

## LILIAN MAY SKIPPER - 29 January 1914-18 February 2011

Lilian May was the daughter of Charles Small and Jessie Bridgman. These pages are a copy of an article which appeared in a local newsletter. Lilian married Maxwell Merlin David Paul Skipper in 1939 and they lived in Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island.

### Lilian May Skipper

29/1/1914 — 18/2/2011



Lilian May Skipper, Lil to all her Island friends, passed away peacefully on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. As news of her death rippled round Halfmoon Bay, we Islanders shared our sense of loss. "An era had ended." A matriarch had gone, an upright, good woman, an enthralling raconteuse, whose memories of Island life were a living link back to the days when there was still a community at Pegasus and the fish freezer there

was in use.

Lilian May Skipper, nee Small, was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1914, at Lumsden. Her parents, Charlie and Jessie, were farmers there, moving later to Waimea and then to Grove Bush, where Lil and her older brother Herbert attended the local school. By the time the family moved to Makarewa, the family of 4 children was complete: two boys, Herbert and Leslie, and two girls, Lil and Doreen, the youngest

A further shift took them to Invercargill – to Crinan Street. The four children attended South School. Father worked for the Invercargill City Corporation and Mother went out to work doing laundry for other people. Later, during the Depression, Lil's mother took in boarders to help make ends meet. At an early age, Lil knew the reality of hard work.

Like so many of her generation, her schooling was cut short by the necessity to support her family. At age 14 Lil left school to care for her mother who had been seriously injured in a tramcar accident. Caring for her mother involved, of course, taking on the tasks of looking after the whole family.



Aged 15, she went to work at the Southland Laundry and Dye Works in Bowmont Street where she stayed for nine years, working with nine other women and two men. After seven years there she reached the position of "Head Girl" Supervisor

Swimming and dancing were favourite pastimes for this energetic lass, who retained

into sprightly old age a slender, upright silhouette, the envy of much younger fry. Lil loved dancing! She told of going to dances, often biking some distance to the dance halls, on **Friday night, Saturday night, Monday night and Wednesday night**. This caused her parents some consternation but to one young gentleman in particular, Max Skipper, by name, who met her at one of these gatherings, it was a great delight.

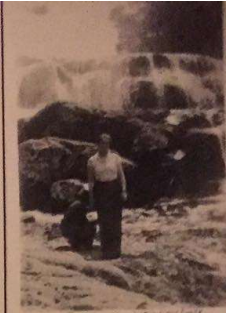
Before her marriage, Lil had visited Stewart Island several times with friends, her first visit coinciding with the funeral of Hans Nilsen. Why, she wanted to know, were all those boats clustered together in Leask Bay? This was Lil's introduction to the moving Island tribute to one of its own who had passed away. Little did Lil suspect that day that Hans Nilsen's son, Bruce would stand as best man to her future husband. Max and Lil were married on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 1939 in St Paul's manse, Invercargill, Lil's sister Doreen their bridesmaid.

The happy couple spent the winter months of that year at Pegasus where the fishermen were bringing their blue cod catches in to be processed at the Freezer. Pegasus was a busy little village with several families living there and fishing boats calling in frequently.

On her return to Halfmoon Bay, Lil faced the necessity of setting off to Invercargill to await the birth of her first child. She and Baby Maureen returned to the Island and the following year Mother and Babe made the trip south to Pegasus for another fishing season.

Life for Lil was always full.

The Lions Club and Country



Belltopper Falls, Pegasus.



How many people can fit in one dinghy!? "The gang" at Whaler's Base.



Nightingale at Pegasus



Lil with May Nilsen



Lil and Max with little Maureen. Behind them on the right is the old police station.

Women's Institute benefitted from her long and committed membership. Her grandchildren remember her helping with Lions Club barbecues at Moturau

savage easterly blow. Lil would turn up at Garden Circle with an exquisite bloom that knocked the battered offerings of the rest of us into the shade.

As the years rolled by, this lovely lady, who had helped so many, became the recipient of help from many others. In particular, the Fabulous Five, Pat King, Ann Pullen, Margaret Rooney, Kerry Squire and Barbara Wilson, provided sustained loving care and friendship for an increasingly fragile but gracious lady. In the words of Margaret Rooney Lil gave her two precious gifts – her time and her friendship.



At a dance hall.



Island bowling tournament. Lil is in forefront; behind her to the left are "Ma Fife" and Molly Smith.

Moana when the Linblad Explorer used to visit the Island in the late 1970's.

She cooked for the children of friends, when parents were away or ill or awaiting the arrival of another baby. With son-in-law Ted away fishing and Maureen working in the shop, Lil provided a cooked lunch every school day for her three grandchildren

Our Island nurses, Debs and Marty, cared for Lil, with compassion, understanding, superb professional expertise and common sense. Inevitably the time came when Lil's safety and wellbeing required that she move off island and into residential care. A painful transition was eased by the love and ongoing support of many friends, who visited her at Warmsley House, maintaining the bonds of friendship and respect forged by a lifetime of giving to others.



Val Johnson, Molly Smith & Lil



At the Ob Rock tea kiosk.

Lil loved sport. She was a member of the Island's RSA Bowling Club where she played "a mean bowl". With Max she went to Invercargill as a member of the Island



Lil (right) with her sister Doreen.

Badminton Club. In later years she played darts "with a good eye and throw". An abiding passion was Rugby, a passion she indulged by signing up for Sky TV.

Rest in peace, Lil, and garden in glory.

Then there were Friday nights at the Pub. In those pre-politically correct days, the Geriatric Table, so named, was reserved for the senior citizens who came in to enjoy conviviality and the fun of Raffle night

**Blessing For Lil**

*May calm be widespread,  
May the sea glisten like greenstone  
And the warmth of eternal summer  
fall upon you.*

Lilian May was aptly named. She loved flowers and cherished her garden. In the long years of her widow-



Dressed in the height of fashion.

hood – for she lost her beloved Max when she was only 56 – her garden was a great solace. Resolute and independent, she gardened on in all weathers. Her garden produced magnificent blooms. In the depths of winter or after a

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Ninetieth Birthday Party



**Lil (right) with her sister Doreen.**