Mary

Mary Roden Smith (née Beattie) was born in November 1911 in Gore, a small country town in the South Island of New Zealand. She was the eldest of 4 children. Her family later moved about 300km north to Waimate, another small country town.

Mary’s father, Herries Beattie, was a prominent New Zealand historian and wrote extensively about the South Island Maoris. Many of his books are still in print.

The family attended a little Open Brethren Gospel Hall (church) in Waimate. There Mary learned to love and trust the Lord Jesus as her Saviour. This love for the Saviour was to characterise the rest of her life.
Gordon Allan Smith was born in Asunción, Paraguay in February 1912, the second of 4 children. His parents were the New Zealand pioneer missionaries Allan and Maud Smith. Allan and Maud worked in South America for many years on the Paraguay and Amazon rivers; their work is described in the 1948 biography of Allan Smith by A. G. Compton, “Pioneering on the Rivers.” There’s a downloadable copy on the website www.le.bz

During those early years in South America, Gordon became fluent in Spanish and gained some proficiency in the native Guaraní language. This would serve him well in later life.

At the age of 14 Gordon returned to New Zealand with his brother and sisters and commenced his secondary education as a boarder at Nelson College, a large boy’s school. His parents returned to South America.

At Nelson College Gordon was an outstanding student. He attained high distinction in both sports and studies and won the coveted prize for “the Best All-rounder.”
University

In the early 1930s Mary studied in Dunedin at the Otago University. She graduated with a Bachelor of Home Science degree and then taught for several years at the Feilding Agricultural High School.

Gordon studied Engineering at Canterbury University in Christchurch for a year, but in 1934 he changed to study medicine at the University of Otago in Dunedin. This was almost certainly because he had medical missionary work in view.

While at Otago University, Gordon won “University Blues” for excellence in both athletics and hockey. He also became president of the Otago University Evangelical Union (now the Varsity Christian Fellowship).

Gordon did his final year at Wellington Hospital and completed his medical degrees in early 1940.

Although Gordon and Mary both studied at Otago University, they probably didn’t meet each other until after university.

Mary with her siblings about 1936: Mary, Jim, Christina and Margaret kneeling

Mary graduating with a Home Science degree

Gordon's family about 1935: Joyce, Maud, Bruce, Allan, Gordon and Maudie

Mary with some of her formidable-looking students at Feilding Agricultural High School

Winners of NZ University's Cross-Country championship - Gordon is No.5

Gordon while a student
Friendship and Marriage

One summer holiday an outbreak of polio in the South Island prevented Mary from travelling to home to Waimate for Christmas, so she went north to Auckland to the Eastern Beach Christian Camp. It was there that she met Gordon Smith, who was still a medical student.

He later joked that he liked her because of her legs!

In July 1940 they married. Theirs was a marriage of kindred spirits, and they were to have 47 eventful years together.
Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Beattie
request the pleasure of the company of

at the marriage of their daughter

Mary Roden

to

Gordon Allan Smith

at the Innes Street Hall,

on

Wednesday, 21st July, 1940,

at 1 p.m.,

and afterwards at a Reception in the Savoy Teasmooms

R.S.V.P.

by 23rd July,

to Harris Street,

Waimate.

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WEDDING

SMITH—BEATTIE

The wedding took place recently at Gospel Hall, Innes Street, Waimate, of Mary Roden, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs J. H. Beattie, of Waimate, and Gordon Allan, elder son of Mrs and the late Mr Allan Smith, Wellington. Mr R. Y. Neville, of Christchurch officiated. The Hall was tastefully decorated by friends of the bride.

The bride, who was escorted by her father, wore a graceful frock of deep magnolia satin with heart-shaped neckline, long fitting sleeves, and fullness at the shoulders gathered into a high waistline. From neck to waist at the back were small buttons, and the skirt was fully flared, forming a train. Her embroidered veil fell from a coronet of lily of the valley, and she carried a shower bouquet of fresias, winter roses and maidenhair fern. A gold locket and chain, a family keepsake, completed her toilette.

The bride was attended by her sister, Miss Christina Beattie, wearing a dainty frock of rose-pink chiffon over taffeta, with the bodice cut on similar lines to the bride's, and a fully flared skirt, finished at the back with a large matching taffeta bow. On the hair was worn a small cluster of flowers, with a taffeta bow. A finishing touch was a double string of pearls, the gift of the bridegroom. She carried a bouquet of pink astilbes and maidenhair fern.

