



# Alumni Newsletter

School of Physical Education Te Kura Akoraka Whakakori



**In this issue**

**2010**  
issue 1

**Risky Business: Mike Brown Uncovering The Big Fat Truth: Elaine Rose Wall of Fame Inductees: Arthur Parkin & Trevor Garrett We'll Meet Again: Wyn Parkes Sweet Success: Wendy Sweet Funding Coup: Jon Shemmell**

## Professor Doug Booth

Dean, School of Physical Education

**Welcome** to the 2010 season of newsletters. Staff at the School continue to be amazed by the achievements of our graduates across a broad spectrum of professions and walks of life, as the stories featured here demonstrate.

A touch of modesty and humility is always becoming, but hiding your light under a bushel is *not* part of the Physedder ethos, so please turn the spotlights on so we can see you! Don't hesitate to drop us a line if you or alumni of your acquaintance have done something noteworthy.

Speaking of the high achievers amongst you, we profile the six 2010 inductees to our Wall of Fame: the first two are in this edition, with the others to follow in later weeks.



Professor Doug Booth

Having recently co-ordinated a self-review document of the School, I am happy to report that the School has never been in better shape, and I will be sharing my findings with you in Issue 3.

This is a news forum for alumni and about alumni, and this year several of the articles have been written by alumni: thanks to everyone who was able to donate their time and share their knowledge.

So, read on and enjoy.

*Doug*

# Risky Business

by **Mike Brown** BPhEd 1990

Dr Mike Brown is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies at the University of Waikato. In March he spent a few days in Dunedin, catching up with old mates, and sharing his current research with academic staff and outdoor instructors who lead our Applied Theory & Practice papers. Some of what he had to say was unexpected, and provides food for thought for any of us who are interested in or involved with outdoor education.



Dr Mike Brown

## Risks – what sort of risks?

In the twenty years since graduating I have been fortunate to work in the outdoors in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Positions include working at Outward Bound in Scotland and New Zealand; with young people in Northern Ireland for a sail training charity; with school groups in Australia; and doctoral study and two tertiary teaching positions. The opportunity to move between the academic context and “rock-face” has been both challenging and enriching. Clearly theory can inform practice and practice can suggest new insights and challenges to existing theory.

## Outdoor education: increasingly contested terrain

Outdoor education has been part of our education system for many decades and is considered to be an integral component of the broader school curriculum. Yet **understandings of what outdoor education ‘is’ or can achieve have altered**. Outdoor education theory has evolved from an eclectic mix of disciplinary areas (education, psychology, counselling, etc). As it has evolved, some of the original contexts or sources have been “lost”. As a result we may not realise some of the limitations and flaws inherent in a theory or idea that was imported from another discipline. Another possible reason for a continuation of some practices is the confusion between personal preferences and sound teaching and learning principles. As Alison Lugg (2004) has suggested, the passion which is a strength of the outdoor profession can also be a weakness, in that “it can create a ‘blinkered’ view of outdoor education practice, rather than an openness to critique, debate and possibly change” (p10).

In the remainder of this article I wish to pose some questions about the necessity of physical risk to aid learning. **This is not a call to place students in cotton-wool nor to turn outdoor education into a classroom subject.** Given the recent tragic events in outdoor education we cannot ignore the hard questions about exposing young people to risk. **What is needed is a more complex and nuanced understanding of risk other than 'it's good for them' or 'it will toughen them up'.**

## Talking about risk in outdoor education

Elsewhere (Brown & Fraser, 2009 ) I have developed this argument more fully, thus I will restrict myself to several key bullet points.

- ▶ Risk has become central to many definitions of outdoor education.
- ▶ The educational aspect of outdoor education has been overshadowed by an emphasis on 'risky pursuits' and safety management policies and procedures.
- ▶ What is considered acceptable risk has altered over time and will likely continue to change as the socially acceptable margins of risk diminish.
- ▶ A continued focus on risky pursuits does not adequately address the fundamental question that should be addressed by outdoor educators: what is the sound and defensible educational rationale for conducting this programme?
- ▶ The debate around risk needs to be moved from a focus on risky activities to a broader understanding of learning in the outdoors.

Reframing what we understand by 'risk' changes both how we might talk about risk in outdoor education and most importantly how we conduct our programmes.

