

Ruia did not just get to Wimbledon in 1957 by chance or on her ability alone. The story is quite involved.

"John Waititi was a great friend of mine who saw the opportunity from 1956 for a Maori to go overseas and represent the Maori people. As an individual he saw I had the necessary talent to put the Maori on the map.

"He organised me to go in 1957 to Wimbledon by getting the sanction of the NZ Tennis Association. He wrote to all the tribal boards in NZ for financial assistance. The response was fantastic. The thing then went national through the press. It was called the "Ruia Morrison Fund". Howard Morrison was one of the drawcards in a tremendous variety concert at the Auckland town hall which was all part of the fund raising.

"The funds lasted me four years. It kept me playing virtually full-time and also allowed me to attend teachers training college for a few months each year."

Ruia donated some of her own funds to help establish Maori golfer Walter Godfrey overseas after Godfrey had won the New Zealand amateur open title in 1958 at age 17.

Each year from 1957 until 1961, Ruia tripped overseas for seven months of the year.

"I could have gone on another trip in 1962 but I was mentally and physically on the down. I had fibrositis in the diaphragm and I was doped up to my eyeballs for the national championships that year. I lost my national title to Sonia Cox – I was in three finals in Wellington but they didn't play the other two because I was in Wellington Hospital."

Morrison did not win the national women's singles title in 1962 but she won the title in 1957, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1963 and 1965. She won the national doubles title in 1956, 1957, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1965 and the mixed doubles title in 1960.

The 1960 national championships presented Ruia with all three national titles. As well, in 1955 she scooped the pool in winning the national under 19 singles, doubles and mixed doubles.

Morrison said she doesn't think there is the depth of talent in tennis in this country today.

"It's professional now and that means dog-eat-dog. It's a full time business and this has changed the exposure of tennis talent."

Morrison played the stop volley to perfection, she could play superb passing shots and her best game was when she was on the attack.

"I didn't consciously think of myself as aggressive, but I didn't cater to my opponents either. I was out there to hit winners. If I had the option of a shot I would take one that caused the least embarrassment to my opponent – but when it came to playing in a final, the quicker I got off the court, the better. I was always very nervous before any

game. But once on the court I became detached from my surroundings."

It's obvious Ruia is immensely proud of her achievements. Her love for hitting a ball with a racquet has taken her far beyond her wildest dreams. But by the same token, through the individualistic aspect of the sport, there persisted a con-

flict of mind and spirit: family and tribal extensions where the individual is of less importance.

Ruia admits to this conflict but says she never wanted to be a tennis star. She doesn't regret the 'stardom', but has welcomed the anonymity the years have brought.

