



Alan McMillan at the Taieri River in 2001 and Mr McMillan in 2013 after receiving an award for his contributions to public access by the New Zealand Walking Access Commission.

PHOTOS: ODT FILES

Pharmacist and businessman was Mr Public Access NZ

■ **ALAN McMILLAN**
Public access champion

A STRONG and respected national advocate for public access to the outdoors was Alan McMillan, of Mosgiel, Dunedin, who died last month after a period of illness. He was 81.

Mr McMillan was born in Oamaru, the second of four children to Muriel and Alfred James McMillan. As a youngster, he moved with his family to Balclutha. Alan grew up there as an avid and active outdoor person whether it be shooting, ferreting for rabbits, biking, walking or fishing in the accessible backblocks of South Otago.

In his working career, Mr McMillan qualified as a pharmacist. He worked as an apprentice to Merrett Wilkinson from 1952 in Wilkinson and Son the Chemist, Dunedin — the oldest pharmacy in New Zealand. He rose through the ranks of Boots the Chemist, firstly as a pharmacist and then manager in Suva (1956-63), then sales manager and finally the managing director for New Zealand in 1974.

In 1976, he returned to Wilkinson and Son Chemists to eventually become owner and manager. Mr McMillan's forte was a personalised shop experience with his customers,

whom he greatly enjoyed; and they, in their turn, received professional but down-to-earth health advice they were able to relate to.

Mr McMillan was highly respected as an organised, thoroughly professional, scrupulous and talented businessman, always following the best professional ethics. In Dunedin he was active in the local business community, particularly around the development of the car parking building behind the then Golden Centre in Dunedin. He was a past-president of the local Pharmacy Guild and a national councillor. He was elected as a Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society in 2003.

A fine sportsman in his youth, he played rugby and cricket for his school, rugby at the Pirates Club in Dunedin and played in and also coached the Albion rugby team in Suva.

Mr McMillan always had a fine community spirit, diligent yet unobtrusive and committed with quiet integrity. While in Wellington in the early 1970s, he was an active member of Wellington Sea Rescue. In the *Wahine* storm of April 1968, he helped evacuate people from threatened houses. In Fiji, he saved a young man from drowning in the ocean.

His community spirit was always to the fore and even when

dogged by ill-health in later years, he would support the education of young medical students during case study lectures.

Mr McMillan's love was for the outdoors, particularly trout fishing. He fervently believed in the traditional egalitarian Kiwi spirit and tradition of free, untrammelled access for all New Zealanders to the public domain of rivers, streams, beaches and public lands. His strong principled belief motivated him to become a forthright yet diplomatic champion for public access to the outdoors.

He was chairman of advocacy group Public Access New Zealand (Panz), was a member of the Walking Access Advisory Board and a life member and former president of a national trout fishing advocacy the NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers.

In 2013, Mr McMillan received one of the NZ Walking Commission's inaugural Walking Access Awards for contributions to public access.

Mark Neeson, of the commission, said Mr McMillan was the polite, objective, calm and enthusiastic voice of Panz, providing it with clear and insightful leadership. His proposals and approaches were considered and thoughtful.

Ken Sims, Manawatu, life member NZ Federation of

Freshwater Anglers, described Mr McMillan as Mr Public Access NZ. "He worked tirelessly to preserve free and unfettered access to NZ's public lands and rivers. His knowledge of the law and history was immense. Despite his many battles and failing health, he will be remembered for his ready smile and delightfully dry sense of humour, matched with a steely, and uncompromising determination. He was one of those people, you were the better for, simply by having known him. He will be sorely missed."

Speaking at his funeral, Otago poet Brian Turner said Mr McMillan had dignity and proved himself to be stoical, gutsy and courageous to the end.

"He was resolute, did his best to protect the public's rights of access to our public roads, lands and rivers and so on. He was an ardent but reasoned, level-headed unpaid servant in that regard."

"Alan understood that nature ought to be seen as a community, not just a conglomeration of commodities."

Mr McMillan revelled in his family. He was a devoted husband and considered and benevolent father. His grandchildren were never far from his heart and mind.

Mr McMillan is survived by his wife, Judith (nee Piper), three children and eight grandchildren. — Tony Orman