**A small number of studies have critiqued the role of risk and the use of stress/anxiety as a beneficial teaching and learning tool.** Brent Wolfe and Diane Samdahl (2005 ) have questioned whether risk and challenge necessarily lead to positive outcomes. They suggest that there are several underlying assumptions regarding the value of risk: firstly, that learners need to learn how to deal with risk and that this will be beneficial for them; secondly, that the potential benefits from an adventure experience outweigh the potential risks.



PHSE 232 Rock Climbing 2005:  
Briar Horton (BPhEd 2006)



However, structuring tasks to heighten the perceived risk and increase stress can be dysfunctional and impact negatively on both individuals and groups. Dene Berman and Jennifer Davis-Berman's (2005) work on contemporary understandings of change suggests that people are more likely to respond positively when they feel safe, secure and there is a level of predictability in the environment; this suggests an alternate model for fostering growth.



PHSE 231 Winter Tramp Mountain 2006  
Richard Dunsheath (left) & Greg Schicker  
(both BPhEd 2008)

### **'Other ways' to talk about risk**

Paul Beedie (1994) has suggested that **the educator's role should be to assist students to manage the risks associated with learning.** It is the educator's role to encourage and support students to take the risks of dealing with the uncertainties of the unknown, to move beyond what is currently known and to experiment with constructions of identity. Beedie suggested that one such 'risk' is to encourage and equip students to take responsibility for their learning. He claims that this approach has the potential to lead to empowerment and the development of life skills and the enhancement of dignity.

**It is the process of taking a risk to learn which is central to development rather than the nature of the activity.** Creating an environment where students feel able to move beyond what they know, to question and to speculate without fear or condemnation for being wrong is the educational challenge. Given the holistic approach to learning in the outdoors the educator's role might be to facilitate conditions where the taking of risks is managed to provide opportunities for students to develop skills and contribute to a positive self image.

Educational theory also attests to the value of taking responsible risks with the aim of building resilience in the face of setbacks and frustration. Resilience requires the learner to manage and recognise risks, persevere at things that are challenging and tolerate the feelings that inevitably accompany difficulties. **The focus might therefore shift to how the learner perceives the situation and how they can manage it, rather than how the outdoor expert might provide and manage risky activities.**

## Concluding thoughts

Too often the taking of risks, through physical challenges and novel activities, is presented as beneficial for all learners at all times. The ropes course or the flying fox are chosen, planned and controlled to a large extent by an 'expert' instructor. As Brown and Fraser (2009) have noted, "The rhetoric of risk is highly appealing, as surmounting one's fears through risk taking has the lure of mastery, survival, accomplishment and immense satisfaction. However, mistaking the thrill of taking risks and the relief of surmounting these, for deep learning is tempting but fraught" (p 9). Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) have suggested that "when participants are placed in situations with little perceived control and high perceived risk, they may change some behaviors in order to cope and better conform, but these changes will probably not be internalized very well" (p 20).

In activities that are 'risky' experts provide specialist advice and controls on participation, thus opportunities for genuine learner-based decision-making may (rightly, for safety reasons) be largely absent. The current emphasis on activities involving risk has created a paradox that potentially removes agency and authentic decision making from students. An alternative approach might be to focus less upon risky activities and their perceived effects for everyone, and more upon the learning opportunities that holistic engagement in outdoor activities provide (e.g. cooking a meal, making decisions about where to camp, sharing the workload). **With a focus on learning, educators might shift their focus from "what novel/risky activities can I provide?" to "what educational opportunities can I provide?"** This question is far more difficult to answer yet it should be the 'touchstone' that we continually return to when planning programmes.

**As outdoor educators we should celebrate the varied learning experiences that we can provide.** I am not suggesting that the management of risks be ignored. However, there is great potential for enhancing the educational aspects of outdoor experiences when educators acknowledge the complex nature of learning rather than relying on the use of risky activities as a defining feature.

Beedie, P. (1994). Risk taking: The consensus views. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership*, 11(2), 13-17.

Berman, D., & Davis-Berman, J. (2005). Positive psychology and outdoor education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 28(1), 17-24.

Brown, M., & Fraser, D. (2009). Re-evaluating risk and exploring educational alternatives. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 9(1), 61-77.

