death of a legend

All Black great, former mayor dies at 86

by Iain and John Gillies

ALL Black, mayor, hospital board chairman . . . Richard "Tiny" White served his country and community most of his life.

He died in Gisborne on Saturday, his family at his side. He was 86.

A mainstay of All Black rugby teams from 1949 to 1956, Richard White was a selector's dream. Fit, durable and intelligent, he had the ability to dominate the lineout and shine in tight or open play.

But his contribution to his community extended far beyond rugby.

Richard White was Mayor of Gisborne for six years and a member of Cook Hospital Board for 24, the last six as chairman.

He was active in the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, which made covenants with the owners of areas of natural beauty or significance in flora or fauna, and served the Order of St John, among about 50 voluntary organisations or

committees. In 1998 he was made a Companion of the Queen's Service Order (QSO) for public service.

Mr White upheld a rich family tradition of public service. A great uncle, James Woodbine Johnson, was Poverty Bay's first representative on the Auckland Provincial Council and the first chairman of Cook County Council. Another great-uncle, Bill Sherratt, chaired Cook Hospital Board, served on Gisborne Harbour Board and was mayor for a term. Mr White's father, Herbert White, was an original member of Poverty Bay Catchment Board.

The wider New Zealand public will remember Richard White as one of the great All Black forwards — a peerless lineout jumper, a tiger for work all over the field and an astute reader of the game.

He was a giant among men who were massive for their time, but his greatest satisfaction in rugby came from outwitting the opposition.

He found a way to leave the scrum



HONOURED: Richard "Tiny" White belatedly receives his All Black cap at a function in Gisborne last year, 55 years after his All Black career ended. The New Zealand Rugby Union dropped the awarding of caps after World War 2 but revived it in 2012.

File picture by Paul Rickard





AS HE IS REMEMBERED: The lock forward regarded as one of the greatest of All Blacks does what he is best known for — securing lineout ball. Tiny White claims another lineout for the North Island in a 1950s era inter-island match.

File picture

before the players outside him so that he could better hunt down the ball. As he went into set pieces he was planning what to do if he won the ball, and assessing what the opposition would do if they won it.

Nothing was more humbling in rugby than to be outwitted, he said.

“My greatest love in playing the game was to outwit the opposition.”

He played in every test of the landmark 1956 home series against South Africa. New Zealand won the series 3-1 to claim the unofficial world rugby crown, but the victory took a heavy physical toll.

After the third test, he could not feel his left hand properly and an X-ray showed he had a vertebra in his neck out of position. It appeared to have been like that for many years, held in place by his neck muscles, so he elected to play in the fourth test.

Then in the first minute of the game he was kicked in the kidney so hard he passed blood in his urine for the next two weeks. The pain eased as the game

progressed but a kick to the base of his spine just before the end of the match forced him to leave the field for the only time in his test career.

With the series won, Mr White returned to a hero's welcome as people lined Gladstone Road and Peel Street to show their appreciation.

By then, at the age of 31, with a growing family and a farm to look after, he had decided to retire. It was the end of an era. He played 55 games for the All Blacks, 23 of them tests, and scored 11 tries. In that time, he never missed a test.

On the 1953-54 tour of Britain and France he played more often than any other All Black — 30 of the 36 matches — and his form led rugby commentator Winston McCarthy to write: “‘Tiny’ White will go down in rugby history alongside Charles Seeling and Maurice Brownlie as the best New Zealand has produced. Some of his performances were amazing . . . he looked as though he could play in 30 more matches.”

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'Too big' to be selected as a kid

12/3/2012

FROM PAGE 1

In his book, *On With the Game*, New Zealand selector Norman McKenzie wrote: "Richard White is the greatest lock forward I have ever seen. He had the ability to shine in the lineout, to shine in the tight work, and to shine in the open. What more can you ask of a lock?"

Richard Alexander White was born in Gisborne on June 11, 1925. His rugby career began at Ngatapa Primary School as a seven-year-old, and he recalled decades later an early setback.

"I was in Standard 6 at Ngatapa and was picked to play in trials to select a Poverty Bay team to play Hawke's Bay.

"If ever I had a disappointment in life, it was on that day. I was told I had played well but could not be picked because I was too big.

"I went home with tears pouring down my face. My father said, 'Don't panic — just prove to the world at some stage that you can play rugby'."

He attended Gisborne High School and Feilding Agricultural College, where he was given the nickname "Tiny".

