I was born in the High Country in the South Island – in Canterbury on a farm called Mt. Torlesse. We lived at the end of a gravel road which was six kilometres from the front gate. My early childhood really centered around my family. We didn’t have a lot of interaction with other people because of our isolation, though when we went to school, that was sort of an adventure in itself. We had to drive through a river and sometimes, the car would get stuck and find my father to pull it out with machinery. But it was in the days when much of the farming was done on horse back. I spent a lot of time on horse back as a child. Life was horses, open spaces ...

We’d ride hell for leather, and we were always daring each other; like to jump wire fences and things. We hunted a lot, and I loved that. That was galloping fast, it was speed, and it was dangerous!

During the winter we tobogganed and then we skied down a little slope, and there was a pond at the bottom. I remember being very indignant and probably shrieking and crying, having skied down and then lost it at the end, and ended up in the pond.”

Fiona Stevens

The Balanced Development of Body, Will and Mind

“One of my Role Models came from within the family. Maurice Brownie, my grandfather, was Captain of the All Blacks in 1926 and 1928 – none of us, got to meet him as he died before I was born. My mother talked about him a lot – in fact as Role Models, my mother and my father were probably the strongest influences I had at that time.

It was because of my aunt, Jacinta Acton-Adams (Johnson), who was a member of the first New Zealand Olympic Winter Games Team in 1952 – that I get into ski racing. I was about 10 or 11 years old and we skied at a club race and I did quite well.

In 1972, when I was 13 I skied well, and I won a scholarship which then led me on to have this coach from Switzerland, called Leo Baccaglio. There were a couple of people but he probably did the most with my skiing in the shortest possible time. From there I went from being absolutely nobody to being the best female skier in New Zealand. It was a completely new world.

In 1972, when we went to Europe, it was really just another race. I mean, all the people that were there were people I’d raced against and come up against, and had been exposed to at other races. So it was a lot of fun and it was a kind of break from everything else. It was a kind of break from the everyday routine, and things then. That was great as long as you weren’t trying to compete, as it was so nice.

OPENING CEREMONY

A lot of Olympic tradition instills huge pride, and so there you are behind your flag and there’s a lot of ceremony about it. And it was great! I felt huge pride to there, that I was good enough to be representing my country.

PARTICIPATION / COMPETITION

The Joy Found in Effort

In many ways it was really just another race. I mean, all the people that were there were people I’d raced against and come up against, and had been exposed to at other races. So it was a lot of fun and it was a kind of break from everything else. It was a kind of break from the everyday routine, and things then. That was great as long as you weren’t trying to compete, as it was so nice.

CLOSING CEREMONY

It was a great sort of party atmosphere. It was fun actually. Everyone ran in and I just remember a whole medley of people, different races, colours, sporting codes, all mingling together, with a big party atmosphere – and it was fun. It was probably one of the most fun parts of the Olympics.

MESSAGE TO YOUTH

I would say that everything that you need to achieve in life is within you and that it’s really a case of what you decide you want to do. It’s a decision you make – I believe that everything you need to achieve is inside you. It’s just a case of accessing it, believing in it and implementing it.

The other thing I would say is to motivate aspiring athletes, or just anybody if it’s not working, change it. If there are confidence to say, look, I’ve tried that and I’ve gone in that direction several different times. I’ve approached it and that hasn’t worked. Okay, discard it. Do not hang on to stuff that hasn’t been effective, and I suppose that’s the other thing, is learning how to be effective.”

Fiona Stevens – Olympian