Copies these papers are available from the author: [michaelb@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:michaelb@waikato.ac.nz)

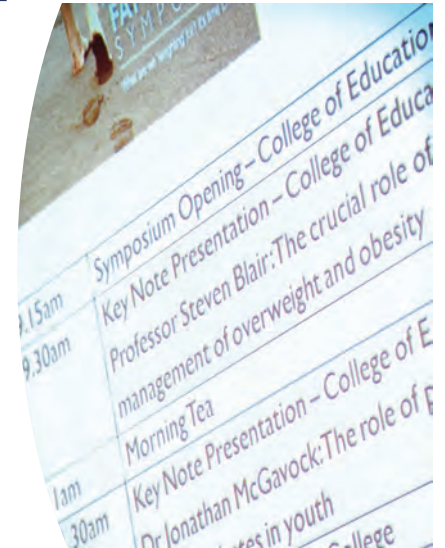


**Mike lives in Cambridge and enjoys sea kayaking and sailing. He "dabbles" in triathlons and is "still recovering" from Ironman this year.**

# Uncovering the Big Fat Truth

by **Elaine Rose**

**Elaine Rose is a Senior Lecturer in Sports Psychology at the School. She played a key role in organising a 3-day symposium earlier this year entitled “Big Fat Truth: what are we ‘weighting’ for? It’s time to move!” It was a great success, and received local and national media coverage.**



Dr Elaine Rose

The aim of this International Research Symposium was to critically examine obesity knowledge and stimulate discussion, debate and understanding of the multidimensional issues in the field of physical activity, health and obesity research. Six internationally recognised experts from the academic disciplines of epidemiology, physiology, sociology, psychology, medicine and law presented a key note address and ran an interactive workshop.

The Symposium was attended by 135 delegates from various backgrounds. There were academic researchers from universities and polytechs across NZ and Australia, high school teachers, public health professionals, public health organisations, and regional sports trusts. Feedback from the delegates was extremely positive, with many enquiring when the next one would be held!

The six speakers approached the Symposium topic from different perspectives, but each speaker recognised the importance of adopting and maintaining a physically active lifestyle to benefit health.

**Professor Steven Blair** (University of South Carolina, USA ) concluded that the **single most important thing a person can do to improve or maintain his or her health status and prevent premature death (irrespective of age ) is to increase their cardio-respiratory fitness.**

The most significant improvements to health come from moving from doing no activity to doing some activity. The physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity over the course of 5 days a week is all that is required to increase fitness. This could be done in 30 minute sessions, or by taking three 10 minute brisk walks each day.





**Professor Nanette Mutrie** (Strathclyde University, UK) explained that **to increase activity levels, the focus should be on promoting walking, as it is an activity that people are most likely to adopt** (it's accessible, free of injury risk, no special skills are needed and it can be a leisure time activity or a means of transport).



pedometers: motivational

Pedometers can be motivational behavioural tools, useful for setting achievable goals, allowing people to self-regulate and self-monitor behaviour, thereby gaining positive feedback and reinforcements of 'good' behaviour - and people like to use them. Providing a pedometer along with a walking programme with graduated step goals significantly increased walking behaviour from baseline to 12 months.

**Professor Michael Jensen** (Mayo Clinic, Rochester, USA) presented on the interaction between fat and insulin resistance in muscle that may contribute to the development of diabetes. **The altered metabolic processes within fat stored in the abdominal area may increase risks for diabetes in obese individuals.** Men tend to store fat under the skin in the abdominal area whilst women are more likely to store fat in both the abdominal and thigh/hip area. Obese individuals are able to store the same amount of fat as normal weight individuals, but are less able to use the stored fat.

**Professor Paul Campos** (University of Colorado, USA) argued that **the obesity epidemic is more about social prejudice than 'good' science.** He challenged participants to think about how obesity concerns encourage and permit poor social policy and prejudicial attitudes and practices towards people who don't fit contemporary 'norms'. He claimed that we don't have a method to turn fat people into thin people, that dieting makes people fat, and argued that it is more harmful to health to be male, poor and/or African American than to be fat.

**Associate Professor Michael Gard** (Charles Sturt University, Australia) also took on obesity science, suggesting that **the obesity epidemic has been over for quite some time and that obesity 'science' has been distorted and used in ways that fit with particular social and health policy agendas**, rather than reflecting 'truths' about obesity risks to people.



**Dr Jonathan McGavock** (University of Manitoba, Canada) showed that **low cardio-respiratory fitness and sedentary lifestyle are associated with an increased risk for development of diabetes and obesity in youth**, explained how physical activity can be used in prevention and management of obesity and type 2 diabetes in youth, and stressed that the community plays an important role in encouraging physical activity in high risk youth.

