

Gabriel Farry

CHARTER MEMBER & THE CLUB'S
FIRST DISTRICT GOVERNOR



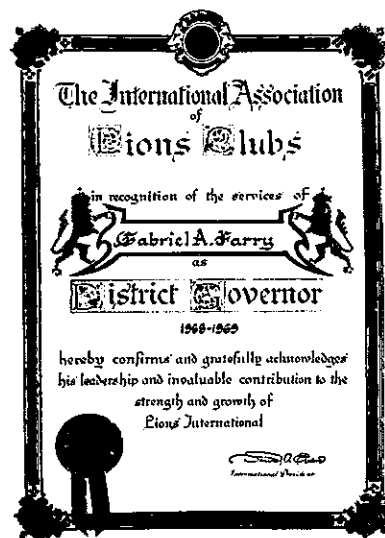
In a 2012 interview with Valmai Redhead Gore Lions Club charter member Gabriel Farry spoke of starting work in the family business during WWII. He always had an interest in civic affairs and ultimately joined the local Jaycees. With this group being a young person's organisation and having

a maximum age limit for members, he eventually found himself looking for an alternative organisation with which to undertake work for the community. Both the Invercargill and Dunedin Lions Clubs were endeavouring to start other clubs in the region and Gore was seen as a good centre. After initial liaison it was the Invercargill Lions Club that initiated and sponsored the Gore Lions Club. The first members to join were Bert Horrell and Murray Carran. Grant Vickery was the first President, Dick Goodson the first secretary, and Cyril Whitaker the first treasurer. Gabriel was initially 1st Vice President and rose to President the following year. The club's first meeting was in the council chambers, followed by meetings in a room at the old Gore High School building, before settling on the La Cresta Coffee Lounge in Main Street. 'There was great camaraderie and an enthusiasm on the part of all members to make Gore a better place to live' Gabriel noted. 'We actively sought new members and set out to recruit 33. Of course the club grew well past this target'. A typical meeting would be a fortnightly gathering at the La Cresta for drinks, followed by a meal, followed by a meeting. The board and any other project groups would meet upstairs directly after that.

In 1968 Gabriel became District Governor. At that stage this Lions District covered the whole of the South Island. As well as visiting existing clubs he was instrumental in establishing 12 new ones during his tenure (for which he received a special award). 'I may have spent more time away from Gore than first anticipated, but I was very lucky to have a supportive family'. When asked about the demarcation between working life and Lions commitments he conceded that 'you couldn't help but

undertake Lions work during business hours - it was a requirement - if you were going to make a proper job of things'. The two major projects that gave him the most satisfaction were the James Cumming Wing and the St James Theatre Trust. The former involved an enormous amount of liaison with other stakeholders and the development of funding streams for the project. Planned Giving was an important subscription scheme where many individuals, farmers and business people were persuaded to pledge sums of money over a three year period. Additionally, Festival Week and other Lions fundraisers were to contribute towards this development. Some delicate manoeuvring was also required to secure the St James Theatre from incumbent owners Kerridge Odeon - so that it might be managed by the Gore Operatic Society. Gabriel led the negotiations and the subsequent acquisition of the facility - at a far more reasonable figure than was first mooted by the owners.

The first 25 years the Club's existence saw over \$350,000.00 raised for community projects, but Gabriel has always placed great emphasis on camaraderie and fellowship - he believes these are the Club's greatest assets. 'Gore is a great place - it has lovely people, and I have enjoyed every minute of living and working in this community'. Gabriel is the Gore Host Lions Club's longest serving member and apart from receiving a number of awards including a Melvin Jones Fellowship, he was also made a Companion of the Queens Service Order (QSO) in 1999.



From
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