

Pat McMinn OBE

9 December 1926 – 21 March 2018



Patty Stella McMinn was born in Gisborne on 9 December 1926 to Maud (born Rielly) and Garnet McMinn. Her family moved to Taumarunui when she was six then to Auckland two years later. Her parents played at dances around the King Country with her father playing piano and her mother on violin and also piano. Her brothers Aubrey and Alva were sixteen and seventeen when she was born and already had their own dance band. She also had an older sister, Myrtle. All her siblings could play piano and Alva also played saxophone.



After touring New Zealand as a nine year-old dancer in *J. C. Williamson's White Horse Inn Company*, McMinn continued dancing and singing lessons at the *Catholic Social Centre* in Freemans Bay. As a fifteen-year-old she sang *Alexander's Ragtime Band* on *1ZB* in the children's radio show *Neddo's Jolly Pirates*.



Her grandmother put her name down for a singing competition at the *Dixieland Cabaret* where Pat was the youngest entrant but won the prize, a twice weekly gig at 10/6 per night. When the *Dixieland* closed she sang for 6 nights a week with the *Johnny Madden Band* at the *Trocadero Cabaret* (Auckland's first night club) on Queen Street including a floorshow where Pat sang and danced accompanied by the piano-accordionist Toni Savage. In the breaks she would knit and embroider in the dressing room where her mum would keep her company and later walk her home.

During the war she was manpowered to work in a local sack factory. At 3.30pm she would cross the road to her home at 18 Wellington St, hold a dancing class at the *International Order Of Oddfellows Hall*, then catch a tram to the *Orange Ballroom* in Newton and sing. When the *Orange Ballroom* closed she continued with Ted Croad's Big Band at the *Old Trades Hall* in Hobson Street.



Pat travelled twice to Korea with concert parties in January 1953 and July 1954. The first party was comprised of Des Begg, Paulene Ashley, Ulric Williams and Pat. The second was Johnny Cooper, Ces Morris (Magician), John Riedy, Jean Kirk-Burnard and Pat.

She released more than 25 sides for the *Tanza Record Company* including several of their biggest hits. Her novelty pop songs were accompanied by the honky-tonk piano of Crombie Murdoch. Pat's first recording was *Choo'n Gum* with *John Mackenzie and the Astor Dixie Boys*. Her biggest hit was *Opo the Crazy Dolphin*, an original composition written in 1956 by pianist Crombie Murdoch which sold 10,000 copies in its first week, despite Opo dying a few days before the release. Other successes included *Bimbo*, *Dancing in My Socks* and *just Another Polka*. She also recorded two duets with Cowboy Johnny Granger for *Stebbing's Studios*. These were, *Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way* and *Let's Live A Little*.

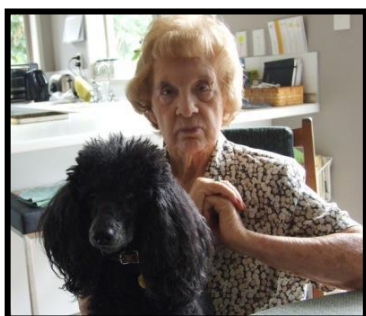
Primarily a Jazz singer, her biggest hit was a jingle about false teeth. *Geddes Dental Company* paid her two guineas. She recorded it in just one hour in 1949 and it was broadcast every day for nearly 40 years on Auckland radio stations. Even today people can still sing the song, distinguished by it's melody, *Oh My Darling Clementine*, a very popular hit in the 60s. Pat suggested that she might have recorded over 200 advert jingles.



She was a foundation member of the *Radio Roadhouse* Show along with Barry Linehan and Athol Coates, the announcer on the *Geddes* advertisement. For two years she hosted a radio program called Patricia on *1YA* with the *Crombie Murdoch Trio* and starred on television variety shows such as Ray Columbus' 1969 *A Girl to Watch Music By*, with guest Max Cryer. In 1971 she and her dance troupe performed at the *Royal Variety Show* before Princess Alexandra to celebrate the centenary of the founding of Auckland City.

Pat performed the floorshow at the *Peter Pan Ballroom* in Queen Street with a group of 8 dancers. The resident group was *Arthur Skelton's Band*. Later with a change of management she hosted VIPs and helped organising the balls.

She married twice, first to drummer Ed Croad, son of bandleader Ted Croad, and in 1969 to Saxophonist Niel Randrup, the youngest member of the *Kiwi Concert Party*. Based in Pakuranga Pat continued to teach tap and jazz dance classes. She also managed her own hair dressing salon.



Pat was the second secretary of the *Variety Artists Club of New Zealand* from 1968 to 1973, following on from Miss Lee Grant. She was the 4th recipient of the *Benny Award* in 1971 and was presented with a *Scroll of Honour* in 1993. She won a NEBOA *Entertainer of the Year Merit Award* in 1975 and in 1976 was awarded an OBE.

She spent her last years living in Tauranga with her husband, breeding and grooming cocker spaniels but eventually down sized to one poodle, *Keisha*, named after the girl actor from the film *Whale Rider*. Recently she suffered from a mild form of Parkinson's and dementia. Pat passed away on 21 March 2018, 91 years old.