

Mrs Mary Hannam

The athletics community was saddened recently by the death on April 10 of their matriarch, Mrs Mary Hannam, in her 97th year. Mary and her late husband Ron became associated with the South Canterbury Amateur Athletics Club in 1960, when their daughter Gail joined the club after success in school athletics. At this time the club was based on the old cinder track at Ashbury Park. The Hannams were the prime examples of the willing parents who would do anything - rake the track, dig the pit, keep the records, organise the programme - just anything that needed to be done.

Mary was club secretary for a few years in the mid-1960s, and Ron was treasurer, but neither ever became president. It was in the "behind the scenes" activities such as programming, recording and publicity that they made their special contributions. When the club moved to the Caledonian Grounds, Ron was on the loudspeaker as meeting manager and Mary managed the "paper work" tasks.

Both kept working for the club long after daughter Gail left. Both were made life members of the club and both were awarded Canterbury blazers by Athletics Canterbury, a distinction of which Mary was especially proud. And all the time, as a school teacher, Mary was encouraging athletics in the primary schools.

Mary and Ron Hannam were the driving forces behind the celebration of the club's centennial in 1971 and the pre-games athletic meeting with lots of international athletes in 1974. Mary was elected patroness of the club in 1982, succeeding Lady Beth Arthur.

It is in that role that the current club members have come to know her, turning up faithfully at opening and closing days and other special occasions. Despite failing eyesight and limited mobility she maintained an active interest in the club right up until last season. She was still very much part of the occasion, presenting trophies and making an appropriate speech to open or close the season. At the reopening of the track at Aorangi Park a few years ago, she walked the full 400 metres on her walking frame.

The Hannam Family is well remembered in the club's trophy list, with the Mary and Ron Hannam Cup for the open women's long jump, the Gail Cup for most points in U/16 women's events, and the Nikki Cup for U/16 throwing events.

Mrs Mary Hannam has been a special figure in South Canterbury athletics for over half a century. She will be missed for her energy, her tenacity, her interest, her support and her determination.