

Mairi Alice Sewell



Dr Mairi Alice Sewell (née McCaskill) was born on 7 October 1929 in Wellington, of Scottish parents. At age 6 weeks, her parents moved to Sydney for employment. She graduated from The University of Sydney in 1953 with a degree in medicine, along with 49 other girls and 300 men, the majority of whom were returned servicemen.

In 1953, Mairi returned to New Zealand looking for work and adventure. Her first jobs as a house surgeon were at Gore and Whangārei hospitals, followed by general practitioner (GP) locums in Pahiatua and the Westland District.

Mairi married Tom Sewell, an agriculturalist with the Department of Agriculture (now the Ministry for Primary Industries), in 1955.

She worked in general practice as a sole practitioner and had part-time work in public health as a school and Plunket doctor while raising their family of seven children.

In January 1967, the family moved to Levin when her husband was transferred.

For the following 35 years, Mairi lived in Levin and worked at Tararua Medical Centre, then at the Horowhenua hospital as the senior medical officer, being responsible for geriatric rehabilitation, palliative care and oncology. She also had close links with Kimberley Hospital as their staff medical officer.

In 2003, she and Tom moved to Auckland for retirement. Tom passed away in 2005, and Mairi continued relief medical work until she finally hung up her stethoscope in 2007. She gave the valedictory speech at her 60th university medical school reunion in 2013, flying to Sydney on a day return.

Mairi played a full role in community life with energy and enthusiasm. She was in demand as a wise counsellor, educator and speaker for many women's and church groups across New Zealand.

Throughout Mairi's life, she cared for people, supporting those in need with words of wisdom and encouragement.

Until her vision was lost, Mairi delighted in reading her bible daily, praying for her long list

of Christian missionaries and doing the cryptic crosswords. On 23 August 2025, Mairi passed away peacefully in her sleep aged 95 years. She is survived by 7 children and their spouses, 23 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

This obituary was written by Dr Graham Sewell, FRNZCGP, RACGP.