Back in Gisborne he joined the High School Old Boys club but did not stay long. From 1946 to 1948 he served with the occupation force in Japan and played for New Zealand Services teams.

In Gisborne again in 1949, he had only recently been selected for Poverty Bay when Norm McKenzie heard of his jumping ability and travelled from Napier to see him. Until the All Black trial at Levin that year, Richard White knew little about lock play. In senior rugby he had been primarily a loose forward and at high school he had turned out as a wing three-quarter and centre. Nevertheless, he made the All Black team to play Australia and Norm

could have a rest but I would still have to run home."

Training in town twice a week was tough and so were the trainers. One of them, Neil "Chopper" Summersby, reckoned the Poverty Bay players of the 1950s needed toughening up.

"He made us run into the corrugated-iron wall of the Old Boys shed that used to be on the Oval," Mr White recalled.

"I was usually one of the first to hit the wall because I did a lot of fitness work — but those who hit the wall first had to take the force of those who were a bit slower."

Mr White's prodigious leaping ability was backed up by hours of practice. On the 1953-54 tour of Britain and France, wingers Ron Jarden and Morrie Dixon practised throwing the ball so that by the time it hit the lineout it was level with the goalpost bar. That was well within the reach of Mr White, who —

from a standing jump — could clap his hands above the bar. From the top of his jump he would fire the ball back to the halfback, or even the first five-eighth.

At full fitness, Mr White weighed 17 stone 2 pounds on his frame of just under 6 feet 3 inches. He dropped to just under 16st when he stopped playing.

He did not want to be "one of those sportsmen who retire and quickly get out of condition", and well into his 80s he was still cycling around Gisborne to keep fit.

In 1976, he had a major setback. While working on his farm at Waimiro in the Waimata Valley north of Gisborne, the tractor he was driving rolled down a hill and nearly killed him.

"I smashed both legs and scalped myself," he said.

"Bill Shiach spent four hours sewing me up, and I was in a wheelchair for four months."



ELECTION SUCCESS: Richard White, wife Elsie and supporters celebrate his election as mayor in 1977. Mr White served two terms. Earlier, Mr White had served six years as chairman of the Cook Hospital board.





Tiny White is pictured last year with Poverty Bay's other All Black great Ian Kirkpatrick taking part in Gisborne's Project Crimson, where trees were planted in honour of the district's All Blacks and to highlight the Rugby World Cup. Schoolboy footballers (from left) Daniel Stewart, Zach Moroney and Jacque Moroney, enjoy time with the district's two best-known All Blacks.

McKenzie later said that Richard White was the cheapest All Black he had found, at eight shillings and 11 pence — the price of the return rail ticket.

Richard White's talent and durability were hard-won. He was running 100 miles a week years before Arthur Lydiard's training methods for athletes became widely known.

"Your body had to be supple enough to train for the man-to-man stuff," he said.

"In other words, you got fit to train."

"I lived at Ngatapa and did all my running out and back, so that if the run was tough and I felt like stopping, I

The effect of his injuries forced him and wife Elsie to move into town, and after six months someone persuaded him to run for the mayoralty. He was mayor for two terms, from 1977 to 1983. During this time, the City Council commissioned two major reports — one on sewerage and the other on water.

As chairman of the hospital board for the six years to 1980, he saw plans for a new hospital come to the brink of fruition.

Mr White is survived by his wife Elsie, sons Michael, David and Chris, and daughters Anne and Kerry.

WHITE, Richard Alexander (Tiny) OSO JP. — Returned Serviceman No 643677 1 Force. On 10 March 2012 peacefully at Gisborne Hospital. Aged 86 years. Much loved husband of Elsie. Dearly loved Dad of Michael and Hilary (Sheffield, UK), Anne and Terry (Auckland), Kerry (Auckland), Dave and Di (Hamilton), Chris and Al (Hamilton). Treasured grandfather of Stacey and Logan (Henley, UK), Emma (Caribbean), Alex and Angela (Auckland), Ben (Gisborne), Rebecca (Hamilton), Tom (Hamilton); Zoë, Gabi, and Katie (Hamilton).

A celebration of Tiny's life will be held in Holy Trinity Church, Derby Street at 11am on Saturday 24th March followed by private cremation. Messages can be left on Tiny's tribute page at www.tributes.co.nz or sent c/- Evans Funeral Services, PO Box 877, Gisborne 4040.

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