

From The Inaugural Magazine of the Union written by NHRU Life Member Pat Delich and Member of the Steering Committee who went on to form the North Harbour Rugby Union...

I first gave thought to North Harbour as a separate Union after talking to Terry Sheehan from the North Shore Club, who was very keen on the idea. A position as a selector of the North Harbour 12th grade team in conjunction with Brian Jones and Don Gallaher of Northcote showed the thrill that the boys received when selected for Representative honours. These boys would have little chance of selection in Auckland because the number of teams and the difficulty of selectors in viewing them.

At about this time (approximately 1977) I came into contact with Keith Webber (President of Northcote Rugby Club) who could see that in the next few years we should have to promote the idea of a North Harbour Union for the benefit of players and clubs alike. The Junior Boys North Harbour Tournament showed us that there would be a viable competition in Junior grades, and it seemed that teenage and senior grades could also work well.

There were a few informal meetings in the next two to three years always attended by Keith Webber (Northcote), Allan Pengelly (Helensville) Trevor Evans (Takapuna), Brian Bergin (Glenfield), Norrie Kellaway (Silverdale) and myself Pat Delich (Western United) to name a few. I recall an evening of discussion at Glenfield with Major General Les Pearce in the Chair. The topic was how we could improve the competitions and opportunities for players on the Shore, but at the time there was only general talk on the possibility of a North Harbour Union, and although it was agreed that more research was needed, no decisions were taken.

We organised a sport and fun day at Parakai for North Harbour Clubs, it was well supported by Northcote, Helensville and Silverdale Clubs. One unifying element for North Harbour was that several Clubs had played under the Kaipara sub-union (eg East Coast Bays, Silverdale, Helensville and Western United) and many of those former players in attendance were now Administrators. There was a good degree of inter-club friendship. Golden Oldies Rugby also helped to get these former players together. It was at these after-match functions that we injected into conversations the thought of a new North Harbour Rugby Union.

I feel that in those years we planted the idea of "North Harbour" in many people's minds, along with the ladies and gentlemen who organised the Junior Boys Tournaments and also Terry Sheehan who ran every successful "Evergreens" games, all of which helped us to develop an identity.

At the end of the "seventies" we lost our driving force in one Keith Webber. Keith was off to Australia with promotion and new opportunities in his chosen profession.

### **ENTHUSIASM AND PUSH**

To keep the idea of North Harbour alive we needed a "dynamo" and it was not long in coming. In September 1980 Captain Tom Riddell from Navy arrived. Tom ruffled a few feathers but to good effect, as administrators were made to realise that change for the sake of club and players had to come. A meeting was held in September 1980 at North Shore where six clubs were represented: (North Shore, Navy, Takapuna, Silverdale, Western United, Northcote) and a decision to set up a steering committee to investigate the forming of a new Union was made.

At the second meeting in October, Malcolm Iversen (North Shore) was elected Chairman and Tom Riddell (Navy) was elected Secretary. Other Members selected were:

Trevor Evans (Takapuna), Bungy Williams (Glenfield), Ray Allison (Northcote), D Brown (Silverdale), Cath Geldard (Massey), Geoff Broad (Navy), John Curtayne (East Coast Bays) Pat Delich (Western United) and Allan Pengelly (Helensville).

Tremendous support was given by John Heerdegen (Referees), Brad Johnstone, Peter Thorburn, Alf Gracie (Silverdale), Peter Lamont, Terry Sheehan, Alan Hargreaves, Robin Brown (Helensville), Maurice Dick (Glenfield) and in those heady days, many others came forward to add their weight to the cause.

Malcolm and Tom's time at the head of the Steering Committee was a short duration but it gave the impetus which scarcely slackened until the Union was formed.

At a meeting at Western United on the 8th June 1981, a motion was put "That a Union be established in 1982 with a view to being fully functional by the commencement of the 1983 season". This motion was lost:

Voting For: East Coast Bays, Glenfield, Navy, Silverdale

Voting Against: North Shore, Takapuna, Massey, Northcote, Western United, Helensville

Later that same evening, another motion was out - "That as soon as practicable, a Constitution be drawn up and an Incorporated Society be formed for a proposed Union". This Motion was passed.

Voting For: North Shore, East Coast Bays, Northcote, Navy, Silverdale, Glenfield, Western United, Helensville

Voting Against: Takapuna, Massey

## **PLANNING AND RESEARCH**

The Steering Committee was finally wound up at Western United on 14 December 1981, and later that night, the first meeting of the Executive of the North Harbour Rugby Football Society under the Chairmanship of Bob Bell-Booth of Takapuna took place. Other members were Craig Ganley (East Coast Bays), Alf Gracie (Silverdale), Gus Grindley (Glenfield), Pat Delich (Western United), Cath Gelard (Massey), Ron McQuinlan (Northcote) Allan Hargreaves (Helensville) Malcolm Iversen (North Shore), Mike Pate (Navy) and Barry Morris as Honorary Solicitor/Treasurer.

From that time it was work, research, interminable meetings and for some a feeling of "Listen Fellas - we're going too slow!" However that period of time gave the executive committee a chance to gather more information to convert to the cause.

In September 1983 Bob Bell-Booth announced his decision to step down as Chairman because of other commitments. we were sorry to hear this but his support and advice were offered for the future and gratefully accepted.

Bob, a great worker was very strong on planning and adept at getting the best out of men working with him.

Jim Stuart from North Shore took over the reins as President. A skilled negotiator and an excellent diplomat, in fact the ideal person to steer the executive through the final stages to the Union, which was also earnestly desired.

Keith Webber, Tom Riddell, Malcolm Weson, Bob Bell-Booth and Jim Stuart - each very different in personality, but they came at the right time and in the right order to serve the North Harbour Rugby Union well and in this they were supported by the able men around them, and the ladies who had to forego the pleasure of their husbands' company because of so many meetings which was necessary in the forming of the North Harbour Rugby Union.

**Pat Delich - Western United Rugby Football Club**