

### **Marion Ward (nee Solly)**

The New Zealand Geographical Society is also delighted this evening to honour another Auckland graduate of the 1950s – Marion Solly, who subsequently married Gerard Ward. It is a great pleasure indeed to be in the position of awarding the Society's highest honour to two geographers in the same family who have both made very distinctive but quite different contributions to the discipline.

Marion, like Gerard, has a fascination with connections between places and the role of transport infrastructure in these connections. Her masters thesis was on passenger transport problems in the Auckland Metropolitan area – she must feel a great sense of *déjà vu* as she hears the perennial debates about what to do about Auckland's transport problems. She went on to the University of Minnesota to complete a PhD on the trade of the ports of Malaysia, and her earliest publications in the international literature are on trade, transport and economic development in Malaysia, culminating with a major review article in 1969 on progress in transport geography. Her research in Malaya and Singapore was supported by Fulbright and Carnegie Fellowships.

Marion returned to Auckland in 1960 for a year as lecturer, then went to England where she lectured at Reading until 1967. She accompanied Gerard to Papua New Guinea in 1967, where she was employed by the Australian National University as a Research Fellow in the New Guinea Research Unit. She subsequently became Field Director of the New Guinea Research Unit, the first woman to be appointed as head of a research institute in the ANU's Institute of Advanced Studies. Through the 1970s wrote extensively on transport issues, urbanization and development in Papua New Guinea and Melanesia.

In 1975 Marion was the leader and co-author of a ground breaking study on the role of women in the Australian National University. This was the first study of its kind in any Australian University. She went on in 1981 to complete

a further graduate qualification in business administration at the University of British Columbia – her thesis this time on the cost of fog at Canberra airport.

During the 1970s Marion became increasingly involved in consultancy work serving as an Associate with a firm of economic consultants in Sydney, Gavan McDonnell and Associates. In 1979 she became Principal of McDonnell Ward, socio-economic consultants, where she worked until the mid-1980s when she operated as an independent consultant. Since 1990 she has been Principal of Ward Consulting Pty Ltd.

Marion is an exemplar amongst those New Zealand applied geographers who have become prominent transformers of places through their work. Between 1973 and 2002 she has worked on or led over 80 missions to countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific to address transport, water supply, sanitation and communications infrastructure issues in the contexts of community, regional and national development. Her list of projects is daunting; Marion's work has had a major impact on literally millions of people. Her work has literally changed places, while most geographers in academia speculate about what causes these changes.

For almost 30 years Marion has been a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Transport in Australia, serving at various times as Chairman and national Council member. She has also been a member of the Australian Centre for Maritime Studies for many years, and was a member of the Institute of Australian Geographers for 25 years. I could say a lot more about her contribution to public life, but I think I have conveyed something of the flavour of the outstanding contribution Marion Ward has made as an applied geographer for over 40 years.

In the course of all of this international work, Marion has retained a very close connection with New Zealand. Her sister lives just out of Hamilton, and the Wards make regular visits to the Waikato to keep in touch with family. She is very much a "daughter" for the return home, to adapt the title of a famous Pacific novel by Auckland University's Professor of English Literature, Albert Wendt.

Marion, we are delighted you came "home" for a visit at this time, thus permitting us to take the opportunity of this conference to award you with the New Zealand Geographical Society's highest honour, "the "Distinguished New Zealand Geographer" medal.

**Richard Bedford, University of Waikato**