Mr Alfred B. Smith, of Wellington, attended his brother as best man. Messrs J. Beattie (Wellington) and H. Compton acted as ushers.

After the ceremony a reception was held at the Savoy, the guests being received by the bride's aunt, Mrs G. C. Beattie, of Rangiora, who wore a stylish brown costume and hat to match, with a shoulder array of red abutilons. She was assisted by the bridegroom's mother, who was wearing a smart wine frock and hat, and a shoulder spray of abutilons.

For travelling the bride wore a teal-green frock and coat, fur-trimmed, and accessories to tone. She carried a brown fur stole.

Dr. and Mrs G. Allan Smith will reside at Taumarumari.
War Years 1941–1945

Their first child, Howard Allan Smith was born 18 May 1941 in Taumarunui and died in August the same year. This was a tremendous blow to the young couple.

While employed as a house surgeon at the Taumarunui Hospital, Gordon enlisted in the New Zealand Army Medical Corps and was seconded to the RNZAF on 11 August 1941 with the rank of lieutenant. He became a flight lieutenant in April 1943 and served in the Pacific as a medical officer in Norfolk Island, Espiritu Santo Island, New Hebrides, Guadalcanal and in the Solomon Islands.
Gordon was promoted to Squadron Leader in July 1944 and continued to serve at Air Force bases in New Zealand. At this time, he learned to fly the Tiger Moth trainer. He was “mentioned in dispatches” in 1946 for outstanding service in the Pacific.

Gordon and Mary’s second child, Lindsay, was born in Waimate in May 1943 while Gordon was away on war service.

It was 6 months before Gordon first saw his baby son.

Later they moved to the Air Force base at Ohakea where Allan was born in October 1944.
Palmerston North 1946–1950

Following demobilisation, Gordon joined the resident medical staff of the Palmerston North Hospital for a year and then for the next 3 years he ran a successful medical practice in the centre of Palmerston North. During this period Gordon served as an elder of the Queen Street Open Brethren assembly (church).

Daughters Rosemary (October 1946) and Christine (November 1948) were born in Palmerston North.

On the front porch at 3 Alan St, Palmerston North, August 1946

Mud-larks in the back yard! November 1947

And then there was sister Christine! About May 1949

Allan, Rosemary & Lindsay, January 1947

Christina Beattie, Christina McKenzie, Christine Baty. Early 1950
In one respect Dr. Smith's journey will be different from that of the pioneer missionary setting out for new shores, for he will be returning, after 24 years, to the land of his birth. His father, the late Mr. Allan Smith, who died in Wellington in 1935, after retiring to New Zealand the year before, was a modern pioneer of missionary work along the Paraguay and Amazon Rivers. For 24 years he travelled the Paraguay in a launch and then before returning to New Zealand, spent six years on the Amazon. His son means to follow his father's path.

Dr. Smith said today he had always intended to return to Paraguay on medical missionary work—he had come to New Zealand with that idea in mind. The war interfered and delayed him for 10 years, but now he saw his way clear.

He said he was sorry to be giving up the practice in Palmerston North, which he had been building up over the last three years, and sorry to be leaving New Zealand, one of the finest places in the world. However, he considered it God's will that he should return home and continue the service his father had begun.

Article in Wellington's Dominion newspaper, 14 December 1949
Journey to England 1950

While in Palmerston North, Gordon again felt God’s call to medical missionary work in Paraguay. This was endorsed by the New Zealand Open Brethren assemblies.

In February 1950 Gordon and Mary, with their four children, Lindsay, Allan, Rosemary and Christine sailed to England on the “Wairangi.” It would be 5 years before they returned to New Zealand.
London and Liverpool 1950-1951

Initially the family lived in Mill Hill, London, while Gordon studied at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The children attended the local school.

The family later shifted to Bebington, Liverpool, where Gordon continued his studies at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Gordon obtained the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in 1951. The children attended the Port Sunlight School in Bebington.
From England to Paraguay 1951

In 1951 the family sailed on “HMS Andes” to Buenos Aires, and then over 1,300 km by river steamer up the River Plate to Paraguay in the centre of South America.