# Wall of Fame Inductees 2010

## Arthur Parkin DipPhEd 1976

“ My time at the School of Physical Education was a rich one for me personally: I found the “real me”. I was a physedder, and I still am. The ethos that PAS Smithells so eloquently passed on has formed a huge part of the way I have lived since. I was absorbed in studying what had always been a big part of my life, and training for the Olympic Gold at the same time: it was totally relevant and motivating. To be recognised by my peers via the Wall of Fame is a great honour and very humbling.”



Arthur was born and educated in Whangarei, and completed his Diploma in Physical Education at Otago in 1976. He is considered to be one of New Zealand's outstanding players in the history of men's hockey, and was selected for four World Cups and four Olympic Games (although he missed the 1980 Moscow Olympics because of the boycott). He was a member of the national team that memorably won the gold medal at the Montreal Olympics in 1976, and he captained the New Zealand team from 1982-84, being selected in the World Hockey XI in 1982-83. He was a national selector from 1987-90, was New Zealand co-coach in 1989 and coached the New Zealand Juniors from 1988-90.



Following his outstanding hockey career, Arthur became a prominent golfer, representing Auckland from 1987-2000, and he was a New Zealand Seniors representative in 2008-10. He became a professional golfer in 2003.

Arthur lives in Mt Eden, Auckland with fellow Physed School graduate Marceline Borren, and they both still play Hockey - it's the 51<sup>st</sup> season in a row for Arthur! They also enjoy golf, mountain biking, tramping, music, fishing and art. The 1976 Olympic Gold was the first ever Hockey tournament played on artificial turf – and today Arthur runs a business installing artificial turf Golf greens and lawn.



# Wall of Fame Inductees 2010

## **Trevor Garrett** DipPhEd 1973

“ I look back at PE School as a place that taught me a wide range of skills; intellectual, social, and physical, that have allowed me to move into a career that I never envisaged when I first walked through those doors on Cumberland St. Six weeks before the ceremony I spent an afternoon with my Mum and, contrary to the rules, talked with her about my upcoming induction. She told me that, as neither she nor Dad had received a high school education, she was very proud of how well her three children had done. Mum died four days later. So when I walked up to receive my award, feeling humbled by the recognition of my peers, I said a quiet thanks to my parents for having been so encouraging in my education and the wonderful career opportunities it gave me. ”



Following secondary schooling at Te Aroha College, Trevor completed his Diploma in Physical Education at Otago in 1973 and a Diploma in Teaching from Auckland Secondary Teachers College. He later completed a Master of Science in Recreation Administration with Honors at Indiana University and a Master of Public Policy from Victoria University of Wellington.

An outstanding career in the state sector followed. He had senior roles in the Department of Internal Affairs, including Chief Executive of Recreation and Development, and had oversight of the NZ Lottery Grants Board, gaming, racing, passports, citizenship and censorship. He was accepted for, and completed, the Senior Manager in Government Program at Harvard University.

His next appointment was as Chief Executive of the Casino Control Authority, which he established on behalf of the government and led for 13 years, and since 2005 he has been Chief Executive of the Charities Commission. He was also President of the NZ Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation for two terms, a member of the National Executive for 13 years, and received a Commemoration Medal for Services to New Zealand in 1990.

Trevor lives in Wellington with wife Diana. They have two children, Michael and Jamie. Sport and physical activity still play a big part in Trevor's life, whether it be running in the Wellington hills or following his sons' sports around the country.

# We'll Meet Again ...

by **Win Parkes** (née **Mirams**) DipPhEd 1961



“That 's me - front left of both photos !!”

**IN 1959** we were the first year group to start the DipPhEd course in the newly-renovated premises in 665 Cumberland Street. We were a well-integrated and sociable lot then - and we 've learned that we are now too!!

**BACK THEN** we relished the annual men v women rugby match!! Of the 32 students in our first year, 3 left before the start of the 2nd year, 4 have gone ahead to put in a good word for us all in that great Phys Ed locker room in the sky, and 50 years later, we' v e re-established contact with all of the remaining 25.

**2 YEARS AGO** 23 of us gathered together with assorted spouses in Christchurch and Bealey to enjoy again our well remembered sociability!!

**IN 2009**, **50 years since we started at OUSPE**, we held another gathering for our year group. This time the Coromandel was the chosen venue and we enjoyed another blast from the past together!!



“Flying foxes are fun for Physedders forever!”



