

1981

Christine French Born 1958

Otago & Worcester

Lawyer



Christine French, Rhodes scholar 1981. (Photographer: Bill Nichols, *University of Otago Magazine*)

Christine French firmly believed in coming home to share what her Oxford experience had given her. After completing her Oxford BCL, French returned to her home town of Invercargill. There she joined her family law firm and, apart from a short time spent teaching law at Otago University, she has worked there ever since.

Her decision surprised some. At a dinner with former Rhodes scholars she realised that she was the topic of discussion at the other end of the table. 'Finally these people sent a delegation down the table and said, "Christine, is it true? You're living in Invercargill", as though it were the most outrageous thing in the world'.

For French, the opposite is true. She points out the advantages of working in a small practice: the chance to take on major cases very early in her career (one she took to the Privy Council); less pressure to balance every hour spent on a case with the fees it will return; and involvement with organisations like the Law Society that benefit from wide geographical representation.

'... part of what Rhodes had in mind was that people should take their skills back to their communities. I do feel an obligation, a loyalty to this area ... Not that it's an obligation ... It's a privilege.'



Christine French outside her student flat on Beaumont Street, Oxford, during the 'Great Freeze' in 1981. The Ashmolean Museum can be seen in the background, as well as Worcester College at the end of the street. (Christine French collection)