Mary, the children and HMS Andes, 20 January 1951

With friends at Vigo, Spain

At a lookout in Lisbon, Portugal, January 1951

River boat to Paraguay, 28 February 1951

Approaching the wharf at Asunción, 3 March 1951

We've finally arrived, with all our cabin trunks!
Paraguay 1951–1956 Missionary Service

Paraguay is a small land-locked country right in the centre of South America, over 1,000 km from the sea. It is one of the poorest countries in South America and has had frequent revolutions. Paraguay is bisected by the 2,600 km River Paraguay, and the great river provides access to much of the country – especially where the roads are difficult or non-existent.

The weather is sub-tropical, hot and humid, and in those days there was no air-conditioning.

Gordon was regarded as a Paraguayan citizen because he was born in Paraguay. This meant that he held dual citizenship and could practise medicine in Paraguay – and preach the gospel – without legal complications.

Gordon added medical facilities to the missionary launch “El Mensajero,” building much of the furniture himself.

Paraguayan roads were not the best!

An upper deck being added to the missionary launch “El Mensajero”

Visitors to the launch in 1953
With a team of missionaries, Gordon travelled for long distances to remote settlements on the river banks. They had many exciting experiences with storms on the river, and on one occasion the launch was stoned at the instigation of the Roman Catholic priest.

Many thousands of people were treated medically, and many heard the gospel for the first time. Congregations of Bible-believing Christians were established in small towns along the river. In 2008 there were over 100 of these autonomous self-governing self-propagating groups meeting throughout Paraguay.
An elderly Paraguayan lady waits at the stern of the launch for medical treatment

Gordon lifts a "Camalote" floating leaf from the river

A family comes for treatment - not much freeboard!

Children visiting El Mensajero in 1959
Paraguay 1951–1956 Family Life

While Gordon was away on the launch, Mary and the children remained in the capital city, Asunción. Mary taught the children using correspondence lessons from New Zealand and she often read them Bible stories.

The children were also enrolled in a good city school called “Colegio Internacional” where their lessons were in Spanish. The school was run by people from the USA and staffed by Paraguayans. The children’s education does not seem to have suffered in Paraguay, as they all did well in later years.

The family lived in an old house that had bullet holes in the walls, and bars over the windows to keep burglars out. Unfortunately, the bars didn’t stop the ants, cockroaches, mosquitos and hundreds of bats!

Gordon poisoned the bats in the ceilings by burning sticks of sulphur on trays in the rooms with the doors and windows closed. He then removed the dead bats from the ceilings by the bucket load!

The family often heard gunfire. One night a bullet came through Lindsay’s bedroom window and – just missing him – made a hole in the wall by his head as he slept. On another occasion he nearly drowned in the river while playing with other children.
There was no stove in the kitchen, only a charcoal fire under an iron grate. Mary’s New Zealand university training in Home Science had certainly not prepared her for this! It was difficult to get fresh milk and Gordon would sometimes have to buy imported powdered milk on the black market.

There was no town water supply, instead rain water from the roof was stored in a large underground cistern. Fishes were kept in the cistern to eat the mosquito eggs. There was also a well with an old electric pump that didn’t work very well. At first all water had to be boiled, but after some weeks when bodies had built up enough resistance to infection this became unnecessary.

Mary employed some of the local girls to help her in the home. She trained them to cook and clean and run a home smoothly. This may have increased their chances of marrying well!

The family was warmly welcomed over 50 years later by one of the girls, Alicia (now a grandmother), when they visited Paraguay for the Open Brethren Assemblies Centenary in 2008.
The family was in Paraguay for 5 years, and the youngest daughter, Janet, was born there in January 1953.

Mary with baby Janet 1953

The family about 1955 – Janet’s joined us!

Daddy’s little girl!

Rosemary, Janet and Christine standing in a window (they were all barred)
Captain Allan at the helm!
Does he know the way?

Rosemary and Christine, lovely sisters!

Farewell to Paraguay

Our last view of Asunción!

The famous five have a light lunch
Return to New Zealand 1956

In 1956 the whole family – there were now five children – left Paraguay to return to New Zealand via Scotland.

They travelled down the great river Paraguay on an ancient Victorian paddle steamer designed for use on a river – but not intended for use at sea. There was a huge ocean storm in the wide mouth of the River Plate. People were crying and screaming, and many were sick. There was talk of throwing the luggage overboard to lighten the ship, however in the end that was not necessary, and they arrived safely in Bueno Aires.

After a few days they sailed from Buenos Aires to London on the “Highland Monarch” and then travelled by train to Scotland.