“At Waterworks the poster tells us to ‘Feel like a kid again’ ... we did - it was easy!”

“Of course camping has gone upmarket since 1959 ...

... sadly we can't say the same about the organisers!”



L to R: John Pullan, Pat Gross (née Lambourne) & Don Rae



# Sweet Success

**Wendy Sweet** (née **Smith**) BPhEd 1991

*“BPhEd offers a great launching pad into the Fitness Industry...”*

Last year Wendy Sweet won the *Fitness NZ Award for Outstanding Contribution to the NZ Fitness Industry*.



Wendy Sweet

Well known as the ‘mother’ of Personal Training, Wendy is NZ’s expert in the licensed contractor model of Personal Training, which she developed in 1995 for the Les Mills group. Most commercial facilities around the world now follow this model as it enables trainers to manage their own PT business within a facility, taking money directly from clients and paying a weekly license fee to the gym. This means that those trainers who do well are not only skilled in exercise and nutrition management, but also in business management. Before leaving Les Mills (Auckland) a decade ago, Wendy built up one of the largest PT teams in the world, managing over 80 trainers in the Auckland gym alone, many of whom were Physed graduates.

The School of Physical Education is renowned for producing quality graduates who make their way into the fitness industry at ‘grass-roots’ level in local gyms. Whilst at the School, Wendy was renowned for dashing between her lectures, her part-time job in ICU at the hospital and Les Mills where she ran the aerobics programme (Les Mills Dunedin was the only gym in those days to have two aerobics programmes – freestyle and jazzercise). With many instructors also Physed students, Wendy has watched their progress over the years, especially those who have gone on to impact hugely on the global fitness industry in both group fitness and Personal Training. Just a few who come to mind include: [Emma Barry](#), who now heads Les Mills International bringing group fitness to the world; [Tracey Minnoch](#), who runs group fitness for Fitness First in Asia; [Joe Waide](#), who was named Australian PT of the Year; [Brendan Harris](#), who is a highly successful trainer in Sydney, and [Janet Alexander](#), who, with her husband, owns Paul Chek’s old studio in San Diego. On a recent trip to San Francisco to attend discussions on the global portability of fitness qualifications, Wendy caught up with Janet. Specialising in golf conditioning as well as training some of America’s up and coming athletes, Janet’s client list is to be envied. Needless to say, she is very familiar with flying in private Lear jets to the Masters Golf champs, and Wendy’s son thinks that it’s very cool that she also trains Sean White (gold-medalist snow-boarder)!



*“ Being in the fitness industry has kept me in contact with many ex-Physedders. There is a special bond between all of us who pioneered Personal Training in NZ, which I treasure. The award is a celebration of the huge number of wonderful people whom I have had the pleasure of knowing, many of whom started out with me in ‘Dunno ’s! “*

Wendy consults to the fitness industry, including Skills Active, is a regular contributor to Fitness Life magazine, and lectures at the University of Waikato on contract. Her Masters thesis was completed this year under the insightful tutelage of [Prof Bevan Grant](#): she interviewed senior contracted trainers around the country, exploring their experiences relating to changing client health and nutrition behaviours, as well as what it took for them to become highly sought-after ‘career’ trainers. The assessor of her thesis was our own [Dr Phil Handcock](#).

Wendy currently lives in Hamilton with her husband and two busy sporting kids. She continues to contribute to the fitness industry, presenting at a number of on-going education workshops.



Dr Jon Shemmell

## Funding Coup

Staff member [Dr Jon Shemmell](#) is an Australian hailing from Melbourne, who worked in the USA for several years before jumping at the opportunity to live in NZ and join us here at the School: *“I was looking for a faculty position in a smaller place where I could enjoy a better work/life balance. My wife Beth and I are really enjoying the relaxed attitude and friendliness of people here, and enjoy walks, bike rides and sampling the great local food and wine. ”*

Jon has been successful in the latest Health Research Council funding round, being awarded \$150,000 as an Emerging Researcher for his project entitled **“Fire together, wire together; sensory synchronisation to enhance stroke recovery”**. His project will involve testing the effectiveness of a muscle stimulation technique, the objective of which is to improve hand function in people who have suffered a stroke. Precisely timed electrical stimulation of muscles controlling the hand and the upper arm will be used to induced adaptation in the primary motor cortex.

This is a prestigious award and we congratulate Dr Shemmell on his success.

**That's it for issue 1; issues 2, 3 and 4 will follow in the weeks ahead.**