



Celebrating the community of Hamilton East

Lois Livingston

MOTHERHOOD, acting, broadcasting, teaching and local body politics have all been successfully embraced by Hamilton East advocate Lois Livingston.

Lois was born to Eva and William Donaldson on 10 November, 1947 in Auckland. Her father was a fourth generation New Zealander and Eva's parents came from England. Eva's mother, a seamstress, traveled alone to be with family here.

Starting at New Lynn Primary, Lois went to Auckland Girls' Grammar School. She loved school, beginning a life-long interest in drama. One memorable school production, *McBeth*, saw her acting as Lady McDuff in which she experienced unrequited love with an Auckland Boy's Grammar student playing McDuff. Auckland Teacher's College followed and then a stint teaching at Wellsford Primary for her country service (a year teaching in a rural school was a requirement for all teachers at the time).

She met her husband at a friend's wedding and they married in the Titirangi Soldier's Memorial Church in 1968. David was a photo lithographer at the Auckland Star. The Livingston's had two daughters and moved to London for three years when the youngest was fifteen months old. An unhappy six weeks was spent teaching in a South London school until a more palatable position was found as a production assistant in a Mayfair advertising agency which she held for a year. Teaching at a boy's preparatory school, Arnold House, in St John's Wood was her next position. The boys were mostly sons of Lords and the like with most being able to read, write and do maths before they went to school. After a year, Lois found herself pregnant and the family decided to return to New Zealand after a three month camping trip in Europe.

The Livingston's returned in 1972. Lois joined the New Independent Theatre in Upper

Hamilton East

Local Lives

Queen St and began acting again. The Livingston's parted company around 1975 but remained on good terms. Lois auditioned and was selected to be a foundation student for a new Diploma of Drama course at Auckland University along with eleven others with a view to being a specialist drama teacher. Mervyn Thompson was the director who she describes as "amazing" and says it was "very hard work with a nine to five day plus rehearsals."

This period was also marked by the reoccurrence of anxiety problems. She describes being able to act on stage but not to sit in the audience as it felt too claustrophobic. After teaching for about 10 years, Lois started doing radio commercials at Radio Pacific once a week. She was offered a job as a panel operator for the breakfast show with the proviso that she learn the job in three days. Thus began a long career in broadcasting. She worked the 5.30am - 12 noon shift. This was only possible as Lois, her two children, two dogs and a cat, a friend and her two children moved in together in Birkenhead. The friend did the breakfast shift whilst Lois took over later in the day. Deciding on a career in broadcasting, she applied for a Radio New Zealand training programme. Two rejections later, Lois was accepted by for training in Wellington. On completion of the course, and waiting for a placement, Lois completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Broadcast Communication at Auckland University. Lois then worked at

Radio Geyslerland in Rotorua before returning to Auckland as an announcer at Radio I (now i98FM) for five years and then she helped to set up Radio Pacific in Hamilton. This was her first stint as a talk host which she'd long wanted to try. She spent eight years as a talk back host until networking of stations resulted in most radio stations operating from Auckland.

Arts and the theatre have always a large part of Lois's life - from helping to establish a youth theatre on the North Shore to Compact Theatre in Hamilton. She also produced a controversial war-time play written by Vincent O'Sullivan, *Shuriken*, eventually taking it to Japan and bringing Japanese actors to New Zealand to perform in the play here. She describes this event in great detail as it was one of the most memorable times in her life and one she is immensely proud of. Lois is currently on the Arts Council.

She has been an Environment Waikato Councillor since 1991 and now chairs the Policy and Strategy Committee. She loves her work with the council and has developed a real passion for the Waikato region. With an interest in heritage, having been on the NZ Heritage Trails Foundation for five years, she has owned two character villas in Hamilton East and is currently doing up a local ex State House. Currently she is chairperson of the Hamilton East Community Trust and an Associate for the Health Consumer Service.

Lois is always ready to help out wherever help is needed. Any suggestions are greeted with offers of help and immediate action. I have never heard her use the words "no," "impossible" or "can't be done." Such a can do attitude has won her many friends and colleagues. Lois reflects that she has had a most amazing career. Certainly, there is little she has not done and she has an extraordinary repertoire of experiences and adventures. She says her broadcasting career



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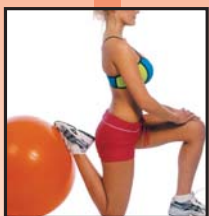
has given her far more understanding of New Zealand's place in the world and made her a more non-judgmental person. Anything she has tried to do, big or small, has been about trying to make a difference - helping people to have a sense of place, pride and well-being. She is happy to use her skills and talents in the community. A grandmother, Lois spends a lot of time with her grand daughter who is a "huge delight." She has experienced many trials and tribulations of parenthood but it is not something she would be without. A superb cook, she also enjoys gardening and decorating.

Where Lois goes, so does Ollie the Collie. They often walk along the river and to the local shops.

Ollie has also helped out when my own dog has done a Houdini and escaped to terrorise the local cats.

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