While in Scotland they lived in Linlithgow for several months and Gordon commuted daily to do a post-graduate medical course at Edinburgh University.

The family was warmly welcomed by the little assembly of believers in Linlithgow.
After Gordon had finished his studies they returned to New Zealand on the "Rangitata."

The good ship "Rangitata"

Christine, Janet & Rosemary in fancy dress

King Neptune came on board and held court when we crossed the equator!

Christine is one of King Neptune's mermaids!
**New Zealand 1957—1962**

During the first year back in New Zealand the boys boarded at Nelson College as third formers (year 9) and the girls attended schools in Auckland and Waimate. The family then shifted to Nelson and the boys were able to live at home with the family.

Rosemary and Christine did well at school in Nelson, and both became Head Prefects of their large intermediate school.

During the time in Nelson, Mary cared for the family and Gordon went back to Paraguay for periods of 9-12 months each year.

In 1962 Gordon had the pleasure of meeting Prince Philip in Asunción. They were able to discuss Gordon’s medical missionary work in some depth.
The boys designed and built 2 kayak canoes at 68 Mount St, Nelson.

When the canoes needed fresh paint, the boys paddled out to Haulashore Island where Allan painted himself!

Sunday, visiting the Bloomfield’s house in Nelson.

On holiday with our Morris Oxford car.

Lindsay (3rd from left) plays his cornet in the Nelson College cadets brass band.
Gordon, Lindsay & Allan climbed a peak in the St Arnaud's range, Nelson Lakes. They were trapped by fog and had to stay overnight on the mountain.

Lindsay & Allan going down the Maitai River on inflatable mattresses

Allan playing and Janet singing a beautiful hymn from the Golden Bells hymnbook

Christine (front centre) was Head Prefect at Nelson Intermediate School
Wellington 1963–1987

Gordon went into general practice in Kilbirnie, Wellington in 1963 and retired in 1982. Mary worked for some years as his receptionist.

Gordon practised in the traditional family doctor way including many home visits. He spent much time with his patients who trusted and loved him. They knew he cared, and nowhere was this more evident than during a terminal illness in the home. He was always there, often for many hours and very late at night, supporting the patient and family to the end. Gordon frequently offered spiritual help and would pray with his patients if they requested it. Some grateful patients sent him gifts for years after their treatment finished.
Gordon never lost his interest in aviation medicine and continued to serve as a part-time civilian medical officer at the Shelley Bay Air Force Base for nearly 20 years after entering general practice in Wellington.

Gordon was a regular attender at the monthly meetings of the Wellington Division of the New Zealand Medical Association and was an enthusiastic member of the Wellington Christian Medical Fellowship.

Gordon and Mary were active members of the Elizabeth Street, Open Brethren Chapel (Now at 9 Hania Street and called “The Street”). They were warm hosts and welcomed many strangers – especially young people – to their home nearly every weekend.

Gordon was a lover of the New Zealand bush and mountains and was a very good craftsman. He made furniture, beautiful toys and outdoor appliances including a swing, a tricycle, a see-saw and a merry-go-round for his grandchildren whom he adored.

Gordon’s Christian commitment governed his whole life, and this could be summarised by a tribute at his funeral, “He was kind, warm-hearted, human, impulsive, enthusiastic and he walked with God.”

Gordon Smith, a wonderful Christian father, was “promoted to glory” 3 October 1987 at the age of 75.

The Saviour said: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” John 10:27-28
Mary enjoys a photo album with Christine and Janet at 9 Naughton Tce.

Gordon at grandson Robert's 1st birthday. Robert is riding the trike grandpa made.

Eleanor (Lindsay's wife) on the merry-go-round Gordon made.

Rosemary & Christine photographed by Mrs Ayo, August 1963.

Janet at Lyall Bay School, November 1963.

Young Dr Allan Smith attracts attractive girls at Lower Hutt hospital! Allan with sisters Christine and Janet 1971.

Mary enjoys a photo album with Christine and Janet at 9 Naughton Tce.
Gordon & Mary's 45th wedding anniversary. They had dinner at Nicholson's restaurant and then cut the cake and played hymns of faith at home. 31 July 1985

Lindsay, Gordon & Allan leave Dunedin to go to Waimate 13/11/66

Gordon with the doll's house he made for granddaughter Anna Baty Christmas 1985

In the Wellington Botanical Gardens for Gordon’s 74th birthday 12/2/86

Gordon & Mary with granddaughter Amy 30/5/86
1976 Adults: Gordon & Mary, David & Rosemary Harrison, friend, Janet, Christine, Martin Baty (kneeling)  Grandchildren: Julia, Kirstin, Andrea, Nicholas

Gordon with Rimu coffee table he made for his daughter Janet, 1985

1982/83 Left: Gordon watches son-in-law David Harrison see-sawing with grandchildren Nicholas Baty and Andrea Harrison on the see-saw Gordon made. Right: Grandchildren Kirsten and Daniel Harrison see-saw with Julia Harrison
Gordon on a swing he built being pushed by grandson Nicholas Baty 1979

Back: Gordon, David Harrison, Lindsay, Rosemary with baby Daniel, Mary.
Grandchildren: Kirstin, Julia, Andrea. March 1979

Allan & Lois Smith leaving Highbury, Wellington to live in San Francisco 5 August 1983
Back row: Martin Baty, Janet & John Watson, Eleanor & Lindsay Smith, Rosemary & David Harrison, Allan Smith.
Middle row: Christine Baty holding Anna, Gordon, Kirstin & Julia Harrison, Mary, Lois Smith holding Brendon.
Front row: Andrea Harrison, Nicholas Baty, James Baty, Daniel Harrison, Rochelle Smith.
Gordon and Mary's 47th and final wedding anniversary, 31 August 1987. Gordon was “promoted to glory” just over a month later.

Christmas 1985. **Standing:** John Watson, Gordon & Mary, Margaret Beattie, David (holding Loren) & Rosemary Harrison, Maud Harvey (behind Anna Baty), Martin & Christine Baty, James Baty. **Sitting:** Lindsay & Eleanor Smith (holding Robert), Julia Harrison, Nicholas Baty, Kirstin Harrison. **Front:** Daniel & Andrea Harrison.

Gordon and Mary with grandchildren Elizabeth and Andrew Watson, June 1987

Gordon and Mary's 47th and final wedding anniversary 31 August 1987. Gordon was “promoted to glory” just over a month later.
Mary 1987–2008

After Gordon's death, Mary continued to live alone in the Kilbirnie house for some years. Later she shifted to a retirement home. Four of her children lived in Wellington and they took turns to visit her daily.

Many years earlier, before Mary went to university, she had studied classical piano to gain her “letters” from the Trinity College of Music.

In Paraguay she tried to teach Allan and Lindsay to play a small pedal organ called a harmonium.

She had much more success with Allan than with Lindsay! But one thing Lindsay did learn from her was a love for the great truth-filled hymns.

Sometimes Mary would play to the family a very fancy and difficult piano arrangement of a beautiful old hymn called “In the Sweet By and By.” But as she got older, she was no longer able to play the piano because of age and frailty.

Not long before she died, she visited her son Lindsay’s house for a meal. It was the last time she was able to visit, and her memory had nearly gone.

After the meal Lindsay played a simple arrangement of “The Sweet Bye and Bye” to her on the piano. To his surprise she clapped and smiled when he finished.

She still knew the truth of the words:

There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way,
To prepare us a dwelling-place there.

In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

Redemption Hymns 585

Mary went there in December 2008 at the age of 97.

She's “on that beautiful shore!” with her beloved Gordon – and the Saviour they loved and served.

Gordon and Mary not only gave their children one of life’s greatest blessings – a loving, Christ-centred family – but they also made it possible for many others to enjoy the same blessing.

We, their children, thank God for a wonderful mother and father!

This brief family history was compiled in early 2018 by Gordon and Mary’s eldest son Lindsay (www.le.bz). It was difficult to decide which photos to include, as hundreds had to be omitted for the sake of space. Many old photos were undated. Some of the information here is from a tribute by Dr Caleb Tucker in the November 1987 issue of the NZ Medical Journal. Caleb was Superintendent in Chief of the Wellington Hospital Board.
Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Christmas 2004. **Back row:** Nicholas Baty, Christine Baty, Allan & Meera Smith, Eleanor, Edward & Amy Smith. **Front row:** Anna Baty, Mary, Martin Baty, Robert Smith.

Mary with son Allan, Christmas 2000. She’s wearing a poncho Allan brought her from South America.

Memorial at Makara Cemetery, Wellington. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”